



PM chairs moot on infrastructure, state land inventory Page 2



Kuwait minister orders probe into absenteeism at social unit

Surprise field visit exposes empty posts

By Fares Ghaleb
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, July 1: Minister of Social Affairs Dr. Amthal Al-Huwailah referred several employees at the social unit in Al-Raqqa for investigation due to non-compliance with the official working hours, as well as some officials who were not in their posts when she conducted a surprise field visit.

In a press statement, the Ministry of Social Affairs confirmed that the minister visited the unit to assess the workflow and the quality of services provided to the public. It disclosed that the minister emphasized the significance of professional discipline in improving government services and ensuring the quick processing of transactions. The ministry added that the visit resulted in the recording of many violations related to non-compliance with official working hours, which necessitated referring the erring employees for investigation, and to take the necessary legal and administrative measures. Al-Huwailah affirmed the continuation of surprise field visits in various sectors of the ministry to monitor performance, and to identify and address shortcomings.



HORIZON TALK

Ahmed Al-Jarallah

The wise man: If you cannot laugh repeatedly, why do you repeat your sorrow?

Every day he heard the same complaints about poverty from them.

The wise man invited the villagers and said to them: I will tell you a joke.

The first time, everyone laughed. The second time, some laughed. The third time, no one laughed.

The people realized that they had been wasting their time complaining.

A stranger donated money to build a mosque, and the villagers became very greedy.

He refused to reveal his name, but promised to visit them again.

He said: I need 500 workers, and I will choose them from the villages.

The man disappeared after stealing 1.5 billion.

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Deals under scrutiny

Cabinet nod mandatory for consulting contracts

KUWAIT CITY, July 1, (KUNA): The Kuwaiti Cabinet on Tuesday vehemently condemned the recent Iranian military aggression, placing the nation's armed forces on peak operational readiness while simultaneously freezing all unapproved state consulting contracts.

The executive decisions came during a weekly session at Seif Palace chaired by His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

The high-profile meeting focused heavily on urgent geopolitical developments and a comprehensive defense strategy following the renewed Iranian aggression.

Minister of Defense Sheikh Abdullah Ali Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah delivered an emergency briefing on defensive postures following hostile Iranian attacks launched against Kuwait at dawn last Sunday.

The Minister affirmed that the military is deployed at maximum operational capability to safeguard national sovereignty, citizens, and residents.

Branding the recent Iranian assaults as a flagrant breach of state sovereignty, a direct threat to regional peace, and a violation of international law and the UN Charter, the Cabinet stated that Kuwait reserves its full, inalienable right to take all necessary measures to protect its territorial integrity.

The Cabinet similarly castigated Iranian attacks that targeted civilian infrastructure in Bahrain last weekend. Emphasizing that Bahrain's security is inextricably linked to the collective defense framework of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), it reaffirmed Kuwait's total solidarity with Manama.

The Cabinet also reviewed the outcomes of recent high-level diplomatic tracks aimed at stabilization.

Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Jarrar Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah briefed the Cabinet on last Thursday's joint GCC-US ministerial meeting in Bahrain, which reviewed regional security following a newly signed US-Iran Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) mediated by Pakistan and Qatar.

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PM Diwan photo
His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah listens to KPC Vice Chairman and CEO Sheikh Nawaf Saud Al-Sabah during the launch of the first Q8 fuel station in Al-Riqqa, in the presence of Minister of Oil Tariq Al-Roumi and other officials. - See Page 5

Upgrade to slash energy-use, emissions

Kuwait floats nationwide LED streetlight tender

By Mohammed Ghanem
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, July 1: The Ministry of Electricity and Water received approval from the Central Agency for Public Tenders (CAPT) last Sunday to float a tender for the supply, installation, and replacement of energy-efficient LED streetlights in existing networks in all

governorates (Phase Two).

According to informed sources, CAPT set July 28 as the deadline for receiving bids from interested companies. The ministry will proceed with the project after awarding the tender and signing a contract with the winning bidder.

This tender is part of a ministerial plan to fully replace the lighting network with

energy-efficient LED systems, which are 50 percent to 70 percent more energy-efficient and environmentally friendly, in addition to expanding the installation of decorative lighting poles.

The plan is expected to save the state treasury millions of dinars through energy savings, as well as reduce carbon emissions from traditional sodium lamps.



KUNA photo
Minister of Education, Eng. Jalal Al-Tabtabaei, during the announcement of the 12th-grade exams results for the 2025/2026 academic year live on Kuwait TV.

Kuwait marks first-ever trio of perfect high school scores

By Inaas Awadh
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, July 1: In an unprecedented achievement in the history of the Ministry of Education, three Kuwaiti students achieved 100 percent in

the Grade 12 final exams despite the exceptional circumstances caused by the Iranian attacks on Kuwait, which required a shift from in-person to on-line classes in the second semester.

Continued on Page 5

Rehab facilities shut over multiple violations

KUWAIT CITY, July 1: The Minister of Health issued a decision to close two physiotherapy and rehabilitation centers and a clinic, referring them to the Medical Liability Authority due to violations identified by the Physiotherapy and Rehabilitation Inspection Committee, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

These violations included operating health facilities without a licensed physician or nursing staff, and falsely claiming that employees were on leave or had resigned without providing supporting documentation.

The committee also found that patients were being admitted and treated without the required medical referrals, in violation of regulations governing the practice of phys-

iotherapy and rehabilitation. Additional violations included medical files lacking patient data or a physician's stamp. It was also found that nursing staff were practicing with licenses that had expired in February 2025.

In other news, Minister of Health Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi on Wednesday inaugurated a week-long public awareness campaign marking World Paramedics Day, observed annually on July 8, at The Avenues Mall.

During a tour of the exhibition, Al-Awadhi visited the training, ambulance and communications sections and thanked operations center personnel for their dedication in serving the country.

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Day by Day

SOME people do not prefer the colour black, seeing it as a symbol of sadness rather than joy. Yet it is said, "Fear not the darkness of the night, but fear the darkness of hearts. The darkness of the night will vanish with the dawn, but the darkness of hearts has no dawn."

The poet Abu Firas al-Hamdani said, "My people will remember me when they face difficult times. In the darkest night, people yearn to see the full moon."

Poets have long sung of dawn, light, and relief. How beautiful is light! Yet we believe in destiny, both its good and its bad.

... Yet tomorrow is another day.

Zahed Matar

Rare UK jubilee stamps on display

By Fares Ghaleb
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, July 1: The Kuwaiti Philatelic and Numismatic Society recently organized an exhibition and lecture on the British Royal Marriage Silver Jubilee stamps, as part of its cultural activities aimed at raising awareness on the history and culture of stamps in general, and Kuwaiti stamps in particular.

In a statement to reporters, Sheikh Hala Bader Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah pointed out that postage stamps are one of the important means of documenting the history of a country and preserving national memory. She said the stamps

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Sheikha Hala Bader Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah listens to Issa Dashti during a lecture on rare British Royal Jubilee stamps, in the presence of Sheikh Dr. Al-Anoud Ibrahim Al-Sabah.

NewsWatch



Zain awarded 25-year Syria telecom license following USD 747 million bid



NBK takes part in ceremony marking the merger of KIPIC with KNPC

FM receives new Tajik ambassador

KUWAIT CITY, July 1, (KUNA): Kuwait's Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Jarrar Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah received the credentials of Khusrav Noziri as ambassador of the Republic of Tajikistan to the country. A ministry statement on Wednesday said Sheikh Jarrar wished the new ambassador success in his work, hoping for further progress and prosperity for bilateral relations between the two friendly countries.

In a press statement, the General Staff confirmed that any explosions heard during this period are a result of the EOD operation. (KUNA)

KUWAIT CITY: Kuwait's Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Ambassador Hamad Al-Mashaan received on Wednesday Ambassador of Myanmar U Chan Aye, on the occasion of his tenure ending. (KUNA)



MoFA photo
Kuwait's Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Jarrar Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah receives credentials of the Ambassador of the Republic of Tajikistan.



Prayer Timings

Fajr 03:17 Asr 15:26
 Sunrise .. 04:52 Maghrib .. 18:52
 Zohr 11:52 Isha 20:23



HH the Amir



Louise Arbour

Kuwait Amir congratulates Canada on National Day

KUWAIT CITY, July 1, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a cable of congratulations on Tuesday to the Governor General of Canada Louise Arbour on Canada Day.

In the cable, His Highness the Amir expressed his sincere congratulations and best wishes to the Governor General, wishing her good health and well-being, and to Canada and its friendly people continued progress and prosperity.

Crown Prince congratulates

His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent a cable of congratulations

on Tuesday to the Governor General of Canada Louise Arbour on Canada Day.

In the cable, His Highness the Crown Prince expressed his sincere congratulations and best wishes to the Governor General, wishing her good health and well-being, and to Canada and its friendly people continued progress and prosperity.

PM congratulates Canada

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah sent a cable of congratulations on Tuesday to the Governor General of Canada Louise Arbour on Canada Day.



'Lulu Group' Chairman, Yusuffali M.A., meets Kuwait's Amir and Crown Prince.

Amir, Crown Prince hail 'Lulu' role in food security

KUWAIT CITY, July 1: Yusuffali M.A., Chairman of Lulu Group, met with HH the Amir of Kuwait, Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, and HH the Crown Prince of Kuwait, Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, at Bayan Palace.

During the meeting, Yusuffali briefed HH the

Amir and HH the Crown Prince on Lulu Group's ongoing initiatives and expansion plans in Kuwait, particularly in the area of food security. He highlighted the Group's efforts to strengthen supply chains and ensure the availability of essential food products across the country.

The Amir and the Crown Prince appreciated

Lulu Group's continued efforts and contribution to strengthening Kuwait's food security, especially in the context of regional challenges.

A.V. Anand Ram, Chief Operating Officer of Lulu International Holdings; Sreejith K.S., Director of Lulu Kuwait; and Zakir Hussain, Regional Director, also attended the meeting.

'Kuwaitization of co-op jobs vital'

'Fakhruna' hunts for workers

By Fares Ghaleb

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, July 1: The Ministry of Social Affairs announced the opening of applications for 45 support positions in 15 cooperative societies (three positions in each cooperative) from Aug 1-31 through the 'Fakhruna' platform, in cooperation with the Public Authority for Manpower (PAM).

Undersecretary of the ministry and Chairman of the Committee for Kuwaitization of Supervisory Positions in Cooperative Societies Dr. Khaled Al-Ajmi disclosed that this recruitment is made possible through the ongoing partnership and coordination between the ministry and PAM. He said this is in compliance with directives of the political leadership, de-



Dr Al-Huwailah

isions of the Council of Ministers, and instructions of Minister of Social, Family and Childhood Affairs Dr. Amthal Al-Huwailah, to speed up the Kuwaitization of jobs in the cooperative sector.

He stated that the available positions include the central market manager, for which a bachelor's degree in Administrative Sciences or Business Administration is required, as well as the goods receiving clerk and warehouse custodian positions, for which a minimum of Diploma in Business Studies is required.

He affirmed that the ministry is proceeding according to a comprehensive program to implement the nationalization plan for jobs in the cooperative sector. He revealed that this plan aims to generate job opportunities for citizens, increase the nationalization rate, and benefit from national expertise in various specializations, in line with the direction of the country towards job sustainability and to achieve the development goals.

He invited citizens interested in the advertised positions and meet the requirements to apply through the 'Fakhruna' platform within the abovementioned application period. He stressed that all applications will be subject to the relevant regulations and procedures to ensure transparency and equal opportunities for all applicants.

Kuwait pledges to play active role in joint Arab civil aviation

RABAT, July 1, (KUNA): Kuwait's unanimous election to the Executive Council of the Arab Civil Aviation Organization (ACAO) represents a significant achievement that underscores Kuwait's active role in supporting joint Arab action in civil aviation, said Kuwait's Public Authority of Civil Aviation Chief, Sheikh Eng. Hamoud Mubarak Al-Sabah.

This came in a statement to KUNA on the sidelines of the 29th ACAO General Assembly in Rabat.

He noted that the General Assembly reaffirmed the organization's statement condemning the missile attacks that targeted civilian airports in Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) member states and the resulting human and material losses.

Sheikh Hamoud also welcomed the signing of a cooperation memorandum between ACAO and counterpart regional organizations in Latin America, Africa and Europe aimed at coordinating positions in support of increasing the number of seats on the Council of the International Civil Aviation Organization and securing a dedicated seat

for Arab states through ACAO's nomination.

He added that the General Assembly adopted several key recommendations issued by the Executive Council, particularly technical measures aimed at advancing the Arab civil aviation sector, stressing Kuwait's commitment to promoting joint Arab cooperation to achieve the highest standards of aviation safety and security.

The assembly also approved the appointment of Moroccan nominee Khalid Al-Sharqawi as the new Director General of ACAO. Sheikh Hamoud extended Kuwait's congratulations and best wishes to Al-Sharqawi for success in achieving the organization's strategic objectives.

He added that the General Assembly elected Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Oman, the United Arab Emirates, Morocco, Egypt, Tunisia, Yemen, Libya and Kuwait to the organization's new Executive Council, expressing hope that the new members would contribute to strengthening coordination and cooperation among Arab states in the field of civil aviation.



His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah chairs the ministerial meeting.

PM chairs moot on infrastructure, state land inventory

KUWAIT CITY, July 1, (KUNA): His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah chaired Wednesday a meeting to discuss infrastructure development and a roadmap for classifying state-owned land to improve management efficiency and support development priorities.

The meeting was attended by Minister of

Public Works Dr. Nora Al-Mashaan, Minister of State for Municipal Affairs and Housing Abdullahif Al-Mishari, Minister of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy Dr. Sabeeh Al-Mukhaizeem, Minister of Commerce and Industry Osama Boodai, and Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investment Abdulaziz Al-Marzouq.

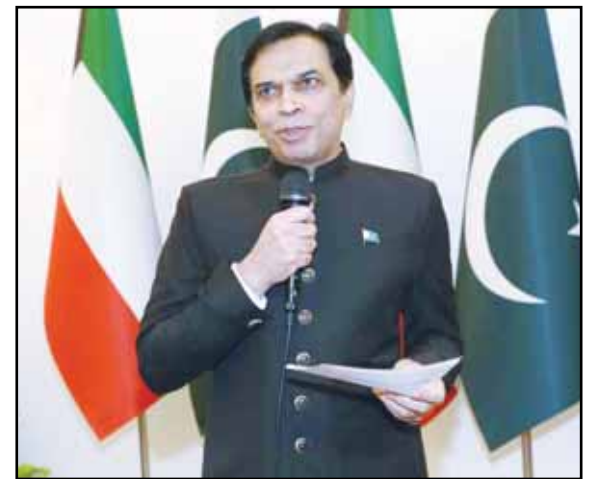
Also attending Director General of KDI-PA Sheikh Dr. Meshal Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Acting Chief of the Prime Minister's Diwan Sheikh Khaled Mohammad Al-Khaled Al-Sabah, KIA Managing Director Sheikh Saud Salem Abdulaziz Al-Sabah, and Kuwait Storage Company Chairman Hazem Al-Essa.

Kuwait leadership role in regional turmoil lauded

Pakistan committed to Kuwait safety: Dr Iqbal



Ambassadors and diplomats attend the 'Taste of Pakistan 2026' event.



Pakistani Ambassador to Kuwait Dr Zafar Iqbal making a speech.

By Fares Ghaleb

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, July 1: Pakistani Ambassador to Kuwait Dr. Zafar Iqbal said the Kuwaiti-Pakistani relations are witnessing continuous development at all levels, disclosing that the volume of trade exchange between the two countries increased by eight percent in the past eleven months despite the challenges posed by the disruption of global supply chains.

Iqbal made the statement at the event organized by the Embassy of Pakistan with the theme, "Taste of Pakistan 2026."

A large number of ambassadors, diplomats, officials and media representatives attended the event, which aimed to introduce Pakistani cuisine and strengthen cultural ties between Pakistan and Kuwait.

According to Iqbal, the above-mentioned growth was achieved through the concerted efforts of the relevant authorities in both countries in maintaining the smooth flow of trade. He affirmed that bilateral relations are based on a deep-rooted friendship and mutual trust, away from hidden agendas.

He disclosed that more than 100,000 Pakistanis are currently residing in Kuwait, contributing to

various economic and developmental sectors -- a reflection of the strength of the bond between the two nations.

He added that visa procedures for Pakistanis wishing to work in Kuwait have been streamlined, proving the strength of bilateral relations. He confirmed that Kuwait has a special place in the hearts of the Pakistanis, and that many members of the Pakistani community are attached to the country and do not wish to leave due to the security, stability and high quality of life it offers.

He praised the wisdom of the Kuwaiti political leadership in managing the situation during the past period, as well as the care and attention that the country gives to all residents.

He explained that the two countries are bound by a long-term defense cooperation agreement that includes security cooperation, exchange of information and expertise, and implementation of joint training programs and exercises. He pointed out that recent regional developments solidified coordination in the technical and training fields.

He confirmed that there are no Pakistani military forces deployed in Kuwait, while asserting that dialogue and diplomacy are the best ways to overcome crises. He lauded the role of Kuwait in supporting efforts to de-escalate tension and

maintain security and stability in the region.

He reaffirmed the support of Pakistan for any negotiation aimed at maintaining peace and its readiness to provide facilities whenever necessary. He indicated that specifying the venue for any negotiation is a decision that all concerned parties must agree on, adding that the most important factor is the continuation of dialogue to achieve positive results.

He went on to say that Pakistan remains committed to guarantee the security and safety of Kuwait, emphasizing the unwavering support of his country for Kuwait under all circumstances. He then condemned any aggression or threat to the security and stability of the latter.

He also explained that the event is a celebration of authentic Pakistani flavors, rich traditions, and the renowned hospitality of his country. He stated that food is one of the most important means of spreading culture and fostering dialogue and understanding between peoples.

He added that the dishes presented at the event embody the geographical and cultural diversity and rich culinary heritage of Pakistan.

He pointed out that the occasion not only showcased Pakistani cuisine, but also celebrated the historic friendship between Pakistan and Kuwait.

Kuwait vows to stick to global commitments on rights

KUWAIT CITY, July 1, (KUNA): Kuwait's Foreign Ministry, represented by its Human Rights Department, organized a training workshop titled "Kuwait's Combined 25th and 26th Reports to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD)" in cooperation with the Office of the UN High Com-

missioner for Human Rights (UN-HCR).

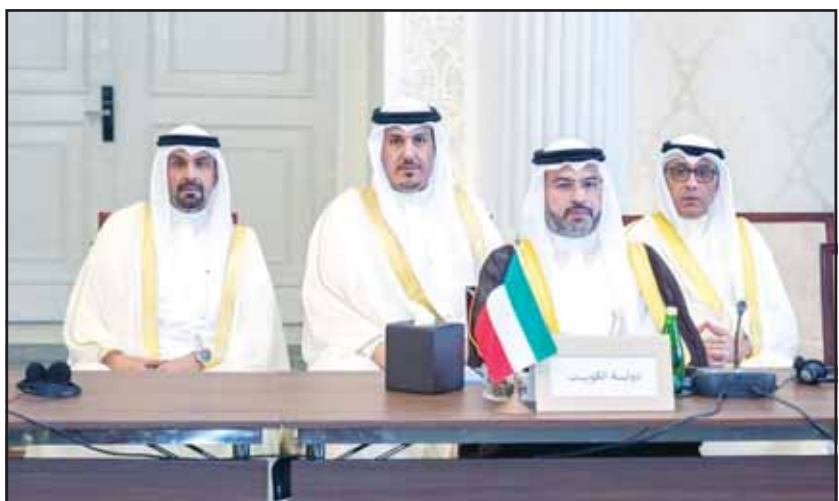
In his opening remarks, Deputy Assistant Foreign Minister for Human Rights Affairs, Counselor Abdullah Abu Shaiba said the workshop began on Tuesday and will continue until July 1, as preparations for presenting Kuwait's combined periodic reports

before CERD mark a vital step in the country's engagement with international human rights mechanisms and provide an opportunity to highlight Kuwait's legislative and institutional efforts in this field.

The workshop forms part of preparations for Kuwait's review before the committee, scheduled

for August 10 and 11 at the UN headquarters in Geneva, he pointed out.

The program aims to strengthen the capabilities of the official delegation, particularly in engaging constructively with UN experts and effectively presenting Kuwait's human rights efforts, he mentioned.



Kuwait's delegation at the gathering.

KUNA photo

HORIZON TALK

Ahmed Al-Jarallah



The wise man: If you cannot laugh repeatedly, why do you repeat your sorrow?

SCAM and fraud do not only affect an individual. Sometimes the entire village falls victim to a con artist who knows how to deceive people by exploiting their beliefs, especially if it is related to charity or a religious matter.

Complaining is a scourge that blinds one to many positive things. The following story tells an example of those who complain without doing anything useful. The story is about a village whose inhabitants fell victim to a stranger who stole their money and fled to an unknown place.

In one of the villages lived a wise man, renowned for his profound wisdom. People came to him from far and wide, sharing their worries and problems. Every day, the wise man was accustomed to hearing the same complaints about poverty, injustice and misfortune. But he noticed that they weren't looking for a solution, they were simply looking for someone who would listen to their grievances.

One day, the wise man decided to teach them a different lesson. He gathered the villagers in a large square and told them a funny joke, and everyone burst out laughing.

The wise man waited a short while, then told the same joke again. This time, only a few laughed, while some began to wonder why. The wise man waited a few more moments, then told the joke yet again. But this time, no one laughed. The wise man smiled and said to them, "You cannot laugh at the same joke over and over again, so why do you cry and

Every day he heard the same complaints about poverty from them.

The wise man invited the villagers and said to them: I will tell you a joke.

The first time, everyone laughed. The second time, some laughed.

The third time, no one laughed.

The people realized that they had been wasting their time complaining.

A stranger donated money to build a mosque, and the villagers became very greedy.

He refused to reveal his name, but promised to visit them again.

He said: I need 500 workers, and I will choose them from the villages.

The man disappeared after stealing 1.5 billion.

complain about the same problems every day? If you refuse to laugh at the same joke repeatedly, why do you grieve over the same tragedy repeatedly?"

Then, the people realized that they were

wasting their time complaining instead of looking for solutions. From that moment on, people began to look at their problems differently.

* * *

Greed destroys the liar

In a quiet village, a man arrived in a luxury car. He impressed everyone with his generosity when he announced a donation of 200 million to build a mosque. He refused to reveal his identity, simply saying that he would return in two months to see the progress of the construction.

After some days, the man returned to find that the mosque was rising. He decided to double his generosity and donated another 100 million, much to the joy of the villagers. As usual, he did not reveal his name, only asking them to pray for him.

A month later, the mosque was completed, and the villagers warmly welcomed the generous donor. The villagers tried to persuade him to stay as their guest. He politely declined, explaining that he had to travel immediately to America, where he owned factories and needed 500 workers, whom he would select from the villages. The villagers were elated and asked him to take the workers from among them, which he agreed to, appreciating their efforts in building the mosque.

He told them he would cover all expenses, he only needed the passports quickly. He said he needed three million (presumably Egyptian pounds) for each passport as a symbolic fee to finalize the paperwork. He told them he would pay

for the remaining costs, including the plane ticket, visa, accommodation and a generous salary.

Everyone was excited, and within a week, 500 passports were collected, each with three million (presumably Egyptian pounds).

Strangely, they could not donate to the mosque's construction, citing poverty.

The man took the documents and money, promising to return soon to complete the procedures. Fifteen days later, 500 passports arrived at the mosque, but the man did not return. He vanished with 1.5 billion (presumably Egyptian pounds). This meant he invested 300 million (presumably Egyptian pounds) in the mosque's construction, but stole many times that amount.

* * *

The philosopher Diogenes lived a life of austerity. His diet consisted only of bread and lentils. The philosopher Aristippus once saw him and remarked, "If you were to flatter rulers, you would eat butter and honey, instead of lentils."

Diogenes replied, "If you learned to eat lentils, my dear Aristippus, you would not have to flatter kings."

* * *

We want rapid development

Hurry, government and build everything essential, lest time overtake you, prices rise, people become disillusioned, and a generation that could have enjoyed its country's projects passes away.



Farwaniya Governorate photo
Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Athbi Nasser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah meets Vice Chairman of the Board of Directors of Popular Cafés Dr. Jassim Al-Kandari, Treasurer Abdulmohsen Al-Makhial and Secretary Abdullah Al-Mutairi.

Better quality of services eyed for citizens & expats

KUWAIT CITY, July 1: Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Athbi Nasser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah on Tuesday met with Vice Chairman of the Board of Directors of Popular Cafés Dr. Jassim Al-Kandari, Treasurer Abdulmohsen Al-Makhial and Secretary Abdullah Al-Mutairi.

They discussed different aspects of cooperation with Farwaniya Governorate and the Board of Directors of Popular Cafés, and ways to support initiatives and activities that serve the interests of the community.

During the meeting, the Governor stressed the importance of continuous

coordination with various entities and institutions in the interest of the public and to improve the quality of services provided to citizens and residents, in accordance with the directives of the political leadership.

On the other hand, Al-Kandari expressed his gratitude and appreciation to the Governor for his concern and cooperation with community institutions.

He confirmed the commitment of the Board of Directors of Popular Cafés to continue coordinating with various entities in order to ensure the success of social initiatives.

Service downloads car registration

MoCI shuts down 8 companies, issues 46 reports of violations

KUWAIT CITY, July 1: Emergency teams from the Commercial Control and Consumer Protection Department at the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, in coordination and cooperation with the Ministry of Interior's Ahmadi Criminal Investigation Department, conducted an intensive inspection campaign targeting a number of commercial establishments, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The campaign resulted in the issuance of 46 violation reports for various infractions, in addition to two notices of violations related to commercial licenses. Eight commercial establishments were immediately closed due to violations requiring closure under the applicable laws and regulations.

The ministry clarified that the nec-

essary legal measures are being taken against the violators in coordination with the relevant authorities.

□ □ □

Registration download: The Ministry of Interior launched a new electronic service through Sahel, the unified government e-services application, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The service allows users to download an electronic copy of their vehicle registration.

In a statement on the Sahel application's X account, the ministry explained that the service enables vehicle owners to download and save their registration electronically on their smartphones, making it easier to access and use when needed.

Couple in drug peddling

Kuwaiti woman , Bedoun man caught with Lyrica pills , sharp weapons

KUWAIT CITY, July 1: The Anti-Human Trafficking and Negative Phenomena Department apprehended two suspects - a Kuwaiti woman and a Bedoun man - in possession of 358 Lyrica tablets, bladed weapons, and paraphernalia used in the distribution and use of narcotics and psychotropic substances, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The Ministry of Interior confirmed in a statement on its X ac-

count that the necessary legal measures have been taken against the suspects. The suspects have been referred along with the seized items to the competent authorities to complete legal procedures.

The ministry emphasized the continuation of its intensive security campaigns in various regions, affirming its zero-tolerance policy toward anyone who threatens the security of society through the trafficking, distribution, or use of narcotics and psychotropic substances.

It also called on the public to cooperate and report any information that could help in combating drugs.

Kuwait praised for help in Algeria embassy poll

By Fares Ghaleb

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, July 1: Voting in the Algerian National People's Assembly election started last Monday at the Algerian Embassy in Kuwait.

Algerian Ambassador to Kuwait Omar Belhadj stated that the high voter turnout is a manifestation of the commitment of the Algerian community to fulfill their national duty.

In a statement to reporters, Belhadj pointed out that the parliamentary election is an important milestone in the Algerian political life, considering it is a constitutional requirement for electing members of the lower house of the parliament, which is responsible for drafting legislation and then submitting them to the Council of the Nation for ratification.

He disclosed that 436 Algerian voters are registered in Kuwait, hoping for the continuation of the high voter turnout.

He said the embassy sends voter participation figures to the relevant authorities in Algeria three times daily through an electronic system.

He added that the counting of votes begins once voting is closed, in the presence of the polling station staff and representatives of the candidates, stating that the final results will be sent to Algeria on July 2.

He praised the cooperation of the Kuwaiti Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Interior, as well as the facilities provided to ensure the success of the electoral process and enable members of the Algerian community to cast their votes easily.

He also expressed his gratitude to the Kuwaiti security authorities for their ongoing cooperation.

Regarding bilateral relations, Belhadj confirmed the deep fraternal ties that bind Algeria and Kuwait.

He revealed that at the meeting between the foreign ministers of the two countries in Amman, Jordan last week on the sidelines of the Arab Ministerial Meeting, Algeria reiterated its condemnation of the unjustified attacks on Kuwait, reaffirming the full solidarity of his country with Kuwait.

Special Buffet

LARGEST SPREAD IN TOWN

Child Buffet	Adult Buffet
KD 3.450	KD 5.950
EVERY THURSDAY DINNER ONLY 6 PM TO 11 PM	EVERY FRIDAY LUNCH & DINNER 12:30 PM TO 4:30 PM & 6 PM TO 11 PM
	HAWALLY ONLY EVERY SATURDAY LUNCH ONLY 12:30 PM TO 4:30 PM

AVAILABLE AT HAWALLY BRANCH
BEIRUT ST, LULU AL WATAN COMPLEX, OPPOSITE CBK
22626782 ☎ 22626783

AVAILABLE AT FAHAHEEL BRANCH
1ST FLOOR, AL HOOR BUILDING
BLOCK NO.11, BEHIND TO CENTERPOINT
23911175 ☎ 23911174

GCC military chiefs discuss regional security, boost in military relations



Chief of the General Staff of the Kuwaiti Army Lieutenant General Khaled Al-Shuriaan receives the GCC military chiefs.



Bahrain's King Hamad Bin Isa Al-Khalifa welcomes the GCC military chiefs in his palace.

KUNA photos

MANAMA, July 1, (KUNA): Chief of the General Staff of the Kuwaiti Army Lieutenant General Khaled Al-Shuriaan headed Kuwait's delegation to the meeting of the Higher Military Committee of Chiefs of Staff of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) armed forces, held in Bahrain.

The Kuwaiti Army General Staff said in a statement that the meeting discussed ways to enhance existing military cooperation among GCC member states, in addition to reviewing the latest regional security developments.

The participants also discussed prospects for strengthening defense cooperation and joint coordination, considering the current regional circumstances.

The meeting was chaired by the Chief of Staff of the Bahrain Defence Force, Lieutenant General Theyab Al-Nuaimi, and attended by the chiefs of staff of the GCC armed forces.

Amir congratulates Somalia, Rwanda on 'National Days'

KUWAIT CITY, July 1, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent on Wednesday a congratulatory cable to the President of Somalia Hassan Sheikh Mohamud on the occasion of his country's Independence Day.

His Highness the Amir wished the president good health and the people of Somalia further progress and prosperity.

His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent on Wednesday a congratulatory cable to the President of Somalia Hassan Sheikh Mohamud on the occasion of his country's Independence Day, wishing him good health.

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah sent Wednesday a congratulatory cable to President of Somalia, Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, on occasion of his country's Independence Day.

RWANDA

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a cable of congratulations to the President of the Republic of Rwanda, Paul Kagame, on his country's Independence Day.

In the cable, His Highness the Amir wished President Paul Kagame good health and well-being and more progress and prosperity for Rwanda and its people.

His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent a cable of congratulations to the President of the Republic of Rwanda, Paul Kagame, on his country's Independence Day. In the cable, His Highness the Crown Prince wished President Paul Kagame good health and well-being.

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah sent a cable of congratulations to the President of the Republic of Rwanda, Paul Kagame, on his country's Independence Day.

Zero tolerance for fencing state land

KUWAIT CITY, July 1, (Agencies): Kuwait Municipality on Wednesday affirmed that movable metal fences and portable structures constitute illegal violations on state land and will be removed in accordance with applicable legal procedures.

The municipality said it will also take legal action against companies or entities involved in marketing or installing the violating fences and structures as part of enforcing municipal regulations.

The announcement comes as Kuwait Municipality continues its nationwide campaign aimed at removing illegal structures from state-owned land through next Monday.

Meanwhile, Kuwait Municipality denied reports circulating about the completion of drafting regulations related to construction and licensing for residential and commercial buildings, stressing that such claims are incorrect, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Kuwait Municipality confirmed that installing movable iron fences and mobile structures on public property is a violation of regulations.



Minister of Commerce and Industry Osama Boodai meets the Ambassador of Azerbaijan to Kuwait, Emil Karimov.

KUNA photo

Kuwait, Azerbaijan seek to enhance trade cooperation

KUWAIT CITY, July 1, (KUNA): Minister of Commerce and Industry Osama Boodai discussed on Wednesday with Ambassador of Azerbaijan to Kuwait, Emil Karimov, ways to strengthen bilateral relations and expand cooperation across the commercial and economic sectors.

In a statement to KUNA, the ministry said the meeting reviewed prospects for expanding bilateral trade and explored opportunities to strengthen economic cooperation, emphasizing the importance of enhancing commercial partnerships and promoting the shared interests of the two friendly countries.

Both sides also discussed improving transport facilitation, logistics services, food security cooperation and supply chain resilience, highlighting their role in supporting market stability, increasing trade exchange and further strengthening the economic partnership between Kuwait and Azerbaijan.

Eye on value of gov't spending

UN helps Kuwait achieve sustainability

By Inaas Awadh

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, July 1: The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Kuwait, in collaboration with the Secretariat General of the Supreme Council for Planning and Development and the American Business Council in Kuwait (American Chamber of Commerce in Kuwait), organized a series of dialogues on developing the public procurement system.

These dialogues brought together high-level government officials and private sector representatives to promote the adoption of strategic and sustainable public procurement, exchange international best practices, raise the efficiency of public expenditure, enhance market competitiveness, and support the objectives of Kuwait Vision 2035.

The UNDP pointed out that public procurement is no longer limited to the purchase of goods and services, as it has become a strategic tool for achieving sustainable economic, social and environmental value.

Participants in the dialogue held in partnership with the Secretariat General

of the Supreme Council for Planning and Development reviewed international experiences in employing public procurement in a more strategic manner. Discussions focused on the mechanisms to raise the efficiency of government expenditure, promote innovation, support local markets, and achieve the best long-term value for public funds.

The introductory session, organized by the UNDP in collaboration with the American Chamber of Commerce in Kuwait, witnessed broad participation among representatives of private sector companies. The session tackled global developments in sustainable public procurement and how companies can prepare to meet new requirements, boost their competitiveness, and capitalize on future procurement opportunities.

UNDP Resident Representative in Kuwait Emma Morley stated that public procurement is no longer about what governments buy, but rather about the value that public spending delivers. She explained that every procurement decision is an opportunity to achieve better outcomes for the society, economy and environment.

She added that through its partnership with the Secretariat General of the Supreme Council for Planning and Development, the UNDP is supporting Kuwait in exploring how sustainable public procurement can contribute to achieving the Kuwait Vision 2035, ensuring that every Kuwaiti dinar of public expenditure provides sustainable value for current and future generations.

MPW seeks to modernize roads

By Mohammad Ghanem

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, July 1: The Ministry of Public Works on Tuesday referred two tenders for road construction in agricultural areas to the State Audit Bureau (SAB) for review and approval of the contracts.

This is a confirmation of the report that the newspaper published on June 17, with the headline, "KD12.4 Million for Road Construction in the Southern and Northern Agricultural Areas", as one of the tenders is for the agricultural areas in

the North and the other is for those in the South.

The Central Agency for Public Tenders (CAPT) had earlier approved the awarding of the two tenders to the ministry at a total cost of KD12.452 million for a period of 730 days (KD6.320 million for the northern areas and KD6.133 million for the southern areas).

The issuance and implementation of these tenders are in line with the ongoing efforts of the ministry to modernize the road network in the internal and external areas, especially the agricultural areas.

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Kuwait PM oversees Q8's local debut

Flagship launch marks new era for domestic fuel market

KUWAIT CITY, July 1, (KUNA): Under the patronage and in the presence of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) on Tuesday launched the operational opening of a flagship Q8 fuel station in the Al-Riqqa area of Ahmadi Governorate, marking the brand's debut as part of a five-station rollout in the local market.

In a press statement following the launch, His Highness the Prime Minister reaffirmed the state's unwavering commitment to backing the national oil sector.

He noted that the vital industry continues to achieve its strategic milestones steadily despite challenging regional circumstances, driven by a long-standing legacy of corporate excellence and professionalism.

His Highness praised the rapid execution and coordinated planning that led to the completion of five new Q8 fuel stations within a short time-frame.

He emphasized that expanding the renowned international Q8 brand into the local market will drastically elevate consumer service standards, upgrade logistics infrastructure, and stimulate downstream commercial activities.

Furthermore, the expansion aims to attract high-quality investments, diversify public revenues, and advance the state's broader sustainable economic development goals.

In a separate statement by KPC, Minister of Oil Tariq Al-Roumi expressed pride in the domestic launch of the global Q8 retail brand, highlighting it as a major milestone in restructuring the national oil sector and fostering institutional integration among the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) subsidiaries.

Al-Roumi emphasized that debuting Q8 service stations locally aligns with the political leadership's directives to diversify downstream ser-



His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah during the launch of a flagship Q8 fuel station in the Al-Riqqa area of Ahmadi Governorate.

vices, elevate standards for citizens, and optimize added value for the national economy.

For his part, KPC Vice Chairman and CEO Sheikh Nawaf Saud Al-Sabah affirmed that introducing the international brand locally unifies the corporation's retail identity and sharpens its global competitiveness.

He noted that the transition will elevate the local consumer experience to match the world-class benchmarks established by Q8 networks across Europe and Asia.

Sheikh Nawaf highly commended the historical legacy of KNPC, which has successfully managed the country's fuel distribution network

since 1961, and reasserted its ongoing pivotal role in securing domestic energy needs.

He added that the new Al-Riqqa station serves as an advanced, integrated service model, featuring unprecedented collaborations with established local retail brands to provide diversified, high-quality shop-

ping and consumer services.

The high-profile inauguration ceremony was also attended by top state and energy officials, including Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investment Abdulaziz Al-Marzouq, Managing Director of the Kuwait Investment Authority Sheikh Saud Salem Al-Sabah, Chief of the Kuwait Fire Force Major General Talal Al-Roumi, Director General of Kuwait Municipality Manal Al-Asfour, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Finance Aseel Al-Munaifi, CEO of Kuwait National Petroleum Company (KNPC) Wadha Al-Khatib, and CEO of Kuwait Petroleum International (KPI) Shafi Al-Ajmi.

PM Diwan photos

Kuwait, Morocco discuss expanding air links

RABAT, July 1, (KUNA): Kuwait's Public Authority for Civil Aviation Chief, Sheikh Eng. Humoud Mubarak Al-Sabah discussed on Wednesday with the Moroccan Minister of Transport and Logistics Abdessamad Kayouh ways to strength-

en bilateral relations and enhance the civil aviation sector between both countries.

In a statement to KUNA, Sheikh Humoud said discussions aimed to set a framework for developing the current flights routes between

the two countries, while focusing on opening new areas to boost air cargo movement as well as the flow of goods in a way that serves mutual interests.

They also touched upon the possibility of launching direct flights

for Royal Air Maroc to Kuwait as a strategic step that could create a significant boost in supporting air travel and making it easier for passengers to move around, as well as to encourage investment and boost tourism exchange.

AMAN task force taps New Zealand on crisis readiness

KUWAIT CITY, July 1, (KUNA): Kuwait's AMAN task force, responsible for establishing the National Center for Emergency, Crisis and Disaster Management, held a virtual meeting on Wednesday, with New Zealand's National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) to exchange expertise and review international best practices.

The team stated to KUNA that the meeting reviewed New Zealand's emergency management model, coordination mechanisms between government agencies and local authorities, as well as risk management, preparedness, business continuity and disaster response.

The two sides also discussed enhancing cooperation and exchanging expertise in strategic planning, operations management and institutional capacity building to support Kuwait's efforts to establish an integrated national emergency management system.

The Cabinet-affiliated AMAN team is tasked with developing a comprehensive national framework for emergency, crisis and disaster management, while strengthening risk management, preparedness and crisis response nationwide.



Kuwait's AMAN task force during a virtual meeting with New Zealand's National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA).

Continued from Page 1

Cabinet nod

According to the meeting's joint final communique, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio reaffirmed Washington's ironclad commitment to GCC security.

Importantly, the communique explicitly backed Kuwait's absolute sovereignty over its maritime borders, demanding that the Iraqi government honor its international obligations under UN Security Council Resolution 833.

The briefing followed a separate official visit by Secretary Rubio to Kuwait last Wednesday, where he met with His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.

Their discussions focused on consolidating bilateral cooperation and navigating the volatile Middle East geopolitical landscape to reinforce regional stability.

On the domestic front, His Highness the Prime Minister instructed all ministries to refrain from entering into any contractual agreements with external consulting firms without obtaining prior, explicit authorization directly from the Cabinet.

The Cabinet also extended formal condolences to neighboring Gulf states impacted by recent regional instability.

It sent its deep sympathy to Saudi Arabia following a fatal Aramco helicopter crash in Ras Tanura last Sunday and expressed its commiseration to Qatar over the martyrdom of a Qatari national killed by shrapnel from recent regional military operations.

Finally, the Cabinet discussed various items on its agenda, reviewed reports and minutes submitted by ministerial committees, and referred several matters to relevant authorities for further study.

Kuwait marks

Minister of Education Eng. Sayed Jalal Al-Tabtabaei on Wednesday approved the results of the Grade 12 exams for the 2025/2026 academic year in the science, literature and religious education sections, along with the results for the special education students, at a ceremony held in the headquarters of the ministry in South Surra, with senior ministry officials in attendance. The announcement of the results was

broadcasted live on Kuwait TV.

The ministry stated that the results are available through the government application, 'Sahel', and its official website, allowing students and parents to view grades and percentages.

The passing rate in the science section reached 91.69 percent, while the literary section recorded 83.55 percent and 83.84 percent in religious education, reflecting the success of the educational and organizational plans implemented by the ministry throughout the academic year.

Al-Tabtabaei affirmed that the announcement of exam results is considered a national occasion that crowns a school year filled with achievements. He said the students have proven that willpower, diligence and ambition can help them overcome challenges and achieve success and excellence.

He pointed out that the academic year witnessed exceptional circumstances and regional challenges that necessitated flexible decisions and well-considered plans to ensure the continuity of education. He emphasized that the cooperation of various state institutions was a key factor in overcoming these circumstances and ensuring the success of the academic year.

He expressed his deep gratitude and appreciation to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah for their unwavering support for the educational process, and their commitment to build the Kuwaiti people and empower future generations.

He also commended the support of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, particularly his continuous follow up during the Iranian aggression, which contributed to enhancing the readiness of state institutions and ensuring the smooth conduct of the educational process.

He praised the support provided by First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah, confirming that the cooperation of the Ministry of Interior and its sectors provided a safe, organized and fair examination environment, and contributed to the orderly conduct of the exams.

He expressed his appreciation to the personnel of the Kuwait Armed Forces, Ministry of Interior, Kuwait National Guard and Kuwait Fire Force (KFF), asserting that their preparedness played a crucial role in en-

suring the safe and stable conduct of in-person classes and examinations. He lauded the fruitful cooperation among members of the Cabinet, which bolstered the efforts of the Education Ministry in achieving its educational objectives.

He said the Ministry of Education balanced safeguarding student well-being, maintaining the continuity of education, and guaranteeing the integrity and fairness of examinations. He attributed the commendable results to the collaborative work and integration among various state institutions and the educational field.

He extended his gratitude to all the Ministry of Education staff, including teachers, administrators, supervisors, heads of committees, invigilators, and those assigned in the examination centers, acknowledging their efforts that contributed to the success of the academic year.

He also praised the role of parents, describing them as partners in success for their support and guidance of their children.

He revealed a first in the history of the Ministry of Education -- three Kuwaiti students achieved a perfect score of 100 percent. He emphasized that this unprecedented achievement reflects the students' hard work and perseverance, and represents a bright milestone in Kuwaiti education.

He concluded by congratulating the students, urging them to continue their pursuit of knowledge, uphold their national values, and believe in their capabilities, indicating that they are the real wealth of Kuwait and the makers of its future.

Rare UK

are an integral part of the history of any country, explaining that Kuwait relies on postage stamps to prove its legitimacy in many matters.

She disclosed that the lecture focused on historical information about the origins and development of stamps, along with rare stamps dating back to the period before World War I.

She indicated that Kuwait lost many important documents during the Iraqi invasion, which makes it more important to preserve historical documentation tools. She stated that stamps are among the significant means of preserving history and transmitting it to the future generation.

She then expressed her greetings to Kuwait and its people, wishing

lasting security and stability for the country.

On the other hand, Issa Dashti, Secretary of the society and a researcher on Kuwaiti-British relations, affirmed that the history of Kuwaiti postal services is rich with milestones and documents, reflecting the history and international relations of the country. He said the set of British Royal Marriage Silver Jubilee stamps issued in 1948 are among the vital pieces of evidence of the strength of Kuwaiti-British relations.

Dashti revealed that the event is one of the cultural activities organized by Kuwait Philatelic and Numismatic Society, in cooperation with the Kuwait National Library, with the aim of raising awareness on stamp history.

He said the Kuwaiti stamps are an important historical record for the country, indicating that the set was issued in 1948 to commemorate the 25th wedding anniversary of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth, during which the British Royal Mail issued two commemorative stamps for the occasion. He added that the stamps were re-printed later with the name of Kuwait and its currency at the time -- the rupee -- for use in the Kuwaiti postal service during the British postal administration period.

Rehab facilities

Director of the Medical Emergency Department Dr. Fahad Al-Qemlas said the campaign will continue at Al-Khيران Mall and 360 Mall to promote first aid awareness and strengthen community engagement.

He added that the campaign includes hands-only first aid training sessions to teach the public how to provide initial assistance until ambulance teams arrive.

Al-Qemlas also noted that the event marks the first anniversary of the First Responder Service, which has strengthened emergency response during routine operations and crises.

Ambulance Supervisor Abdullah Al-Nafis said Kuwait operates nearly 79 ambulance centers across all governorates through 13 emergency complexes.

He added that the First Responder Service has enabled treatment of around 15 to 20 percent of emergency cases at the scene before ambulance crews arrive, while air ambulance services handle around 900 cases annually in remote areas.

Arab Parliament chief ties 'unity' to regional stability

CAIRO, July 1, (KUNA): Maintaining cohesion to address challenges around the wider Arab region was key to protect common interests, the Arab Parliament's chief Mohammad Al-Yamahi said on Tuesday, citing the status quo as an amalgam of security, political and economic hardships.

Greater cooperation and a "joint working mechanism" represent the ideal framework under which these challenges could be addressed, he told a regular session of the Arab League's

legislative body in the Egyptian capital, pushing for a diplomatic path forward to navigate through the unrest plaguing the region.

On the Arab region's core concerns, he highlighted the "legitimate statehood rights" of the Palestinians as being chief among them, which entail the establishment of an independent Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital, as pushed for in a gathering in Cairo last week of Arab parliament chiefs.

'It's a relatively bad time in Congress'

House GOP deadlocks over Trump's demands, sending lawmakers home early

WASHINGTON, July 1, (AP): Whither the U.S. House?

As the nation celebrates its 250th birthday this weekend, the legislative branch has momentarily called it quits.

The House leadership on Tuesday abruptly canceled votes and sent lawmakers home early for the holiday recess, Speaker Mike Johnson's majority once again ground to a standstill by a Republican revolt over their own party's agenda.

In this case, it's a standoff blocking the annual defense bill - with pay raises for the troops and other matters at a time of war - as the renegade Republicans push to include President Donald Trump's own priority, the SAVE America Act, a strict voter ID bill. Last week, the Senate similarly shuttered after Trump's demands.

The emptying Capitol provides another snapshot of the imbalance of power in Washington as a headstrong executive confronts a weakened Congress.

For the second time in as many weeks, the House has simply given up.

"It's a relatively bad time in Congress," Republican Rep. Dusty John-

son of South Dakota said recently. "A lot of my colleagues have forgotten how to govern."

A year ago this weekend brought a wholly different scene in Washington, as Trump gathered Republican lawmakers outside the White House for an ebullient July Fourth ceremony to sign what they called the "One, Big, Beautiful Bill" of tax breaks and spending cuts.

It was a celebratory moment for Trump and the slim Republican majority - and for Johnson, who many doubted could pass the bill over the objections of Democrats who viewed it as tax giveaway at the expense of billions of dollars in cuts to health care and food stamps for Americans in need.

Johnson was so reliant on Trump's power to help push the bill to approval that he gifted the president a speaker's gavel, which Democrats and others saw as a worrisome symbol of the transference of power from one branch of government to the other.

"We're not dealing with Speaker Mike Johnson," Democratic Rep. Pete Aguilar of California, the caucus chairman, said in a recent inter-



US Speaker of the House Mike Johnson, R-La., talks with reporters as he walks to his office following a vote at the Capitol on June 30 in Washington. (AP)

view. "Unfortunately, Speaker Donald Trump does not want us in this week."

As Johnson works to keep Trump close, the president's demands seem to grow in ways the Republican speaker can't always deliver.

The president's insistence on the SAVE America Act, which doesn't

have enough support in the Senate to pass, has interrupted almost all other business in Congress. Trump has refused to sign a popular bipartisan housing bill that cleared both chambers until the voting bill is also approved. He calls the housing bill a "yawn."

Johnson spent four hours last week at the White House and said he spent another two hours with the president this week on a path forward.

"I told him, 'Mr. President, I don't have any tattoos, but if I did, it'd say SAVE America on my shoulder,' OK?" Johnson said over the weekend on Fox News.

"We passed it three times in the House already. We're going to pass it again."

But by Tuesday, a House vote to advance the legislation collapsed. Republicans led by Rep. Anna Paulina Luna of Florida argued that Johnson's plan to attach the voting bill to the defense bill was essentially a rejected in the Senate.

"That's disappointing," acknowledged Republican Majority Leader Steve Scalise of Louisiana, who insisted the GOP would try again.

"We're going to keep trying because we have to," he said. "We're not done doing big things."

The founders of the new democracy clearly had aspirations for the Congress, putting it first in the Constitution as the Article One branch of government, ahead of the executive

and judicial branches.

But as lawmakers face voters this fall, they will have to answer for these dwindling days on their calendar.

House Democratic Leader Hakeem Jeffries said the problem is not the Congress, it's the GOP.

"Donald Trump is fighting with Senate Republicans, Senate Republicans are fighting with House Republicans, and House Republicans are fighting with each other," said Jeffries, who is in line to become House speaker if Democrats win control in fall.

"It's not the Congress that's struggling. It's House Republicans who are struggling," he said.

Jeffries said Democrats are fighting "to make life more affordable for the American people."

As they left the Capitol for an extended recess, lawmakers voiced frustration with the House's dysfunction.

Rep. Kevin Kiley, who left the Republican Party to become an independent earlier this year, said the situation in the House is "frustrating."

"It's just like déjà vu where many times now we run into some sort of obstacle," he said, "then the solution is just to go home."

Divided Supreme Court's birthright citizenship decision exposes sharp rifts among justices

WASHINGTON, July 1, (AP): The US Supreme Court's divided ruling that children born in the U.S. are citizens under the Fourteenth Amendment - even if their parents are in the country unlawfully or only temporarily - exposed deep fissures in the justices' views on the issue and toward each other.

The court's two Black justices notably had very different views on U.S. citizenship in the context of Reconstruction after the Civil War.

Tuesday's decision rejects an order President Donald Trump issued at the start of his second term, declaring that children born to people who are in the United States illegally or temporarily are not American citizens.

The majority, composed of Chief Justice Roberts and Justices Sonia Sotomayor, Elena Kagan, Amy Coney Barrett, and Ketanji Brown Jackson, determined that birth on US soil plus being subject to US law is enough for citizenship.

Several dissenters, including Justices Clarence Thomas and Samuel Alito, say birth alone is not enough - the child's parents must have a deeper political allegiance or relationship to the US.

Jackson's direct disagreement with Thomas' dissent highlights a major rift between the legal minds. Here are the justices in their own words:

Much of Roberts' opinion was a history lesson on English common law, in which he concluded that birthright citizenship has always depended primarily on birthplace - not on parents' immigration status or domicile.

"Citizenship, then and now, was the right to have rights - to freely participate in our political community. The Framers of the Fourteenth Amendment extended that promise to 'every free-born person in this land.'" Chief Justice John Roberts wrote for the court, citing congressional debate over the amendment. "We keep that promise today."

"We break no new ground today," Roberts said on the bench as he read the court's majority opinion.

Thomas, who wrote the main dissent, disagreed with the majority's opinion and argued that American-born children are not automatically American citizens.

The basis of his argument, among other things, is that the court ignored evidence from Reconstruction debates that suggested citizenship depended on a deeper relationship to the country. After the Civil War, the U.S. underwent a series of political and constitutional battles over how to define the civil rights and citizenship status of formerly enslaved Black Americans.

"The Citizenship Clause was enacted for people who were born in this country and called it home. It was enacted for freed slaves such as Dred Scott, who had 'a domicile' here and therefore were entitled to sue as citizens," Thomas wrote in his dissent, concluding that Reconstruction was a targeted remedy for freed slaves to restore citizenship to a wrongfully excluded group.

"In my view, the Citizenship Order is not facially unconstitutional," Thomas wrote, referring to Trump's executive order. "The Order is consistent with the original meaning of the Citizenship Clause, at least insofar as it applies to children born to parents, here lawfully or unlawfully, who are not domiciled in the United States."

Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson agreed with the opinion in full, but wrote to respond to Clarence Thomas' dissent, arguing that Thomas fundamentally misunderstands what the Reconstruction Amendments - the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments - are trying to accomplish.

"Despite his longstanding endorsement of a 'colorblind' Constitution, Justice Thomas, now surprisingly suggests that the Citizenship Clause was a race-conscious remedial measure, relating only to 'freed slaves such as Dred Scott' - but that narrow vision of the Fourteenth Amendment bears little relationship to the history of its ratification."

"The Reconstruction Amendments were an anti-caste, anti-subordination reset for the Nation, not a mere spot treatment for the dark stain of slavery."

"The Court's conception of a color-blind Constitution and the Government's (and principal dissent's) cramped, group-specific reading of the Citizenship Clause are two sides of the same coin, stemming from a basic misunderstanding of the relevant history."



US President Donald Trump answers questions from reporters after signing an executive order in the Oval Office of the White House on March 31, in Washington, as Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick listens. (AP)



Greek rescue crews search through the rubble of a building that collapsed in the Petralona neighborhood of central Athens on June 30. (AP)

Firebomb attacks in Greek city target residences of governing party members

THESSALONIKI, Greece, July 1, (Agencies): Three pre-dawn firebomb attacks apparently targeting the residences of members of Greece's governing conservative New Democracy party have left five people hospitalized, with one in serious condition, authorities said Wednesday.

The attacks between 4 a.m. and 4:45 a.m. outside apartment buildings in the northern Greek city of Thessaloniki used crude explosive devices made with camping gas canisters. All the injuries were sustained from the last of the three attacks, where cars and motorcycles were set ablaze, police said.

One of the cars reportedly was owned by a parliamentary candidate for the New Democracy party. The candidate suffered burns and her mother was hospitalized in intensive care with burns, police said.

Three other residents in the apartment building were hospitalized with smoke inhalation, police said.

Also:

ATHENS: One man was found dead and a woman was injured in a wildfire raging near the northern Greek city of Thessaloniki on Tuesday, the Greek Fire Service said.



Burned vehicles are seen following firebomb attacks that apparently targeted members of Greece's governing conservative New Democracy party in the northern port city of Thessaloniki, Greece on July 1. (AP)

The man's body was discovered by firefighters in the burned Derveni forest area, approximately 10 kilometers north of Thessaloniki, and a woman suffering from burns was rescued and taken to hospital, according to the Greek Fire Service.

More than 100 firefighters, assisted by water-dropping aircraft and

helicopters, have been battling the blaze, which broke out around noon on Tuesday.

Strong winds have hampered fire-fighting efforts, pushing the flames toward the nearby village of Liti. Local authorities have issued an emergency alert urging residents to evacuate.

Turkey tightens security ahead of NATO summit

ANKARA, Turkey, July 1, (AP): Turkey is rolling out sweeping security measures for the upcoming NATO summit, deploying tens of thousands of police and placing air defenses on high alert, while banning public gatherings and imposing controversial restrictions on freedom of expression and assembly.

That's meant to safeguard the summit, but also to display strength and underscore Turkey's commitment to the military alliance, even as it is often portrayed as an outlier within it.

On July 7-8, leaders from all 32 member states are expected to convene in the Turkish capital, including U.S. President Donald Trump, whose threats to withdraw from NATO and reduce US troop levels have cast uncertainty over the alliance's future.

Turkey has also unveiled a new VIP airport, converted from a former military airfield, specifically to host NATO leaders.

At the Ankara summit, NATO members are expected to address questions over defense spending and the U.S.'s evolving role in the alliance.

The main agenda will center on unity after Trump has criticized allies for failing to support the U.S.-led war on Iran and efforts to reopen the Strait of Hormuz.

"The important aspect of the meeting is to what extent the rift between the United States and Europe can be healed or narrowed during the summit," said Fatih Ceylan, a former Turkish ambassador to NATO and security analyst at the Ankara Policy Center. "We should not expect miracles, but nonetheless if there is



Flags flap in the wind outside NATO headquarters in Brussels on Jan 19. (AP)

a convergence of ideas emphasizing the importance of NATO, that should be seen as a success."

Turkey's role as host seems to have helped win an appearance by Trump, who has a close rapport with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

"Well, except for the fact that it was being held in Turkey by President Erdogan, I don't think I would have gone to it," he told reporters following a meeting with NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte at the White House.

In the run-up to the summit, Erdogan described Turkey as a reliable ally that consistently shoulders responsibility on NATO's southeastern flank and will continue to play a leading role in the alliance. He said his country was working to ensure that the Ankara Summit "will stand as a reference point in NATO's history."

A NATO member since 1952, Turkey has the alliance's second-largest army after the United States, a fast-growing defense industry, and a strategic location the crossroads of Europe, the Middle East, the Black Sea, and the Caucasus.

Yet it has often acted independently, frustrating allies by refusing to participate in sanctions on Russia, engaging in disputes with Greece, and purchasing Russian missile defense systems - a move that led to its expulsion from the U.S.-led F-35 program in 2019.

Turkey also delayed Finland and Sweden's NATO membership until it secured concessions on counterterrorism cooperation and the lifting of arms export restrictions, and blocked the appointments of NATO chiefs Anders Fogh Rasmussen in 2009 and Mark Rutte in 2024 until other demands were met.

Europe

Fire in Belgian apartment kills 6: At least six people were killed and many others injured on Wednesday in a fire at an apartment block in the Belgian city of Antwerp, police said.

The blaze broke out mid-morning on the eighth floor of the building, where more than 200 people live, in the city's Linkeroever neighborhood, sending vast plumes of smoke into the air, Antwerp police said in a statement.

"Right now, unfortunately, at least 5 people have died in the fire. There are also a significant number of seriously injured people, as well as a number of lightly injured," Antwerp police spokesperson Kim Bastiaens told Belgian private broadcaster VTM. (AP)

□ □ □

Lithuania OKs Sinkevicius as new PM: The Lithuanian parliament on Tuesday approved Social Democratic Party leader Mindaugas Sinkevicius as the new prime minister.

On June 23, the Inga Ruginiene's government announced its collective resignation. Under Lithuanian



Lithuania's Social Democratic party leader Mindaugas Sinkevicius, nominated as the next Prime Minister, speaks during a parliament session in Vilnius, Lithuania on June 30. (AP)

law, the new prime minister must be proposed by the largest party in parliament, which in this case is the Social Democratic Party. Following the party's recommendation, President Gitanas Nausėda submitted Sinkevicius as the prime ministerial candidate to parliament on June 25. (Xinhua)

Asia

S.Korea Nat'l Assembly OKs Han as new PM: South Korea's National Assembly on Tuesday approved the appointment of Prime Minister nominee Han Seong-sook.

The appointment motion was approved with 166 votes in favor and one invalid ballot.

Lawmakers of the main conservative opposition People Power Party boycotted the vote, while lawmakers of the ruling Democratic Party and other pro-government parties voted to adopt the confirmation report.

Han was nominated for the post by President Lee Jae Myung on June 7. (Xinhua)



Han

3 dead in Philippines vehicle collision: Three children were killed after the motorcycle they were riding collided with a truck in Bukidnon province in the southern Philippines on Tuesday morning, according to local authorities.

The motorcycle reportedly lost control while negotiating a narrow road and collided with the truck carrying sugarcane planting materials.

The local disaster risk reduction and management office said the victims were on their way to fetch water for their school. (Xinhua)

Fire burns at landfill near Jakarta: A fire broke out at a landfill in Tangerang regency, near the Indonesian capital city of Jakarta, on Tuesday, scorching more than two hectares of land, local officials said.

Driven by continuous dry weather and baking temperatures, the blaze spread rapidly across the waste disposal site after being detected on Tuesday morning, local media reported.

Strong winds and a shortage of water supplies also severely hampered firefighting efforts, the report said.

A joint emergency team involving dozens of personnel and fire engines was deployed to contain the blaze. Local medical teams were also on standby to treat people affected by the thick smoke. (Xinhua)

Pakistan warns India against water weaponization at Indus Waters Treaty seminar

ISLAMABAD, July 1, (AP): Pakistan's government has warned that any attempt by India to deprive Pakistan of its share of water under the Indus Waters Treaty would amount to the "weaponization of water" and could have serious consequences for regional peace and security.

Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar and other government officials made the remarks at an international seminar on the 1960 World Bank-brokered treaty, which governs the sharing of water from the Indus River system between the nuclear-armed neighbors.

The treaty has come under renewed strain after India suspended its participation in the agreement following the killing of 26 tourists in Indian-controlled Kashmir in April. New Delhi blamed Pakistan-based militants for the attack, a charge Islamabad denied while offering to participate in an independent investigation.

The attack triggered one of the sharpest deteriorations in relations between the rivals in decades. Both countries downgraded diplomatic and trade ties, closed their main land



Rescue workers gather at the site of an under-construction tutoring center which collapsed, on the outskirts of Lahore, Pakistan on June 30. (AP)

border crossing and revoked visas for each other's nationals. The tensions later escalated into tit-for-tat missile strikes in May 2025 before a ceasefire was announced by U.S. President Donald Trump. Relations have remained frozen since.

Speaking at the seminar, Dar said water should never be used as a political tool.

"Shared waters must never be weaponized. They should remain a bridge between nations, guided by cooperation, dialogue, and respect

for international law for the benefit of present and future generations," he said.

Also:

LAHORE, Pakistan: Mourners gathered Wednesday in Pakistan's eastern city of Lahore to bury 14 schoolchildren who were killed when the roof of a tutoring center collapsed on Tuesday.

Police are investigating whether negligence during ongoing construction work caused the collapse that left another eight children injured and hospitalized in stable condition.

Residents and preliminary police findings indicate the tutoring center was operating in an aging building. Investigators believe the unfinished roof of the second floor may have collapsed because of poor construction.

At least two people, including the building owner, were arrested as investigators tried to determine who was responsible, senior police official Kamran Faisal said, adding that negligence by the owner and construction workers appear to have caused the collapse.

Chinese president chairs meeting on flood control, drought relief

Xi hails CPC's 105-year 'epic,' urges building modern socialist China

BEIJING, July 1, (Xinhua): Chinese President Xi Jinping on Wednesday hailed the 105-year history of the Communist Party of China (CPC) as the "most magnificent epic" of the Chinese nation and urged the Party to press ahead to build China into a modern socialist country on schedule.

Addressing a gathering marking the CPC's 105th founding anniversary, Xi, also general secretary of the CPC Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, called on Party members to remain steadfast in their convictions and work tirelessly to fulfill the Party's missions in the new era and on the new journey.

Founded in 1921 against the backdrop of a weak China plagued by foreign humiliation and poverty, the CPC has grown from a small group of just over 50 members into the world's largest governing party with tremendous global influence.

Xi underscored the importance of

meeting the goal of fully realizing socialist modernization by the middle of the century.

"Time stops for no one, and neither does history," he said.

The whole Party must adhere to its basic theory, basic line and basic policy to "remain undaunted by passing clouds and stay on course through wind and waves," Xi said.

Stressing that the Party must rely closely on the people to create new historical feats, Xi urged Party members to "further reinvigorate the enterprising spirit for getting things done."

He also called on the whole Party to actively respond to risks and challenges on the path ahead.

"China's development is now in a period where strategic opportunities coexist with risks and challenges, and where uncertain and unpredictable factors are on the rise. We must always be prepared to withstand major tests of high winds and raging waves, and even violent storms," he



Chinese President Xi Jinping, (center), poses for photos with recipients of the July 1 medals during a ceremony to mark the 105th anniversary of the founding of the Chinese Communist Party at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on July 1, 2026. (AP)

warned.

As profound changes unseen in a century accelerate, the world has

entered a new period of turbulence and transformation, with humanity once again standing at a crossroads

of choice, Xi said.

"We must continuously promote the building of a community with a shared future for humanity," he said.

Xi also stressed advancing full and rigorous Party self-governance with sustained efforts to win "the tough, protracted and all-out battle against corruption."

"It is imperative that all of us in the Party never forget our original aspiration and founding mission, that we always stay modest, prudent, and hard-working, and that we have the courage and ability to carry on our fight," he added.

According to the latest census, the CPC now has nearly 101.29 million members and over 5.43 million primary-level Party organizations.

At the gathering, Xi conferred the July 1 Medal, the Party's highest honor, on model CPC members.

Also:

BEIJING: Xi Jinping, general secretary of the Communist Party of

China (CPC) Central Committee, on Tuesday chaired a meeting of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee to study and arrange work related to flood control and drought relief.

China is expected to see more extreme weather and climate events than usual in its main flood season this year, with droughts and floods occurring at the same time, according to the meeting. It urged all regions and relevant departments to take solid measures to ensure effective flood control, drought relief, emergency response and disaster mitigation.

Stressing that protecting people's lives remains the top priority, the meeting called for measures to strengthen flood control on major rivers and lakes, and highlighted the need to attach great importance to the risk of drought-flood abrupt alternation, and strengthen the unified management and dispatching of water sources.

36 students and 3 teachers missing after gunmen raid school in Nigeria

ABUJA, Nigeria, July 1, (Agencies): Thirty-six students are missing after gunmen raided a school in northeastern Nigeria, authorities said Tuesday.

The attack, which happened Monday at the Lassa Day Secondary School in the Askira-Uba area of Borno state, left at least one teacher dead.

Twenty-five girls and 11 boys, as well as three teachers were abducted during the attack, Dauda Iliya, spokesman of the governor of Borno, said in a statement. The governor, Babagana Zulum sent a delegation of high-level officials to the community. It was not immediately clear if the teachers were rescued.

Borno education commissioner Lawan Abba Wakil described the incident as "unfortunate" and said the authorities were working with security agencies and community leaders to ensure the safe return of the missing students and staff.

The students, who were taking their secondary school leaving examinations when they were attacked and abducted, are between 15 and 18 years old. No group immediately claimed responsibility for the attack but an insurgency from armed groups in the region has killed thousands and displaced millions.

Boko Haram and its splinter faction, which is affiliated with the Islamic



Children protest demanding government to rescue the school children that were recently kidnapped in various parts of the country, on the street of Abuja, Nigeria on June 4. (AP)

State group and known as Islamic State West Africa Province, or ISWAP, are prominent militant groups in northeast Nigeria and the greater Lake Chad area, which is bordered by Chad, Niger Republic and Cameroon.

Earlier this month, the Nigerian army rescued more than 300 people abducted by Boko Haram from Ngoshe, a town about 114 kilometers

(71 miles) from Lassa, where Monday's abduction happened.

In May, the West African country said its joint operation with the United States had killed 175 ISWAP fighters.

Also:

ABUJA: Days of downpour in Lagos, Nigeria's commercial hub, have resulted in heavy flooding wreaking havoc across the city, including the urban centers.

The persistent rainfall, which climaxed on Sunday night, has submerged major thoroughfares, crippled small businesses, and exposed the fragile nature of the coastal megacity's drainage infrastructure as the peak of the annual rainy season sets in.

From the densely populated mainland districts to the upscale neighborhoods of Lekki and Victoria Island, residents are left navigating waterlogged streets, while business owners count their losses.

"The rain was relentless," said Abosede Idowu, a local hairstylist in the low-income neighborhood of Okokomaiko.

"By the time it stopped, water had entered the shops. Many of us have had to raise our storefronts with concrete blocks because this happens almost every year, but this particular downpour was overwhelming."



A view of the houses damaged by landslides in an informal settlement of Attecoubé, in Abidjan, Ivory Coast on June 30. (AP)

Floods in Ghana, Ivory Coast kill 24

Floods and landslides triggered by days of torrential rain in the capital cities of Ghana and Ivory Coast have left at least 24 people dead, authorities said Tuesday, as emergency workers continued to pull hundreds of stranded residents

from submerged buildings.

Entire buildings and roads were submerged in Accra on Monday, cutting off access to several areas of the Ghanaian capital and in the neighboring city of Tema. At least 12 people have been con-

firmed dead in Ghana, including a mother and her child who were both swept away in the Achimota-Agbobloshe district, Alex King Nartey, a spokesperson for Ghana National Fire Service told The Associated Press. (AP)

Colombian election loser Cepeda threatens 'civil disobedience' if winner doesn't ditch US citizenship

BOGOTA, Colombia, July 1, (AP): A Colombian senator, who recently lost the nation's presidential election, said Tuesday he will not recognize his opponent, Abelardo de la Esperiella, as the nation's new head of state, if he does not comply with several demands, including renouncing his US citizenship.

In a statement issued Tuesday, progressive senator Iván Cepeda urged de la Esperiella, the winner of June's presidential runoff, to renounce his US citizenship, arguing that holding it while being Colombia's president could generate conflicts of interest.

The senator also said that de la Esperiella should clarify whether he is an "agent" of the United States, because as a criminal defense lawyer he defended a former paramilitary leader who was an informant for the US Drug Enforcement Administration.

Cepeda also said that de la Esperiella should desist from any efforts to extradite to the US outgoing President Gustavo Petro, who federal prosecutors in Brooklyn have said they are investigating for potential



Ivan Cepeda concedes defeat in the presidential election at a news conference in Bogota, Colombia on June 24. (AP)

ties to drug traffickers. "If these conditions of legality are not met, as the leader of the opposition, I will embark on the path of peaceful civil disobedience that implies not recognizing the authority of someone who will not defend our

national sovereignty," Cepeda said.

De la Esperiella, a conservative lawyer who ran on a tough-on-crime platform and was endorsed by US President Donald Trump, won Colombia's presidential runoff on June 21, defeating Cepeda by 250,000 votes.

Cepeda acknowledged the results of the elections three days later, after Colombian authorities validated an election-day quick vote count, which showed de la Esperiella had obtained 49.6% of the votes while Cepeda got 48.7%.

De la Esperiella did not immediately respond to Cepeda's accusations, or requests for him to renounce US citizenship.

The 47-year-old lawyer, who is set to be inaugurated as Colombia's president on Aug. 7, was born in Bogota. He obtained US citizenship as an adult after living for several years in Florida, where he ran a law firm that represented high-profile clients, including former paramilitary leaders accused of human rights abuses and businessmen charged with money laundering.

Cepeda's threat of not recognizing de la Esperiella as head of state is not expected to have any legal implications because de la Esperiella has already been certified as the election's winner by the National Electoral Council.

Anti-immigration protesters march in South Africa, immigrants leave

JOHANNESBURG, July 1, (AP): Thousands of demonstrators gathered in parts of South Africa to rally against illegal immigration on Tuesday in the biggest migration-related protests since the wave of anti-migrant violence in 2008. Authorities said the marches were largely peaceful despite isolated incidents of looting and attempted looting.

Police reported that several people were arrested, although they did not disclose how many. At a press conference late on Tuesday, Justice Minister Mmamoloko Kubayi praised the peaceful nature of the protests but warned that anyone involved in violence or other criminal acts would be prosecuted.

"Those who chose to exploit the marches to commit criminal

acts will face the full might of the law," she told reporters. "Police will continue to identify, arrest and prosecute all those responsible for criminal conduct."

The demonstrations come after some protest groups set their own June 30 deadline for the departure of all migrants who are in the country illegally. The activists blame those migrants for causing unemployment among South Africans by accepting low wages, and for other problems, including high crime.

South Africa's government has rejected the deadline, saying only authorities can enforce immigration laws.

The most prominent groups opposing illegal immigration include March and March, Operation Dudula and Progressive Forces. President Cyril Ramaphosa, who has challenged the protesters' allegation that migrants are to blame for the country's social and economic challenges, met Monday night with leaders of some of the groups and asked them to conduct peaceful demonstrations.



Kubayi

Boursa ends flat as main market slides

KUWAIT CITY, July 1, (KUNA): Boursa Kuwait closed Wednesday's trading session marginally lower, with the All Share Index slipping 1.81 points, or 0.02 percent, to settle at 8,704.52 points. Trading activity saw 281.4 million shares change hands through 21,708 transactions, with a total value of KD 81.2 mil-

lion (approximately USD 249.2 million).

The Main Market Index recorded a notable decline, falling 88.11 points, or 0.97 percent, to 8,973.29 points. A total of 157.5 million shares were traded across 11,581 transactions, valued at KD 34.8 million (around USD 106.8 million).

Business

Meeting with Syrian President, Bader Al-Kharafi reaffirmed Zain's commitment to advancing Syria's digital future

Zain awarded 25-year Syria telecom license following USD 747 million bid



President Al-Sharaa with Al-Kharafi, Syrian Minister of Communications and Information Technology Abdulsalam Haykal, and senior officials from the Ministry and Zain Group.



During the meeting in the Syrian capital, Damascus.

KUWAIT CITY, July 1: Zain Group, a leading regional Tech Co has been awarded a 25-year license (20 years plus an extendable five-years), to operate a mobile telecom network in the Syrian Arab Republic.

This milestone follows a rigorous and highly competitive tender process for the existing MTN network, conducted by the country's Ministry of Communications and Information Technology (MCOT), that encompassed comprehensive technical and financial evaluations, in which Zain secured the award with the most competitive and fully compliant bid for a total of USD 747 million.

Zain will establish a new operating entity in Syria in which the Group will hold a 75% stake and a Syrian government entity will hold 25%. The targeted commercial launch for the Zain Syria brand is expected in Q1 2027, subject to completion of all regulatory and license conditions.

During a six month transition handover period, the Zain team will work closely with the Syrian MCOT and the MTN team in supporting the improvement and continuity of services for the current 6.3 million customer base.

The license marks Zain's entry as the second operator into one of the Levant's most promising markets, underpinned by a young population and rising demand for high quality mobile and data services for individuals and businesses, given the improving socio-economic conditions.

As part of the award, the Zain Syria entity will invest more than USD 800 million to expand and modernize the network with 5G network and other AI-powered digital technologies over the next decade. This will be funded through the financial resources generated from the Syrian operation. Zain Group's



Bader Al-Kharafi presents Zain's commitment to Syrian President Ahmed Al-Sharaa.

technical, investment and operational expertise will ensure efficient capital deployment, accelerate network development and enhance service quality and performance.

Zain Vice-Chairman & Group CEO, Bader Al-Kharafi said: "We extend our sincere appreciation to the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic and H.E. Abdulsalam Haykal, Minister of Communications and Information Technology and his team for conducting a transparent, professional and rigorous tender process. Their confidence in Zain is a responsibility we embrace with the highest level of commitment. The Zain Group Board and executive management are fully committed to building a modern, reliable network that supports Syria's digital transformation and delivers high quality telecom and digital services to the Syrian community."

Al-Kharafi added, "Guided by the directives and wise vision of H.H. The Amir of Kuwait, Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, we reaffirm our firm belief in the importance of strengthening Arab cooperation and advancing develop-

ment and investment initiatives that foster stability and prosperity across the region, while reinforcing the foundations of sustainable development for generations."

"I was honored to meet with President of Syria, H.E. Ahmed Al-Sharaa, during which I emphasized that Zain's entry into the Syrian market represents more than a strategic business expansion; it reflects our deep confidence in Syria's future, the capabilities of its people, and its development ambitions. I also conveyed Zain Group's commitment to being a true partner in supporting Syria's digital transformation and economic growth through investing in local talent, advancing digital infrastructure, and support for SMEs and government entities through advanced AI-powered digital solutions that will serve generations to come."

Mr. Al-Kharafi continued, "We are confident in Syria's economic recovery and long-term prospects. Zain's entry into the market, alongside the operation's committed CAPEX investment over the coming decade, reflects this confidence. This expansion strengthens our

- **Bader Al-Kharafi:** "Zain's expansion to Syria reflects the vision of HH The Amir of Kuwait and his confidence in the country's future prosperity reinforcing Kuwaiti Syrian socio-economic relations"
- Zain Syria will invest USD 800 million over next decade in rollout of 5G and digital technologies
- Strengthening Syria's position on the regional-digital map and advancing its economic recovery
- Focus on developing national talent, job creation and supporting the startup ecosystem
- Commercial launch under Zain Syria brand expected in Q1 2027
- Zain involved in six-month transition period to ensure continuity of services for 6.3m customers

presence in the Levant, reinforces longstanding Kuwaiti Syrian ties, and enhances regional connectivity by enabling cross-border digital services that leverage Zain's regional footprint and technological capabilities."

"Guided by our '4WARD Progress with Purpose' corporate strategy and our purpose of creating 'Better Lives and Lasting Connections', we look forward to welcoming the people of Syria into Zain's Wonderful World and becoming a trusted partner in the country's digital transformation and socio economic progress."

"Established Zain entities such as ZainTECH, Zain Omantel International (ZOI), our fintech platforms and other digital businesses will extend their services to the country. In parallel, financial support and innovation-driven initiatives will be implemented to foster the Syrian entrepreneurial startup ecosystem. This approach underscores Zain's commitment to creating long-term value that extends beyond telecom and contributes meaningfully to the country's digital development."

Mr Al Kharafi concluded: "We

are confident that this expansion will enhance shareholder value through an expanded customer base and increased revenues, driven by synergies with neighboring markets, while reinforcing Zain's position as a leading regional TechCo on the global stage."

Network rollout and services

During the six month transition phase, the Zain Syria entity will implement a comprehensive network modernization program while also supporting uninterrupted service for approximately 6.3 million existing customers. The rollout will include significant 5G deployments and infrastructure upgrades and AI-powered solutions, with early phases targeting more than 98% population coverage.

Zain will bring operational technical expertise and disciplined investment practices acquired across emerging and complex markets to ensure high service availability and an exceptional customer experience for Syrian consumers, businesses, SMEs and government institutions.

Once launched, Zain Syria will offer a broad portfolio of voice, data, digital and content entertain-

ment services tailored to households, youth, enterprises and public sector organizations. Customers will benefit from synergies with Zain Group's common products, regional platforms and digital propositions, alongside new services developed specifically for the Syrian market.

Zain currently operates across eight Middle East and African markets, serving 51.2 million customers. Extending its footprint to Syria further Zain's position as a leading regional TechCo and supports its '4WARD-Progress with Purpose' strategy to accelerate the business by expanding in high-potential adjacent markets. Once launched, Zain Syria will be the Group's fifth operation with 5G services joining Kuwait, KSA, Bahrain and Jordan, a leading regional 5G position. ENDS

About Zain Group: Zain is a leading provider of innovative ICT and digital lifestyle communications operating in eight markets across the Middle East and Africa, serving 51.2 million active customers as of March 31, 2026.

With a commercial presence in 8 countries, Zain provides mobile voice and data services in: Kuwait, Bahrain, Iraq, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Sudan and South Sudan. Headquartered in the UAE, ZainTECH, the Group's one-stop digital and ICT solutions provider, is playing a key role in the transformation of enterprise and government clientele across the MENA region. Also UAE based, Zain Omantel International (ZOI) is revolutionizing the international telecommunications wholesale landscape as the premier wholesale powerhouse serving regional operators, international carriers, and global hyperscalers. In Morocco, Zain has a 15.5% stake in 'INWI', through a joint venture. Zain is listed on the Boursa Kuwait (stock ticker: ZAIN). For more: www.zain.com

Recognized at MEED MENA Banking Excellence Awards

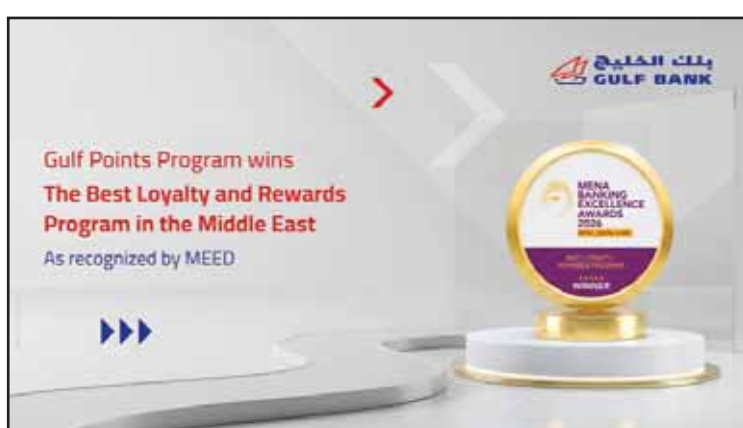
Gulf Bank achieves 'Best Loyalty and Rewards Program' award from MEED

KUWAIT CITY, July 1: Gulf Bank has been awarded the "Best Loyalty and Rewards Program" at the MEED MENA Banking Excellence Awards 2026, in recognition of its customer-centric approach to delivering meaningful value, innovative digital solutions, and an elevated rewards experience through the Gulf Points loyalty program.

The award reflects Gulf Bank's continued focus on designing banking experiences around customers' evolving needs. Gulf Points was developed to make everyday banking more rewarding, with a particular focus on encouraging customers to maximize the value of their spending through Gulf Bank credit cards, which offer enhanced rewards and benefits compared with debit card transactions.

Through Gulf Points, customers are rewarded for eligible purchases made with Gulf Bank credit cards, turning daily spending into tangible value. The program supports the Bank's broader objective of enriching the credit card proposition by offering customers greater flexibility, stronger incentives, and more rewarding ways to benefit from their spending, whether locally or internationally.

Gulf Points is one of Kuwait's leading banking loyalty programs, offering a comprehensive suite of redemption options that reflects different customer lifestyles and preferences. Customers can redeem points for cashback, transfer points as gifts, or shop through Gulf Bank's innovative online rewards store, the first of its kind among banks in Kuwait, which features an



- Gulf Points gives Gulf Bank credit cardholders more value from every transaction, supported by flexible rewards and an enhanced customer experience.

extensive selection of products and services.

The program also enables customers to redeem points for travel bookings, hotel stays, shopping, gift vouchers, and a wide range of lifestyle services. In addition, customers benefit from exclusive offers and discounts across an extensive network of retail, dining, and merchant partners in Kuwait and internationally, further enhancing the overall customer experience and strengthening the value of Gulf Bank credit cards.

This recognition underscores Gulf Bank's commitment to continuous innovation, digital enablement, and customer experience excellence. By investing in loyalty solutions that are simple, flexible, and rewarding, the Bank continues to provide customers with integrat-

ed banking experiences that deliver value beyond transactions.

The MEED MENA Banking Excellence Awards are among the region's most prestigious banking awards, celebrating excellence and innovation across the financial services industry. The awards recognize financial institutions demonstrating best practices across multiple categories, including retail banking, digital banking, customer experience, loyalty programs, and rewards.

This achievement further reinforces Gulf Bank's position as a leading financial institution committed to delivering innovative products, customer-focused benefits, and a rewarding banking journey that meets the needs of today's customers while anticipating the expectations of tomorrow.

Ali Abdulwahab Al Mutawa Commercial Co. supports INJAZ Kuwait's youth competition

KUWAIT CITY, July 1: Ali Abdulwahab Al Mutawa Commercial Co. (AAW) today announced its support for the 20th edition of INJAZ Kuwait's Annual Company Program Competition (CPC), for high school and university students. This participation reaffirms the company's commitment to youth empowerment and entrepreneurship by equipping students with workplace skills, and learning opportunities that help prepare them for the evolving demands of the labor market.

This year, the annual Company Program Competition brought together 170 students from across Kuwait, including 100 high school students and 70 university students. Through workshops, rehearsals, and presentations, participants gained practical experience and strengthened their business and entrepreneurial skills.

The company was represented by Mr. Ahmad Bourisli, Chief Human Resources & Administration Officer at Ali Abdulwahab Al Mutawa Commercial Co., who served as a judge for the High School Company Program Competition and contributed his expertise in evaluating students' business concepts and entrepreneurial initiatives.

As part of its support for the competition, AAW also provided vouchers to all participants, and distributed physical gifts provided by JYSK, INTERSPORT, and Nuxe across both the high school and university competitions.

Joe & The Juice also supported the event by offering a selection of snacks, juices, and coffee throughout the day, helping foster an engaging and welcoming atmosphere for all attendees.

INJAZ Kuwait is a non-profit organization dedicated to empowering youth by enhancing their entrepreneurial skills, financial literacy, and



Member of the company's competition judging panel, Chief Human Resources & Administration Officer at Ali Abdulwahab Al Mutawa Commercial Co., Mr. Ahmad Bourisli



Members of the company's competition judging panel.

workforce readiness.

Ali Abdulwahab Al Mutawa Commercial Company is one of the largest retail and distribution companies in Kuwait, operating across multiple sectors and representing more than

100 global brands in the wholesale and retail markets. AAW remains committed to supporting youth-focused initiatives that encourage learning, innovation, and entrepreneurship.



Isam Al-Sager in a group photo during the ceremony.

Highlighting financing role in strategic energy projects

NBK takes part in ceremony marking the merger of KIPIC with KNPC

KUWAIT CITY, July 1: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) participated in the ceremony hosted by Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) to mark the merger of Kuwait Integrated Petroleum Industries Company (KIPIC) with Kuwait National Petroleum Company (KNPC). This strategic milestone reflects KPC's direction toward strengthening operational integration across its subsidiaries, enhancing efficiency and operational resilience in line with the requirements of the next phase, and reinforcing the competitiveness of Kuwait's oil sector.



Isam Al-Sager with Shaikh Nawaf Saud Al-Sabah and Hisham Al-Rifai.

Mr. Isam Al-Sager, Vice Chairman and Group Chief Executive Officer of National Bank of Kuwait, participated in the ceremony, which was attended by a distinguished group of senior officials and executive leaders from Kuwait's oil sector.

gic projects that contributed to strengthening energy security in Kuwait.

Advancing Operational Integration

Commenting on the merger, Al-Sager said: "The merger of KIPIC with KNPC marks a significant milestone in the development of Kuwait's oil sector, and a strategic step that reflects KPC's ambitious vision to maximize operational efficiency and opti-

mize the deployment of available resources and capabilities, in a manner that enhances the sector's competitiveness and creates sustainable added value for the national economy."

Al-Sager added that consolidating expertise and operational capabilities under one umbrella will establish a more integrated model that strengthens readiness to navigate the rapid global shifts shaping energy markets,

- **Al-Sager:** The KIPIC-KNPC merger ushers in a new era of integration across Kuwait's oil sector
- Consolidating capabilities and expertise will help create sustainable added value for the national economy
- NBK has been a key partner in KIPIC's success journey, serving as the main bank for its accounts since the launch of its operations
- Since KIPIC's inception, we have been committed to providing banking and financing solutions that support its growth
- We take pride in our role as a trusted banking partner to Kuwait's oil sector for many decades
- We maintain deep-rooted strategic relationships with KPC's subsidiaries
- We will continue to play a pivotal role in financing key national projects and supporting sustainable growth

while further reinforcing Kuwait's position as a leading regional hub in the oil and gas industry."

A Deep-Rooted Partnership

Al-Sager emphasized the depth of NBK's longstanding partnership with KIPIC since its establishment, saying: "We are proud to have been a trusted partner to KIPIC from the very beginning of its establishment, and to have contributed to sup-

porting a number of its strategic projects that formed key pillars in strengthening Kuwait's energy ecosystem. This merger further confirms the successful journey achieved by the company and the vital role it has played over the past years."

"At NBK, we will continue to play an active role in supporting key national projects by delivering tailored financing and banking solutions that contribute to

advancing Kuwait's economic development priorities and reinforcing the State's efforts to build a more diversified and sustainable economy," Al-Sager added.

Supporting KPC's Strategic Direction

Al-Sager noted that NBK highly values the development initiatives led by KPC to enhance operational efficiency and optimize returns, affirming that strengthening integration among KPC subsidiaries is fully aligned with modern approaches to managing major institutions on advanced commercial principles that promote resilience and sustainable growth.

NBK continues to serve as a trusted financial partner for strategic and development projects in Kuwait, drawing on its longstanding expertise in financing and managing major national projects, as well as its continued support for key economic sectors, most notably the oil and gas sector. This role contributes to advancing the objectives of Kuwait's development vision and strengthening the country's position as a leading economic and financial hub in the region.

NBK celebrates launch of the Q8 brand in Kuwait marking another milestone in its longstanding strategic partnership with KPI Group

KUWAIT CITY, July 1: In a milestone that underscores the global presence of Kuwaiti brands and strengthens their footprint in the local market, National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) congratulated Kuwait Petroleum International Group (KPI) on the launch of its brand in Kuwait, marking the beginning of a phased expansion plan over the coming period.



NBK affirmed that this landmark development represents a historic milestone, as the Q8 brand returns to Kuwait after more than four decades of successfully representing the country across international markets. The launch reflects KPI's extensive experience and strategic vision in advancing the fuel retail sector and delivering a modern, integrated customer experience in Kuwait.

This achievement crowns KPI's longstanding track record of success and reflects its commitment to bringing global best practices to the domestic market, contributing to higher service standards and enhanced competitiveness across the energy sector.

Against this backdrop, NBK underscored the strength and enduring strategic value of its longstanding partnership with Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) and KPI Group. In its capacity as a key banking partner of KPC Group, NBK affirmed that this enduring partnership represents a strong model of productive collaboration between the banking and energy sectors in supporting major strategic and development projects.

Building on this longstanding partnership, NBK noted that its relationship with KPI Group spans

- Q8's launch in Kuwait crowns decades of global success and elevates the local fuel retail experience
- We take pride in our role as a key partner in financing KPI's strategic projects and landmark acquisitions. Our strong and enduring partnership with KPI Group continues to support its ambitious projects and strategic business milestones

many years of productive collaboration in the execution and financing of major projects. These include participation in strategic joint ventures such as the Duqm Refinery project in Oman, as well

as the Clean Fuels Project and Al-Zour Refinery Project in Kuwait, where the Bank played a pivotal role in supporting these projects that contribute to reinforcing Kuwait's position on the global

energy landscape.

Moreover, NBK has supported the financing of several significant acquisitions undertaken by the KPI Group, including Project Shine, involving the acquisition of Shell service stations in 2014, as well as the acquisition of a stake in Italy-based Ecofox, a company specializing in biofuel production, in 2024. These transactions reflect the strong confidence placed in NBK's financing capabilities and its extensive expertise in supporting international expansion.

On the banking services front, NBK has served as lead arranger for a number of syndicated financing facilities, while also managing the accounts of several KPI subsidiaries and affiliated companies, underscoring the depth, breadth, and strategic integration of the relationship between the two groups.

NBK affirmed that this strategic partnership is underpinned by a solid foundation of mutual trust and a shared vision, enabling both parties to achieve tangible successes over the years. The Bank also expressed its commitment to building on this longstanding relationship and continuing to support KPI's future expansion and growth plans, both in Kuwait and across international markets.

NBK further expressed its pride in supporting this new chapter in KPI's journey, reaffirming its enduring commitment to initiatives that contribute to the growth of the national economy and reinforce Kuwait's standing as a leading global energy hub.

Kuwait oil price dips to \$79.50 per barrel

KUWAIT CITY, July 1, (KUNA): Price of Kuwaiti crude oil drops by 35 cents to USD 79.50 per barrel (pb) in Tuesday's trading, compared with USD 79.85 pb the day before, Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) said on Wednesday.

In global markets, Brent crude fell 22 cents to settle at USD 73.14 pb, while US West Texas Intermediate declined 22 cents to USD 69.72 pb.

KUWAIT CITY, July 1, (KUNA): The Kuwait Flour Mills and Bakeries Company (KFMB) on Tuesday announced the rollout of a chain of integrated express markets across the newly inaugurated Q8 fuel stations network.

In an exclusive statement to the Kuwait News Agency (KUNA), KFMB Chief Executive Officer Mutlaq Al-Zaid said this major retail expansion serves as a strategic extension of the company's pioneering role in reinforcing national food security and serving local consumers.

Transforming fuel stations into retail hubs

KFMB expands retail with Q8 convenience stores

He noted that the new outlets will provide a comprehensive retail experience, combining KFMB's trusted signature products with a diverse array of everyday fast-moving consumer goods.

Al-Zaid pointed out that the 24-hour convenience outlets will offer a curated selection of freshly baked goods, premium coffee, and daily prepared ready-to-eat meals tailored to modern, fast-paced lifestyles.

The initiative aims to redefine the local convenience retail landscape, transforming traditional fueling stations into multi-

functional service hubs that deliver exceptional speed and quality.

The chief executive added that the project leverages a highly integrated operational model, blending KFMB's core product lines with strategic partnerships alongside prominent local and national vendors.

This synergy, Al-Zaid emphasized, underscores the company's commitment to retail innovation, aligning its operations with global downstream benchmarks to meet evolving consumer expectations.

Continued support for Diraya campaign

KFH strengthens financial literacy through ongoing awareness initiatives

KUWAIT CITY, July 1: Reinforcing its leadership in financial literacy and social responsibility, Kuwait Finance House (KFH) continues to spearhead the national "Diraya" awareness campaign. Launched by the Central Bank of Kuwait and the Kuwait Banking Association, the initiative sees KFH deploying innovative tools and strategic outreach to strengthen financial and banking awareness across the community.

Awareness pillars

KFH geared its awareness plan towards several pillars to support Diraya campaign in response to the growing digital challenges, particularly cybersecurity and data security.

Promoting financial literacy

KFH increased its awareness messages which urged customers to refrain from responding to messages with suspicious links or sharing OTP or passwords with third parties. KFH also emphasized that banks never request personal customer information through links or phone calls.

KFH's efforts played a prominent role in promoting financial literacy and increasing awareness as well as advising customers to remain vigilant of the cyber fraud modern methods to avoid falling victim to such practices. Furthermore, KFH advised customers to disregard any requests for banking details made through phone calls or social media, identifying such solicitations as fraudulent efforts to steal personal data and account information.

Additionally, KFH continued its awareness initiatives encouraging customers to verify the authenticity of websites prior to entering any personal information.

AI-powered fraud attempts

KFH intensified its efforts to warn the public against new fraud attempts that involve the use of advanced AI tools to replicate the voices of real individuals with a high degree of accuracy. These voice imitations are used to contact friends or family members through phone calls or social media, often accompanied by urgent requests to transfer money. The lifelike nature of these interactions may give the impression of authenticity and credibility.

KFH called for the highest levels of caution and urged customers to verify the identity of the person requesting a financial transaction.

Internal awareness

KFH's endeavor to warn against fraud attempts encompassed sharing awareness emails to its employees. These emails present concise and engaging content aiming to raise awareness of cyber fraud risks and warn against suspicious calls that seek to deceive employees and obtain their information.

Initiatives and forums

KFH also continued its active participation in initiatives that promote



banking awareness, including its support for Kuwait's largest cybersecurity hackathon for the third consecutive year. During the event, KFH highlighted the concept of fraud in general and cyber fraud in particular, addressing its various forms that pose risks to individuals and society.

Moreover, KFH participated in the 12th eGovernment Forum titled "AI-Powered Information Security Services", demonstrating its role in reinforc-

ing cybersecurity.

Digital channels

KFH recorded a significant milestone in its awareness efforts for Diraya campaign, leveraging its digital channels and official social media accounts as educational and awareness platforms for the public. Through these channels, KFH delivered distinctive awareness content.

With the introduction of its new digital services, KFH published a series of successful awareness messages on these newly launched services such as instant issuance of prepaid and credit cards, WAMD service, and instant transfers through the gulf payment system, AFAQ.

The Bank also released several educational videos on how to use and benefit from digital financial solutions available on KFHOnline, which can be viewed through its official social media accounts @kfhgroup.

Financial awareness for kids

As part of its support for the Diraya campaign, KFH partnered with Hzata Bookstore, which specializes in children's books, to launch content dedicated to children. The initiative aims to raise awareness and teach children the basics of early savings and financial planning.

In cooperation with Hzata, KFH also organized an innovative, practical, and interactive program for Baiti account customers.

Social engagement and measurable impact

Reaffirming its leadership in supporting Diraya campaign, KFH continued its initiatives to measure banking awareness among the public through several programs and activities. These included awareness initiatives for its PR Academy participants, Kuwait University students, students participating in Ma'attalabacompetition, as well as participants in the Derasti Exhibition, held at Kuwait International Fair in Mishref. KFH also organized awareness programs for CODED Academy students during the Bank's participation in the Kuwait Codes initiative.

Record engagement levels

KFH's efforts in supporting Diraya campaign resulted in achieving record engagement levels, with awareness messages reaching millions of followers. This contributed effectively to changing financial behavior toward greater caution and awareness.

It is also worth noting that KFH, through its leading role in Diraya campaign, reiterates its pivotal role in prioritizing customers and public safety. Additionally, the success in spreading digital and banking awareness reflects KFH's pioneering vision of transforming its platforms into educational channels that contribute to creating a safe and sustainable financial environment.

Europe targets cheap imports, steel glut amid China trade gap

BRUSSELS, July 1, (AP) - The European Union rolled out two measures to protect its steel industry and limit e-commerce small parcels on Wednesday as the 27-nation bloc grapples with its staggering trade imbalance with China.

"Today's change is about restoring fairness for European businesses and better protecting our consumers," European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said in an online post praising a new 3 euro (\$3.42) customs duty on small packages. "The surge in low-value online imports has put our retailers at an unfair disadvantage. Too many of these products also fail to meet EU safety standards, putting consumers at risk."

The Commission said new rules on steel imports are designed to protect EU plants and jobs from "the damaging impacts of global overcapacity" on "a strategically crucial European industry." China's subsidies for steel production have led critics in Brussels and beyond to charge that policy undercuts steel industries from Germany's Ruhr valley to Kyushu Island in Japan.

The EU's trade deficit with China widened in 2025 to around 360 billion euros (\$410 billion) - or roughly 1 billion euros a day - and is rising in 2026.

China's annual global trade surplus reached a near-record \$1.2 trillion last year even after higher tariffs introduced by the Trump administration, and despite China's dependency on Persian Gulf energy, the war in Iran has not destabilized China's export-led economy with sales of high-tech goods and vehicles abroad having jumped.

From Wednesday, the EU will remove a customs duty exemption called "de minimis" for parcels valued at under 150 euros. Chinese firms like the e-commerce giants Temu and Shien control about 90% of this type of trade, according to the Commission. The U.S. made a similar move last year.

The Commission said 5.9 billion

small packages were imported into the EU in 2025, compared with about 1.4 billion in 2022. At roughly 16 million a day, that's 97% of the traffic, but represents just 2% of import value. A majority of the packages were said to have failed safety tests and triggered environmental concerns on overuse of plastic.

"Europe finally shows teeth against flood of cheap package deals," said Bernd Lange, the head of the European Parliament's trade committee in a post online.

Yet the 3 euro tax might "not affect the big picture" as it's minimal compared to the price gap between Europe and China for goods like e-commerce, according to Gary Ng, a research fellow at the Central European Institute of Asian Studies.

While it may be effective in reducing small orders and impulse purchases, Ng said that customers and e-commerce platforms can still make group orders.

The new rules set tariff-free quotas at 18.3 million metric tons annually and imposes an out-of-quota duty of 50% on 26 types of steel imports. It also requires more transparency from importers to trace where the so-called "melt and pour" stage of production takes place to ensure countries like China will not circumvent protections by shipping products to the EU via third countries. The EU had put in new steel tariffs in October to protect the bloc from a flood of steel imports diverted by new U.S. trade policy under Trump.

Europe's steel industry is in crisis, with crude steel output falling to a "historic low" in 2026, according to the European Steel Association. "Europe's steel production is shrinking while imports as a share of the EU market are rising," said the trade group's director-general Axel Eggert in March. "EU policymakers must therefore agree the new steel trade measure quickly without it being weakened otherwise Europe risks losing more industrial capacity."

While China producers more than half of the world's steel, the EU im-

ports mostly from trade partners like the U.K., Ukraine, India, Taiwan, Turkey, Japan and South Korea. The new tariffs could trigger penalties in free trade agreements with nations like Japan but some exemptions have been granted to Ukraine as it battles Russia.

"We will remain open to engage - call it a club, call it an alliance, call it whatever you like - but the idea that we come together with like-minded partners on this global challenge of overcapacity in the market," said a Commission official tasked with communicating policy but not authorized to be named. "In an ideal world there is fair competition and level playing fields. Unfortunately, we don't seem to live in an ideal world."

Beijing will oppose the new rules even if they do not directly target China, said Alicia Garcia-Herrero, a chief economist for Asia Pacific and Middle East at the French bank Natixis.

"The Chinese do not want this instrument to work. This could be a springboard for more," she said. "It opens the door to the overall overcapacity instruments to see how it works."

China's Ministry of Commerce in May warned the EU against new steel import regulations and said China would firmly respond to "discriminatory measures" against its companies and products.

Some experts in China have raised the alarm over growing backlash to mass exports.

In a recent report, the Center for International Security and Strategy at Tsinghua University in Beijing identified "China Shock 2.0" - a massive surge of highly subsidized, advanced Chinese manufacturing exports flooding global markets - as one of the top 10 perceived security risks for China. It warned that the EU would likely impose additional tariffs on China that, together with protectionist sentiment in the U.S., might inspire other nations to follow suit with "steep tariff hikes and investment screening" targeting Chinese firms.

Ukraine strikes trigger fuel crisis across Russia

MOSCOW, July 1, (AP) - The lines are growing at Russian gas stations -- and so is the frustration and uncertainty as several months of Ukrainian attacks have set oil refineries ablaze and choked supplies for motorists across the vast country.

Fuel rationing has been introduced in many regions, with hours-long queues of cars snaking beside roads. Social media videos show drivers agitated at the lines or swearing at empty gas pumps and rising prices. The mayor of the Siberian city of Irkutsk even ordered portable toilets brought in to accommodate those in line.

The fuel crisis - unprecedented for a nation that is one of the world's biggest energy producers - has brought Moscow's full-scale invasion of Ukraine home to ordinary Russians like few other events in the war, now in its fifth year.

It drew a rare admission from President Vladimir Putin, who acknowledged that "problems persist for both motorists and businesses," and "there are still queues at petrol stations, and finding the right grade of petrol isn't always easy."

Putin insisted the shortages are "not critical" and "temporary."

But that appeared to do little to reassure at least one motorist in Mos-

cow, the wealthy capital typically better-insulated from economic shocks than the rest of the country.

"I think the situation is not very good," the motorist waiting in line told The Associated Press on Monday, the day after Putin's televised remarks.

"They say one thing on television, and in reality it's another. ... People are queuing everywhere," he added, declining to identify himself out of concern for his safety.

An AP count shows over 50 reported attacks by Ukraine on oil refineries, depots, terminals and other oil infrastructure in Russia and the illegally annexed Crimean Peninsula since late March. Often, the same facility is hit more than once -- such as the refinery in the Black Sea town of Tuapse, which was struck four times in just over two weeks.

As a result, the amount of crude oil Russia processed into fuel in June was down 25% from a year ago, to 3.95 million barrels per day - the lowest level in over two decades, said Gary Peach, oil markets analyst at Energy Intelligence.

"The outages are extraordinary," he said.

Gasoline production has fallen 17% to 850,000 barrels a day, from 1.03

million a day a year ago - far short of what's needed for the domestic market. Russia exports relatively little gasoline.

About a third of Russia's oil refining capacity is offline, said Chris Weafer, CEO of Macro-Advisory Ltd. Consultancy, noting that because refineries don't publicly confirm the extent of the damage, his estimate comes from anecdotal evidence and oil industry sources.

"It comes at a very critical time for the Russian economy, in that the agriculture season, particularly the harvest season, is now starting to ratchet up," increasing demand, Weafer said.

Ukrainian officials describe the strikes as a campaign to pressure Moscow to end the war by undermining its military logistics and supply lines and weakening its ability to mount assaults along the front.

In particular, Kyiv has sought to isolate Crimea, which was seized from Ukraine in 2014 in a move that most nations do not recognize. Attacks earlier this year forced the Moscow-installed authorities to enact fuel rationing on the peninsula in May and halt sales to civilians there altogether several weeks later. Limited sales later resumed in the city of Sevastopol.

Canada risks being sidelined

North American Trade faces new strains over tariffs, local content

WASHINGTON, July 1, (AP) - Tourists from Chattanooga check into beach resorts in Cancun. Canadian auto parts feed factories in the American Midwest - and vice versa. Happy hour revelers raise glasses of Mexican tequila and mezcal at bars in Seattle.

It adds up. The United States trades \$1.9 trillion a year - \$5 billion a day - worth of goods and services with its neighbors, Canada and Mexico. They have supplanted China to become America's top two trading partners.

So the stakes are high when it comes to fiddling with the rules that govern trade between the three countries. And after a year of President Donald Trump's chaotic tariff policies, many U.S., Canadian and Mexican businesses would welcome the return of stability across North America.

They are not likely to get it.

The regional trade pact - the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement or USMCA - that Trump negotiated and boasted about in his first term comes up for renewal Wednesday, a process that is likely to last months, maybe longer.

And the path forward is lined with landmines.

"There's going to be a lot of drama this summer," Diego Marroquin Bitar, a fellow in the America's program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, said last week at a USMCA forum sponsored by the Cato Institute.

The U.S. is making demands that could effectively force Canada and Mexico to surrender some automaking production to the United States. That might bring more auto factory jobs to the United States. But it would also upend established supply chains and would push up U.S. prices for new cars that now average nearly \$50,000 at a time when American consumers are already frustrated about the high cost of living.

Trump, characteristically, has added to the tension by threatening to pull out of his own agreement altogether.

In 2020, the USMCA replaced the 1994 North American Free Trade Agreement, which tore down most trade barriers between the three North American countries.

Trump and other critics had called NAFTA a job killer because it encouraged U.S. companies to move factories south of the border to take advantage of low-wage Mexican labor, then ship goods back to the United States duty free.

His USMCA ended up being similar to NAFTA - though it pressured factories to pay higher wages and make sure that more of what they made originated in North America in an effort to prevent Chinese products from slipping across regional borders duty free.

The USMCA included a novel provision requiring the pact to be renewed every six years. That deadline is Wednesday, but "nothing is going to happen July 1," said Oscar Ocampo, director of economic development at the Mexican Institute for Competitiveness.

Negotiators could agree Wednesday to renew USMCA as it is for another 16 years. But that is considered highly unlikely. Instead, they are expected to keep working on ways to improve it; they have until 2036 to reach an agreement - or the pact expires.

Meantime, any USMCA country can pull out of the pact provided it gives its two partners six months' notice - a red buzzer that Canada and Mexico, dependent on trade with the United States, fear Trump just might push.

Trump, after all, said in June that he was "not looking to renew" the trade pact with Canada and Mexico. "We don't need anything that they have," he said.

Ocampo suspects that Trump doesn't really want to drop the treaty;



National flags representing the United States, Canada, and Mexico fly in the breeze in New Orleans where leaders of the North American Free Trade Agreement met on April 21, 2008. (AP)

he just wants to use the uncertainty to keep pressure on Mexico over security and immigration issues.

The United States and Mexico have held talks on renewing the trade agreement. But Canada has so far been stuck on the sidelines.

Patrick Childress, a partner at the Holland & Knight law firm and a former U.S. trade negotiator, said: "The danger for Canada is this: that the U.S. government and the Mexican government reach agreement on changes to core provisions of the treaty and then show up in Ottawa and say: 'Here's what we've agreed to. You can take it or leave it.'"

Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney said that the three trading partners plan to meet virtually on Wednesday, adding: "I'm not looking for my pen."

Carney later said in French his priority is to do an update to USMCA and that it is impossible for the U.S. to have a new agreement without the approval of Congress.

The U.S. wants a refreshed trade pact to do more to make sure that Chinese goods don't get in through the back door. But the most contentious issue is a U.S. push to require that more products are made in North America - and specifically the United States.

USMCA included a requirement that automotive products must be 75% made in North America - up from 62.5% under NAFTA - to qualify for duty-free treatment.

The U.S. wants to push the 75% threshold even higher but it won't be easy. Automakers already "have been fine-tuning their supply chains for years to be able to hit that 75% mark," Childress said. They would need time to meet the higher standard.

The U.S. is also seeking a brand-new requirement: that 50% of cars be made in the United States, Carney confirmed in early June. Currently, none of the USMCA countries gets a guaranteed share of production. "It's a red line for both Mexico and Canada, and it goes against the spirit and the letter of regional integration," Ocampo said.

Marcos Carias, an economist at the credit insurer Coface, said only 1 in 5 Mexican and Canadian cars imported into the United States would currently meet the 50% standard.

Vehicle models likely to be hit with higher costs under the plan, he said, include Ford's Maverick compact pickup truck, Chevrolet's mid-size Equinox SUV and some Nissan sedans - all made in Mexico. Carias' "back of the envelope" calculations suggest that prices could increase 5% - 7% on the most-affected models.

A lot of companies just want relief from Trump's ever-changing tariffs. "My interest in this USMCA renewal is just consistency, right?"

Shawn Miller, co-founder of PKGD Group, which imports agave spirits (tequila, mezcal and raicilla) from family producers in Mexico. "If the rules change, the rules change. But we'd really like to know (what they're going to be) and we'd like them to stay that way for a while."

Business is booming for PKGD. Sales at the Holland, Michigan-based firm are up 62% so far this year after surging 100% in 2025 and 300% in 2024.

But last year was chaotic. Trump hit Mexican and Canadian goods with a 25% import tax in February only to turn around a month later and exempt products that were eligible for preferential USMCA treatment. The USMCA allows the Mexican spirits into the United States duty free.

Amid the tumult, three truckloads of Mexican spirits imported by PKGD crossed the border into the United States and got hit with the 25% tariff. The cost came to \$105,000. "For us, it was one unfortunate day!" Miller said.

Not knowing what tariffs Trump might conjure up next, PKGD huddled with its Mexican producers to figure out how to respond. "What can we absorb? What can they absorb?" Miller said. "How can we mitigate this?"

Miller said he and his Mexican suppliers "are not large multinational corporations with dedicated trade departments, teams of lawyers, or lobbyists focused on trade policy."

Kerry Mellin can sympathize. In 2014, the veteran Hollywood costume designer started a business in Ventura County, California, selling silicone grips that enable people with disabilities (such as cerebral palsy and Parkinson's) to hold things - spoons, cups, pens, toothbrushes.

But sales floundered when she introduced her EazyHold grips in Canada, where she has dual citizenship. She thinks it's because the silicone she imports from Asia kept her grips from having enough North American content to qualify for USMCA's duty-free treatment when they crossed the border from the United States.

Mellin suspects EazyHold could meet the USMCA standards, "but the rules are complex and unpredictable enough that I genuinely can't be sure without hiring a trade attorney."

Mellin believes the USMCA's rules of origin should be loosened, not tightened, to help small businesses that can't afford costlier raw materials from North America.

"I do understand why the rule exists -- to stop companies from routing Chinese goods through Mexico," she said. "I just wish it could tell the difference between that and a small family business in California making grip aids for people who can't hold a fork. I'm not the problem they were trying to solve."



This image released by Universal Pictures shows a scene from Illumination's "Minions & Monsters." (AP)

From silent gags to story stumbles

Between homage and humor, Minions find neither

Every once in a while, Hollywood gets high on its own supply and makes a love letter to moviemaking. It happened recently with Steven Spielberg's "The Fabelmans" and George Clooney's "Jay Kelly." Now it's time for the unlikelyst of love-letter writers: canary-yellow, gibberish-speaking, overall-wearing mini-monsters.

"Minions & Monsters" - the third chapter in the ongoing standalone adventures of the "Despicable Me" pint-sized enablers - is about the sheer greatness of moviemaking, and it's a navel-gazing misfire. Few industries - maybe journalism, sure - is as enamored at making its profession seem heroic.

The Minions this time find themselves at the dawn of both the movie business in Hollywood and the last push by suffragists to get the vote. It's a weird confluence that writers Brian Lynch and Pierre Coffin fumble.

The movie has playful references to old screen gods - Harold Lloyd dangling from the hands of a clock and Charlie Chaplin swallowed by the gears of a mechanical system - along Hollywood nods to "Casablanca" and the punny title "The Good, the Bad and the Stupid" - but the kids in the audience won't get them and their parents are just too tired. Harold Lloyd jokes don't hit as hard in

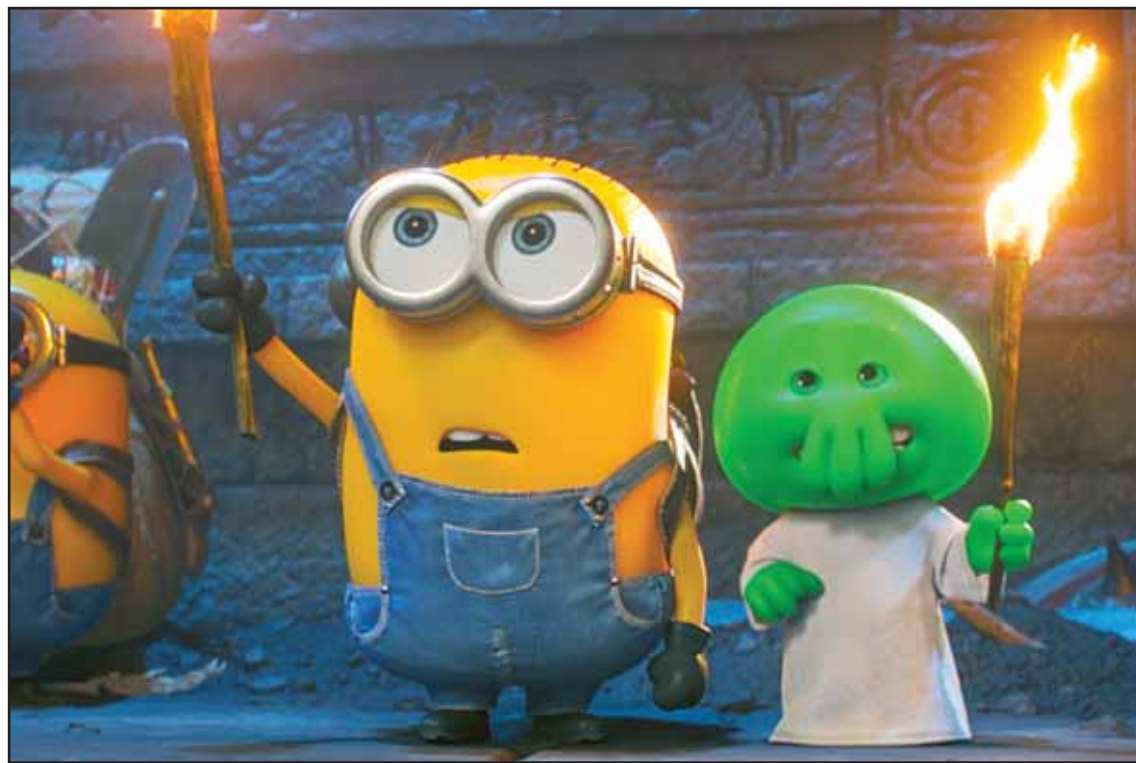
2026.

Two of the legion of faceless Minions step forward this time - best friends James and Henry, creative misfits amid a smear of yellow drones - to unite and make a movie. (Who knew there was a Minion counterculture?)

Things go very well at first - turns out adding a Minion or two to a cowboy or a heist movie makes them instant kings of the box office - and they soon move into a Beverly Hills mansion and become insufferable. James dreams of winning an Oscar, which in this case is a statuette of a gold banana, a Minion obsession.

But they hit a wall when silent movies turn to talkies. And since they spout nothing but nonsense - "Fantastic" "miso soup" and "vamos" - can't make the transition. They're dumped out of the studio system.

That's when James and Henry finally get the plot going: Make their own killer monster movie by conjuring up real monsters. The first one they try turns out a little weird: The gigantic, fearsome octopus-dragon they request turns out to be a cute green Funko Pop-like critter called Goomi, voiced by Trey Parker. Goomi promises to find them some real monsters. But should we trust him?



This image released by Universal Pictures shows minion Henry, voiced by Pierre Coffin, left, and Goomi, voiced by Trey Parker, in a scene from Illumination's "Minions & Monsters." (AP)

Coffin, making his first solo directing effort after co-helming all three "Despicable Me" films and the first "Minions," voices all the

Minions - he must be fun to have at parties - and is an assured hand. The violence levels are a little high for PG, including a beheading and vari-

ous impalings, plus the usual senseless mayhem. The screenwriters have included a romantic subplot involving a suf-

fragee voiced by Zoey Deutch who falls for a robot-alien (standout work by Jesse Eisenberg) in a storyline that makes less and less sense. And the framing device - a museum tour guide explaining how Minions shaped Hollywood - sags awkwardly.

Adults can keep awake looking for the Easter eggs Coffin has left for serious cinephiles: "20,000 Leagues Under the Sea," "Steamboat Bill, Jr.," "A Trip to the Moon," "Metropolis," "Citizen Kane" and "The Blob." Maybe the best moment in the movie is almost a throwaway: Director George Lucas, appearing as himself.

"Hooray for Hollywood" is on the soundtrack and that might have been the subtitle for the movie itself. There are some people whose eyes get moist thinking about picking up a film camera and following their muse, having their work play in a dark theater to cheers. And then there are others who just want to get on with it already. "Vamos!"

"Minions & Monsters," a Universal Pictures release that opens in theaters July 1, is rated PG by the Motion Picture Association for "violence/action, language, and rude/macabre humor." Running time: 90 minutes. One and a half stars out of four. (AP)

Pierre Coffin on doubt, distance and a return to Minions

Franchise architect reconsiders his 'yellow' legacy

NEW YORK, July 1, (AP): Filmmaker Pierre Coffin is the creator and chief practitioner of Minionese, but it's a dialect - like most things Minions - that's taken time to hone.

"I have this file on my phone of Indian dishes or weird words," Coffin says. "People come up to me and say, 'You should say that!' and I write it down."

"The hardest thing," adds Coffin, "is just to find the melody."

It's been 16 years since Coffin co-directed Illumination's "Despicable Me." He has made three more movies in the franchise, directing "Despicable Me 2," "Despicable Me 3" and "Minions." But the Minions, like Coffin's personal version of Frankenstein's monster, have often remained a deviling, even mystifying force to him.

Coffin, a French Indonesian animator who lives in Paris, where Illumination productions are based, has struggled with both the dictates of Hollywood franchise-building and the strange narrative conundrums of movies based around a supervillain and gibberish-speaking henchmen.

"That's why I kind of disappeared from the series," Coffin said in a recent interview from Paris. "I mean, the first one was really good. A bad guy becoming a good guy after contact with three little girls, I could see it. The second one was a little bit more shady because it was like: That guy who's no longer a bad guy falls in love and there's a marriage at the end. That's literally how Chris (Meledandri) pitched it to me. My French sensibility threw up a little bit."

If you can't tell, Coffin - the still-mischievous 59-year-old son of a French diplomat and an Indonesian novelist - is unusually candid about the franchise he helped create. Even movies that he directed, he's highly critical of.

The previous "Minions" spinoff, 2022's "Minions: The Rise of Gru," Coffin won't even talk about because, he says, "I don't necessarily like it and it's strange to me." "Despicable Me 3," the 2017 sequel was the last movie Coffin directed, but he says he didn't even want to make



Pierre Coffin, left, director of "Minions & Monsters," and Chris Meledandri, CEO of Illumination, appear during the Universal Pictures and Focus Features presentation at CinemaCon in Las Vegas on April 15, 2026. (AP)

it. Afterward, Coffin told Meledandri, the Illumination chief executive, that he was done.

"I told him: I got to move on. I did my trilogy, my prequel - I'm good. I can help with the voices, no problem. But I want to move on," Coffin says. "I worked on separate things, but I always get pulled back by the Minions."

The Minions have a way of manipulating their bosses, Coffin included. After walking away from them, he's back for "Minions & Monsters," the third standalone feature for the "Banana!"-shouting little guys.

"All the other ones I had doubts about. I was guided into a direction that I did not necessarily like or understand," says Coffin of the previous sequels. "But the things were a huge success. I was humbled. OK, there has to be something I don't understand."

"This one is horrible because I'm thinking I really like it," Coffin says, laughing. "And I'm thinking, man, maybe I just killed the franchise."

On the contrary, "Minions & Monsters," which opens in theaters Wednesday, may be the best "Minions" movie yet. In it, the Minions turn filmmakers. Alongside Charlie Chaplin and Harold Lloyd, they try

to make a monster movie in 1920s Hollywood.

The premise, suggested by Meledandri, was too enticing for Coffin to turn down. He even wanted to write the script, which he did with cowriter Brian Lynch. "Minions & Monsters" makes the yellow troublemakers something more than chaos-inducing sidekicks. They're silent film stars who for the first time feel like actual protagonists.

"This movie has so much for people who were kids when they first encountered the Minions," says Meledandri. "More than any previous Minion movie, it incorporates all of that wonderful silliness of the Minions but it's also a terrific story." Even after seven films and more than \$5 billion in box office, the Minions are still revealing themselves to Coffin. They were, in the first place, a product of evolution. For "Despicable Me," they were first designed like hulking thugs, then more like robots, then more like mole men. Coffin, Chris Renaud and art director Eric Guillon kept refining. Add in some goggles, overalls and names like Stuart and Kevin and, bingo: movie history.

Yet given that the Minions are impossible to understand, except for a word or two, they make for

tricky protagonists. Hand them over to a new boss, and you risk making the Minions second bananas again. At the same time, long sections of uninterrupted Minionese can grow tiresome without some human interpreter.

"If it's too long and annoying to the ear, we just kill it," Coffin says. "All of these movies, we do until we find the little formula."

Even just writing for the Minions isn't a clear process. Coffin, who voices all the Minions, is accustomed to improvising their dialogue back and forth. (For the first "Minions" movie, he'd begin his mornings with two hours alone with a microphone before commuting to the studio.) Putting pen to paper came less naturally.

"Brian didn't know how to write them," Coffin says. "He tried writing gibberish. I told him, 'Don't write gibberish. I don't understand what they're saying. Let's write them in English.' It took us a while to establish that dumb thing."

Coffin can sound almost parental about the Minions. The characters he gave voice to aren't just in the movies. They're like mascots for Illumination, generated billions in merchandising. Not every treatment nails their singular nature.

"I don't want to criticize what the others have done with the Minions, but when someone else does something with the Minions, I feel that they're considering them creatures," Coffin says. "But they're not creatures. They're creatures with a spirit, with a personality."

Even he's still figuring them out. In writing "Minions & Monsters," Coffin wanted to think about the origins of friendships. He began surveying people about how they met their best friends. Many of the replies inevitably went back to when someone was 8 or 10 years old.

"That made it very clear to us: The Minions are kids," Coffin says. "I discovered that on this movie. It dawned on me. They're irresponsible, they don't listen, they make a mess, they don't listen to authority. From that moment onward, it was very easy."

Oscar hopes recharged

Neon powers up 'Artificial' after surprise Amazon exit

NEW YORK, July 1, (AP): "Artificial," Luca Guadagnino's starry film about Sam Altman and OpenAI, has been acquired by the indie distributor Neon after it was dropped by Amazon MGM Studios.

Neon said Tuesday that it bought the film following a bidding process. Amazon dropped the nearly complete \$40 million film, starring Andrew Garfield as Altman, earlier this month, a surprise move that came just months after Amazon announced a \$50 billion investment in OpenAI.

Amazon said then that "Artificial" would "be better served if it were released by a different studio."

Neon said Tuesday that it will release "Artificial" this year and "compete in this year's Oscar race." The film, which chronicles the days leading up to the 2023 firing and reinstatement of Altman as OpenAI chief executive, also stars Monica Barbaro, Yura Borisov and Academy Award winner Mark Rylance. Ike Barinholtz plays Elon Musk.

In late February, Amazon signed an expansive multiyear partnership with the artificial intelligence startup. Then earlier this month, Amazon MGM said it would put the film up for sale to find it a new home.

Neon has established an enviable awards-season track record with Oscar winners like "Parasite" and "Anora." The specialty label has backed the last seven Palme d'Or winners at the Cannes Film Festival. The studio declined to disclose how much it paid for the worldwide rights to "Artificial."

"The acquisition underscores Neon's commitment to partnering with visionary filmmakers, and bringing ambitious cinema to audiences around the world," the studio said in a statement.



CEO of OpenAI Sam Altman talks to CEO of Google DeepMind Demis Hassabis, not seen, on the sidelines of the G7 summit, Wednesday, June 17, 2026, in Evian-les-Bains, France. (AP)

Researchers turn textile waste into museum-grade restoration paper

Egypt achieves breakthrough in manuscript conservation

ALEXANDRIA, Egypt, July 1, (Xinhua) — Inside a laboratory at Egypt's Bibliotheca Alexandrina, white cotton fragments are boiled for two hours, thrashed into a milky pulp, hand-lifted onto bronze moulds, and pressed into sheets of paper.

The result is the country's first 100-percent locally sourced cotton paper, which has been designed not for printing, but for saving history.

Developed for the micro-restoration of ancient codices, rare books, maps and imperial decrees, the new archival-grade tissue is chemically neutral and physically durable. Unlike commercial wood-pulp paper, which yellows and crumbles with age, this Egyptian-made medium is engineered to protect fragile manuscripts for generations.

The project was born out of necessity. When the COVID-19 pandemic severed global supply chains, the library's conservation labs could no longer obtain the specialized imported papers traditionally used to mend ancient texts. Stocks ran low. Costs soared. Preservation work ground to a halt.

For decades, Japan and Italy held a near-monopoly on high-end restoration tissues, according to Hossam al-Deeb, head of the Conservation and



A manuscript restorer mends ancient texts inside a laboratory at Egypt's Bibliotheca Alexandrina in Alexandria, Egypt. (Xinhua)

Environmental Control Department at the library's Manuscript Center.

"This dominance relied on exclusive geographic advantages and generational secrets," al-Deeb said. "Japan led because native shrubs like Kozo yield uniquely long, resilient plant fibers."

Italy's leadership, he added, came from centuries-old mills like Fabriano, which guarded secret formulas perfect-

ed over generations.

To close the gap, Egyptian conservators undertook advanced fellowships in Japan and Italy, bringing the specialized knowledge back to their own labs.

After countless trials, they found a crucial local resource — Egypt's "white gold" — premium long-staple cotton fibers measuring between 35mm and



A worker manufactures paper inside a laboratory at Egypt's Bibliotheca Alexandrina in Alexandria, Egypt. (Xinhua)

45mm.

By using clean white textile waste from local garment factories, the team avoided harsh chemical bleaching agents, giving their paper a distinct edge in chemical purity.

Soliman Ahmed, a lead laboratory conservator who participated in the development trials, said perfecting the cotton formula required moving past

rigid chemical equations to master manual papermaking as an intuitive art form, where the craftsman physically judges the exact weight of the water and the pull of the screen.

The result is a feather-light, nearly translucent tissue that is virtually impossible to tear by hand and blends invisibly onto damaged manuscripts.

"The Egyptian Organization for

Standardization and Quality has officially certified that our homegrown paper shatters the minimum global benchmarks for archival-grade durability," al-Deeb said.

He added that the library will soon supply other Egyptian manuscript and restoration centers with the paper and seek to export it worldwide.

At the quality control desk, Lamia Antar, head of the Specialized Fiber Manufacturing Unit, said the localized system has dramatically eased financial pressure.

"Importing a single sheet previously cost 6 U.S. dollars," she said. "Today, manufacturing this exact standard at home costs us nearly 1 U.S. dollar."

The unit now produces a lined version for codex restoration and an ultra-smooth version for fine artists. Every intervention follows international standards requiring all added materials to be 100 percent reversible, Antar said.

"With local production fully stabilized, we are actively pursuing international accreditation to export this premium paper to world-class museums," she said. "This step transforms Egypt from a vulnerable importer into an international hub for heritage preservation."

Books

'I love to write'

At 91, Kadono still finds magic in books & stories

KAMAKURA, Japan, July 1, (AP) — Eiko Kadono, the author behind Japan's most famous - and almost certainly most beloved - literary witch, has a little trouble going up the stairs these days.

At 91, she's still writing every day and hasn't stopped loving the color pink, dressing up or believing in the magic of books.

"Kiki's Delivery Service," which was first published in 1985 and turned into a 1989 animation film by Hayao Miyazaki's Studio Ghibli, is among 200 books she has written.

"I never tire of writing," she told The Associated Press at her home in the picturesque seaside town of Kamakura, south of Tokyo.

With a little pink gate, the house is filled with books, pink chairs and her collection of animal figures.

"I'm probably a child at heart," Kadono says with a small laugh.

Wearing her signature boldly framed glasses, Kadono is dressed in a colorful smock that her daughter designs especially for her.

She explains proudly that the sleeves are elastic at the wrists so they can be pulled up easily when she writes.

These days, she uses a keyboard, punching the keys slowly, one at a time. But when she is creating a story, it still all starts with writing by hand. She also draws pictures.

"I want to write so that the reader can visualize what I am writing," she said. "I love to write."

Still quick with her retorts, laughs and thoughts, Kadono shrugs off how she's wearing a wig. She doesn't understand why people might want to hide that. She wears red lipstick and acts a bit shy about her wrinkles.

Still, her writing hasn't basically changed over the years. Though when she looks back on her past



Eiko Kadono, the author of "Kiki's Delivery Service," poses for photo in Kamakura, Japan, on June 22, 2026. (AP)

writing, she feels it's wordier than her current crisp style.

The Kiki series in the original Japanese spans six books and three spinoffs. The first installment was translated into English in 2020 by Delacorte Press. It is now in 25 foreign languages.

Now, the second in the series, "Kiki and the New Magic," is set for release in August in English, translated by Emily Balistreri and illustrated by Yuta Onoda.

Kadono, who won the prestigious Hans Christian Andersen Award in 2018, never set out to become a writer. She was basically a housewife,

married to a designer and raising a daughter.

She lived in Brazil for two years during her 30s and was asked to write about that experience. That's when she discovered she liked writing as a fun thing to do, not as a job. It was certainly not something she was ordered or pushed to do.

The character of the sprightly, no-nonsense Kiki was inspired by a drawing her daughter did when she was 12: A cute witch was flying on a broomstick toward the moon.

Kadono decided to create a coming-of-age story about a little witch who goes on an adventure, traveling

with her black cat Jiji.

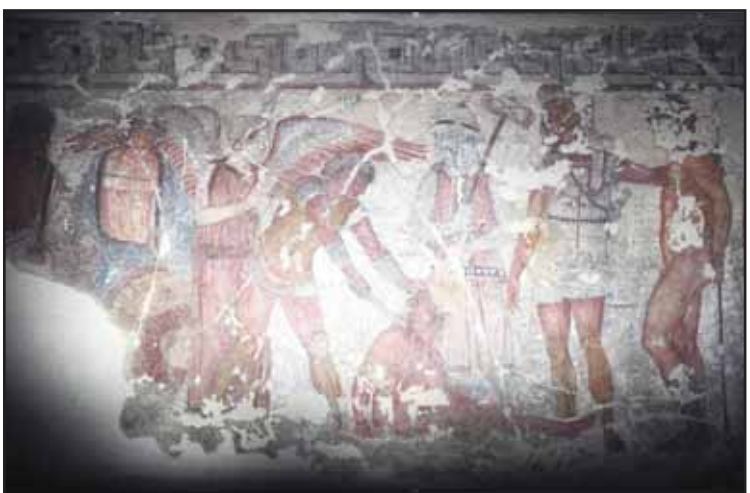
The rest is history.

Kiki's Museum of Literature, which opened in Tokyo in 2023, now sells Kadono's smocks, as well as pink mugs and T-shirts decked with the characters she has created, as well as displays rows upon rows of books, including other authors.

"The other-worldly fantasy that Kadono creates has overcome the boundaries of language, to become appreciated by a wide global audience, including children and adults, and won international accolades," reads a statement in pink lettering on the museum wall.

Villa Giulia showcases newly displayed panels

Italy displays ancient Etruscan tomb paintings



"The Sacrifice of the Trojan Prisoners," a fresco dating from 330-310 B.C., is exhibited in the reconstruction of the François Tomb, an Etruscan tomb, at the Villa Giulia Etruscan Museum in Rome, Tuesday, June 30, 2026. (AP)

ROME, July 1, (AP) — Italy on Tuesday put on display one of the best known examples of Etruscan painting, panels from a tomb that it acquired for 15 million euros (\$17 million) in the Culture Ministry's buying spree of big-ticket pieces of the country's cultural heritage.

The ministry announced in May that it had acquired the fresco panels, dating from the 4th century, from members of the Torlonia family, one of Italy's ancient noble families whose vast collection of antiquity has long been kept out of the public domain.

The François Tomb was discovered in 1857 by the French archaeologist Alessandro Francois in Vulci, on land owned by the Torlonia family. The frescoes were detached from the necropolis in 1863 and became

part of the Torlonia private collection, while the contents of the tomb were divided up among Francois, colleagues and the family.

The Italian government has been trying to get possession of the tomb since 1921, as part of its effort to bring back into the Italian public patrimony artifacts and antiquities that were acquired or looted during the boom of archaeological excavations in the 1800s and beyond.

The Etruscan Civilization occupied swaths of what is today central Italy for centuries as a major Mediterranean trading power. Much of it was destroyed by the subsequent Roman Empire.

The tomb is opening to the public Wednesday at Rome's Villa Giulia National Etruscan Museum. Alongside the fresco panels are jewels,

Etruscan vases and other items that were discovered inside the tomb, now belong in museum collections around the world and were loaned to Italy for the exhibition.

The tomb marks the Culture Ministry's third major acquisition this year of expensive, culturally important artworks. It paid \$14.9 million for Antonello da Messina's "Ecce Homo" and around \$35 million for a rare portrait by Caravaggio depicting Maffeo Barberini, the future Pope Urban VIII.

The funds have come from the ministry's annual budget for acquisitions, but Culture Minister Alessandro Giuli has prioritized buying fewer, bigger-ticket items of cultural importance rather than smaller, lesser artworks and antiquities, officials said.

"In recent months, the Ministry of

Culture has invested a great deal of money in acquiring masterpieces," said Massimo Osanna, director general of Italian museums in the ministry.

Giuli has said the tomb is a "fundamental" part of Italian history that was now being returned to the Italian public to enjoy.

Luana Toniolo, director of the Villa Giulia museum, called the tomb one of the greatest masterpieces of antiquity and Etruscan painting, and one of the best preserved. Among other things, the paintings depict the sacrifice of Trojan prisoners and battles of Etruscan heroes.

"It is a vast book of stone and color that tells us about families, warriors, gods and heroes - both Etruscans and Greeks - and recounts Greek myths reinterpreted through an Etruscan lens," she said.

Publisher races to print more

'Regime Change' Trump's book, surpasses 300,000 copies sold

WASHINGTON, July 1, (AP) — It turns out readers still want to learn more about President Donald Trump after all.

"Regime Change: Inside the Imperial Presidency of Donald Trump," the latest book on the Trump presidency, written by political journalists Maggie Haberman and Jonathan Swan, has sold more than 300,000 copies in its opening week, according to publisher Simon & Schuster.

They're the kind of sales that numerous works about Trump reached during his first term, but had been rare during his second term. Publishers had speculated that the public had tired of Trump books, believing there was little left to know.

The total figures include pre-orders, print book sales, ebooks, and e-audiobooks and orders that have yet to be fulfilled because of demand, the publishing house said. Simon & Schuster said the book is into its third hard copy printing, with 200,000 copies on order, after it sold out quickly in bookstores and on Amazon. It's the best first-week clip of any hardcover nonfiction book in 2026.

The book covers the first 14 months of Trump's second presidency and takes readers inside the West Wing, White House residence and Trump's Mar-a-Lago estate, aboard Air Force One and on foreign trips with the president.

Trump, who has a long history with Haberman from her days covering him as a New York City business and society figure, has trashed the book as "mostly made up." Haberman and Swan are now New York Times reporters.

Their manuscript depicts meticulous details of Trump's military decisions, how he's wielded the power of the Justice Department against his political opponents, his conversations with other power players, and the time and attention he's devoted to remaking the aesthetics and structure of the White House.

The book spells out a thesis that Trump himself believes: Had he not lost the 2020 election, he would not be as powerful in his second term as he is now - emboldening him to trample norms, dismantle established institutions and push the limits of presidential power.



This photo taken on June 16, 2025 shows porcelain ware displayed at the Porcelain Market in Iznik, Türkiye. (Xinhua)

Adil rethinking fragility through fire

China - Türkiye ceramic bridge revives ancient craft traditions

IZNIK, Türkiye, July 1, (Xinhua) — Standing beside the blazing kilns of Jingdezhen, China's thousand-year-old porcelain capital, in 2023, Turkish ceramic artist Adil Can Guven watched flawless porcelain emerge from fires raging at 1,300 degrees Celsius.

For a craftsman who had spent decades preserving the Turkish tradition of Iznik ceramics, a craft shaped by lower firing temperatures and greater fragility, that moment was a quiet revelation. It was not merely a lesson in temperature, but a new way of understanding clay, fire, and the resilience of craft itself.

"In both systems, quartz is present, but everything else changes," Guven recalled. "In porcelain, feldspar acts as a flux, allowing the body to mature at very high temperatures. Iznik ware relies on quartz and glass frit, using local white clay. It makes the process more fragile, but gives our ceramics their distinctive texture."

That fragility comes at a high cost. Fired at just 900 degrees Celsius, nearly 40 percent of his pieces may crack or warp during the process. "No factory could endure this," he said, noting that the craft is sustained by artistry rather than commercial efficiency.

The exchange of ceramic traditions between China and Türkiye dates back hundreds of years. As early as the 15th century, blue-and-white porcelain from China's Ming

Dynasty reached Anatolia, leaving a lasting imprint on Iznik's ceramic craftsmanship. Today, these two traditional crafts are finding new vitality through collaboration.

By the end of this year, a joint ceramic production facility planned in Iznik and developed in partnership with Jingdezhen will bring the two traditions together for collaborative production and research.

Following an April visit to Jingdezhen to examine production technologies and equipment, Iznik officials have entered the final phase of the project. The facility will function not only as a production site, but also as a space for workshops, artist exchanges, and cultural activities between the two cities.

Ke Xinguo, general manager of the Jingdezhen porcelain official flagship store in Istanbul and a participant in the project, said it represents a continuation of long-standing China-Türkiye exchanges.

"It transforms historical ceramic ties between Jingdezhen and Iznik into a lasting platform for cooperation," Ke told Xinhua.

For ceramic artist Ozlem Camkoz, the project represents a bridge between generations, creating new hands to carry the ceramic traditions of both countries forward, while deepening the friendship forged through centuries of artistic exchange.

Zambia commends Chinese medical team for enhancing healthcare delivery

Congo bans gatherings in areas far from Ebola outbreak, some say it limits dissent

KINSHASA, Congo, July 1, (Agencies): Opposition and civil society groups are protesting Congo's new ban on public demonstrations and mass gatherings in the capital and other areas far from the country's deadly Ebola outbreak, alleging that the decision aims to limit freedom of speech.

The decision announced over the weekend came as the outbreak of a type of Ebola with no approved treatment or vaccine continues to grow, with 1,307 people infected and 377 dead across three provinces in eastern Congo. It could be the worst Ebola outbreak yet.

Congo's ministry of interior on Saturday said gatherings and demonstrations were forbidden in the provinces of Kinshasa, Tshopo, Haut-Uele and Bas-Uele as fears grow about the outbreak spilling into new areas. None of the provinces have any confirmed cases.

Separately, the mayor of Goma, eastern Congo's largest city and now under the control of the Rwanda-backed M23 rebel group, also banned public gatherings and demonstrations, including celebrations linked to sport events, on Monday. Congo is in its first World Cup in over half a century.

Congo's political opposition has denounced the ban as unconstitutional. Prince Epenge, the spokesperson for the Lamuka coalition, has said the ban aims to prevent a planned demonstration in the capital, Kinshasa, early next month. The protest is against proposed constitutional changes that would allow Congo's President Felix Tshisekedi to run for a third term.

Civil society organizations also condemned the ban in a statement on Monday, citing freedom of speech and freedom of assembly.

In a televised address on Monday evening, Tshisekedi announced a \$319 million response plan to the Ebola outbreak, and called on people to respect health guidelines, report suspected cases and not give in to misinformation. He did not directly address the bans.

"Ebola is neither a rumor nor a source of shame," Tshisekedi said. "It is a health emergency that demands responsibility, solidarity, and truth."

Health workers have reported some skepticism and attacks over Ebola from residents in the affected areas of Ituri, North Kivu and South Kivu provinces.



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

Cases also have been confirmed in neighboring Uganda, as well as one in France in a doctor who returned from Congo.

The United Nations warned in a report on Tuesday that if the virus spreads into other neighboring countries including Rwanda and Angola, it could cost Africa up to \$3.6 billion and result in 328,000 job losses.

More than a month into the outbreak, officials believe it continues to outpace response efforts and no one knows its true scale. They are yet to identify patient zero and struggle to trace contact cases.

The World Health Organization has warned that violence from rebels in eastern Congo is complicating the response to the outbreak. In Ituri, attacks by the Islamic State group-backed Allied Democratic Force have cut off access to many villages and forced people to flee their homes, adding to already overcrowded camps of people displaced by years of conflict.

Also:

LUSAKA: The Zambian government on Friday commended the 26th Chinese medical team for its contribution to improving healthcare delivery in the country.

During a certificate presentation ceremony for the team in Lusaka, the country's capital, **Siazongo Siakalenge**, deputy secretary to the cabinet, said the team's commitment to delivering healthcare services not only strengthened the long-standing cooperation between Zambia and China but also helped save lives.

Siakalenge commended the team's dedication, as the members attended to outpatients, conducted outreach medical camps, trained healthcare workers through structured lectures, and donated advanced medical equipment and machinery.

"These interventions represent real lives transformed and communities positively impacted," he said.

Charles Mutemba, senior medical superintendent at Levy Mwanawasa Teaching Hospital, where most members of the team were stationed, said that the presence of various specialists on the team helped reduce the need to send patients abroad for specialized treatment.

According to Mutemba, local medical personnel also learned from the Chinese medical team's work culture, particularly its adherence to ethics, positive attitude, hard work, honesty, and integrity.

Zhang Yingjian, leader of the medical team, thanked the Zambian government and local medical crew for their support during the team's mission and for the certificates awarded to its members.



This image provided by NOIRLab shows stars in the constellation Lupus, as captured by the Vera C. Rubin Observatory. (AP)

Largest digital camera begins decade-long survey of universe

The largest digital camera ever built is starting to capture images of unseen corners of the universe.

The Vera C. Rubin Observatory has officially begun its cosmic survey, meant to capture swathes of the sky in more depth and detail. Perched on a Chilean mountaintop, the telescope will point its eye at the southern sky for the next 10 years, taking hundreds of images per night.

Researchers hope Rubin's observations will help them take a better census of the universe, mapping billions of stars in the Milky Way and billions more galaxies beyond it. It takes pictures quickly and will grab

images of the same areas of sky multiple times, allowing scientists to glimpse fainter objects that previously eluded detection.

"We're going to see large numbers of scientists across the world working with this data set, studying the universe in a way that they haven't been able to before," said Phil Marshall, the observatory's deputy director of operations.

Rubin released its first images last year, including colorful shots of the Trifid and Lagoon nebulas located thousands of light-years from Earth. A light-year is nearly 6 trillion miles (9.7 trillion kilometers). (AP)

Hospitals in Europe gear up for next heat wave armed with lessons from this one

ORSAY, France, July 1, (AP): Ice. Urgently and in large quantities.

At a Paris-region hospital, emergency medics needed it to plunge patients into cold-water baths to speedily bring down their temperatures so they wouldn't join the growing tally of dead from a record-smashing heat wave. But lacking an ice-making machine, where to get it?

A fast-food restaurant helped out last week, saying the hospital could take its ice. Staff also bought ice from the supermarket. The Paris-Saclay Hospital has now ordered its own ice machine, eagerly awaited in the emergency department for a future attack of sizzling heat.

Whether that hits next week, as France's weather service says it might, or in summer months ahead, medics and hospital administrators are acutely aware that the battle they've just endured will, because of climate change, be followed by others. Just as they brace for the annual flu season, they know that fighting heat waves is becoming their new normal.

So as they catch their breath from



Doctors and nurses take care of a patient at the emergency department of the Paris-Saclay Hospital, outside Paris on June 30, 2026. (AP)

what the director of the public hospital described as a "horrible" last week, he and his staff are also gearing up for the next round.

"The hospital was working on a 24 hours a day basis because we had to find new solutions in a very short delay," he said. "We already learned

some lessons." Efforts to plug some of the holes exposed by the heat wave that shifted eastward to other parts of Europe after battering France, the United Kingdom and other countries are accelerating on a national level, too.

After an earthquake, how long can trapped victims survive?

NEW YORK, July 1, (AP): For those trapped in rubble after an earthquake, survival depends on many factors, including weather and access to water and air.

If their injuries aren't too severe, victims can survive for a week or more, assuming the weather isn't too hot or cold, experts say.

In Venezuela, rescue teams have been racing against the clock to pull survivors from the rubble after two powerful earthquakes shook the northern state of La Guaira last Wednesday. More than 770 buildings were totally or partially collapsed from the earthquakes, and aftershocks continued to shake the region.

Most rescues happen in the 24 hours after a disaster. The chances of survival drop with each day after that, experts say. Most victims are badly injured or buried by falling stones or other debris.

Trapped victims are more likely to survive if they are in a debris-free pocket that prevents major injury while they await rescue, like under a sturdy desk, said geophysicist Victor Tsai from Brown University. Experts call this a survivable void space.

If fire, smoke or hazardous chemicals were released as a result of the building collapse, they may decrease a person's survival odds, said emergency response expert Dr. Joseph Barbera, an associate professor at George Washington University.

Beyond that, having air to breathe and water to drink are crucial as the days go on.

"You could survive a while without food," Barbera said. "You could survive less without water."

Temperatures where someone is trapped may affect survival, and temperatures outside the rubble can affect rescue missions.

More than 2,600 rescue workers from around the world arrived in Venezuela with trained search dogs and machinery, the government said. And rescue efforts in La Guaira, the hardest-hit area, appeared significantly more organized on Sunday, after residents expressed frustration and anger about the level of response in the days before.

It can be important for survivors to receive vital medical care before they are removed from the rubble, Barbera said. If not, the buildup of toxins from crushed muscles could

make them go into shock after they are rescued.

After the 2011 earthquake and tsunami in Japan, a teenager and his 80-year-old grandmother were found alive after nine days trapped in their flattened home. And the year before, a 16-year-old Haitian girl was rescued from earthquake rubble in Port-au-Prince after 15 days.

The best practices for survival during an earthquake depend on where you are in the world. Building codes in regions with active fault lines are often designed to withstand earthquakes, but that doesn't hold true everywhere.

In many countries, including the United States, the best practices are to drop, seek cover and hang on unless you are close to a building exit. Seek shelter under a heavy table or near sturdy furniture that may yield a survivable pocket if the roof collapses. Cover your face with cloth or a mask to protect from dust and debris.

If you are trapped in the rubble after an earthquake, save your energy and don't overexert. Ration food and water, listen for rescue calls and search for something near you to make noise. If you have a phone with you, conserve its battery and try for help in short spurts each day.



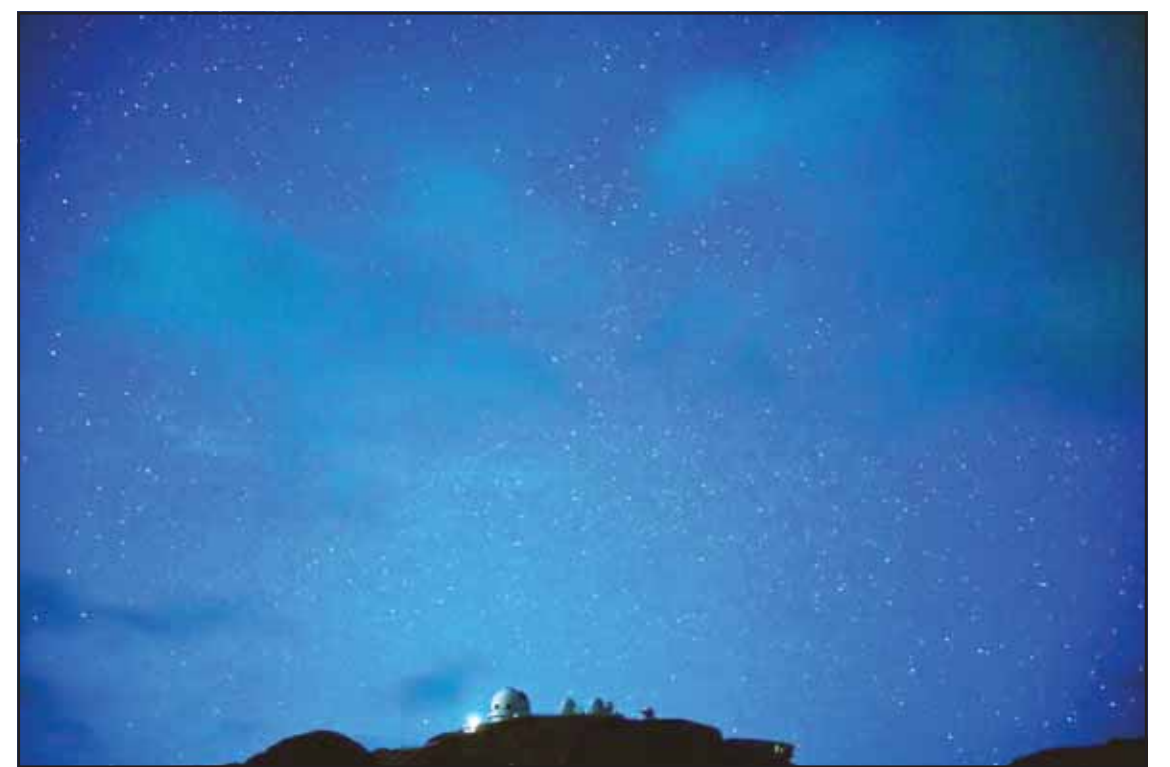
US firefighters from the Fairfax County pull a survivor from the rubble of a building that collapsed in the earthquakes in La Guaira, Venezuela on June 28. (AP)

Meanwhile, aid groups warned Tuesday that Venezuela's fragile healthcare system is being pushed to its limits nearly a week after two powerful earthquakes, with damaged and understaffed hospitals getting overwhelmed by the injured and infectious diseases flaring in the disaster zone.

Meanwhile, the number of official rescues has dropped dramatically in the last three days, the government said, from 5,380 people saved in the first two days after the quakes to just four people found alive Monday by authorities. The prime window for finding earthquake survivors is typically 48 to 72 hours, but it is possible to survive longer depending on factors such as temperature and access to water or food.

The sole survivor rescued by Tuesday afternoon was a toddler who had been trapped for six days under a collapsed building, said Jorge Rodriguez, the president of the National Assembly.

Those numbers do not include the many rescues carried out across the country by volunteer groups that, frustrated by the government's sluggish response, scrambled to save their trapped loved ones days before the arrival of expert international teams.



An aerial drone photo taken on July 30, 2025 shows the Wide Field Survey Telescope (WFST) jointly developed by the University of Science and Technology of China and the Purple Mountain Observatory of the Chinese Academy of Sciences in Lenghu Town, Haixi Mongolian and Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture of northwest China's Qinghai Province. (Xinhua)

China to build space-ground monitoring network for asteroid defense: scientist

BEIJING, July 1, (Xinhua): China is working on a space-ground integrated monitoring and early-warning network as a core component of a planetary defense system that is under feasibility study, according to a scientist familiar with the plan.

Li Mingtao, chief scientist at the asteroid monitoring and early-warning research center under the China National Space Administration (CNSA), made the revelation on Tuesday, the International Asteroid Day designated by the United Nations to raise global awareness about asteroid impact hazards and promote planetary defense education.

Li noted that the network will combine ground-based telescopes with a space-based monitoring constellation to achieve round-the-clock surveillance with no blind spots.

By now, more than 40,000 near-Earth asteroids have been discovered and cataloged worldwide. "No asteroid has so far been identified that will definitely collide with Earth in the foreseeable future, but concerns over impact risks are not unfounded. Many near-Earth asteroids remain undetected," Li was quoted as saying in a report by Science and Technology Daily on Wednesday.

"We must never let our guard down, but there is also no need for excessive anxiety," he added.

On the ground, China will deploy multiple large-aperture optical telescopes at carefully chosen sites, forming a geographically balanced network for long-range, wide-coverage, and precise night-sky surveys, Li said.

Ground telescopes, however, are blinded by the sun's glare due to atmospheric scattering. China also intends to launch a space-based monitoring constellation, free from atmospheric and day-night constraints, specifically targeting threats from the sunward direction.

Through coordinated ground-space operations, the sys-

tem will achieve seamless day-and-night monitoring, he said.

Early warning time, a key factor in asteroid monitoring, varies dramatically depending on the asteroid's size and when it is discovered, the expert noted.

Larger asteroids, he explained, pose greater potential devastation but are easier to detect early due to their brightness. Smaller asteroids are harder to spot but cause less damage. This disparity underscores the critical importance of building a comprehensive monitoring system that can catch threats as early as possible.

China has already made initial breakthroughs in risk assessment models and algorithms and is developing an operational near-Earth asteroid early-warning system. Once a telescope detects a suspicious target, the system will automatically calculate its orbit and assess impact probability, according to the report.

If a credible and urgent threat is confirmed, authorities will be notified immediately, and the public will receive clear information about the risk and recommended actions, Li said.

Should an asteroid threaten Earth, there are two main countermeasures. The first is kinetic impact, meaning a high-speed strike that instantly shifts the asteroid's orbit. It is simple, reliable, and the most viable option, said Li.

The second includes gravity tractors, ion beams and laser ablation, but these exert very weak forces and require over a decade of advance notice to be effective, he added.

The greatest risk comes from undiscovered near-Earth asteroids, which are numerous, faint, and potentially approaching from the sun. "That is why global scientists are racing to build monitoring and early-warning capabilities and catalog them," he said.

Yousef Nasser named Best Player of the Season and Bader Al-Mutawa honored as Kuwaiti Football Legend

A night of excellence: Zain celebrates the stars of the football season



Dr. Tareq Al-Jalahma, Sheikh Ahmad Al-Yousef, and Hamad Al-Musaibeeh with all honorees.



Yousef Nasser honored with the Season's Best Player Award



Waleed Al-Khashti takes part in crowning Kuwait SC as Dawri Zain Premier League champion.



Bader Al-Mutawa honored with the Kuwaiti Football Legend Award



Sheikh Ahmad Al-Yousef delivering his remarks.



Minister Dr. Tareq Al-Jalahma delivering his remarks.



Hamad Al-Musaibeeh speaking during the ceremony.

Zain joined in crowning Kuwait SC as Dawri Zain Premier League champions for the 21st time in the club's history

KUWAIT CITY, July 1: Zain, the strategic partner of the Kuwait Football Association, celebrated the stars of the 2025-2026 Dawri Zain Premier League season at its annual Excellence Awards ceremony, which brought together football stars, athletes, media representatives, and members of the local sports community.

The event was attended by Minister of State for Youth and Sports Affairs Dr. Tareq Al-Jalahma, Kuwait Football Association President Sheikh Ahmad Al-Yousef Al-Sabah, Corporate Relations & Communications Director at Zain Kuwait Hamad Al-Musaibeeh, senior officials from the KFA and the Public Authority for Sport, members of the technical committee responsible for selecting this year's winners, the honored players, and a number of sports sector leaders.

In his opening remarks, Minister of State for Youth and Sports Affairs Dr. Tareq Al-Jalahma said: "This wonderful occasion celebrates a group of talents and achievements in our local sports scene and honor those who worked hard, persevered, and excelled throughout an eventful sports season."

"My message to the next generation of athletes is this: write down your dream, work hard for it, and never stop at the limits of ambition. What you have achieved today did not come out of nowhere. It came through your hard work, commitment, determination, and the support of an entire ecosystem that stood behind you."

He added: "A great player is not shaped by talent alone. Talent exists, but it needs someone to nurture and refine it. Here, we must emphasize three essential pillars: the home and family, the school and teachers, and the club and coaches. We are proud of every parent who dedicated their time and effort to support their child so they can become the champions of the future. We are also proud of every coach who believed in talent, developed it, and continued to build it until it reached this level."

"I am proud of this outstanding group that we honor today, and proud of the sporting momentum we are witnessing, which reflects a new and promising phase for Kuwaiti sports. Our hopes are high and our ambitions are even greater. Through collaboration between government institutions, federations, clubs, and the private sector, we can build a stronger and more sustainable sports ecosystem."

Al-Jalahma continued: "I extend my sincere thanks and appreciation to Bader Al-Kharafi, to Zain, and to private sector supporters of Kuwaiti sports for their role in providing the best means to support athletes and develop local competitions. I also thank the KFA, its President and Board members, and everyone who contributed to the success of this season."

He concluded by addressing the winners: "You delivered an exceptional season, and we all went through exceptional circumstances this year. Yet through the spirit of collaboration and joint work, you were able to present an honorable image of Kuwaiti sports. What comes next will be even better, ambition will continue, and future achievements will be greater."

Kuwait Football Association President Sheikh Ahmad Al-Yousef Al-Sabah said: "I am very pleased to be with you today at this distinguished ceremony, among this group of young athletes who represent the present and future of Kuwaiti football."

"I extend my sincere thanks and appreciation to Zain, the official sponsor and strategic

partner of the KFA, for its continued support and clear contribution to the success of the Association's competitions. This support was not merely a sponsorship, but a true partnership that produced a distinguished sports season on more than one level."

He added: "This season, we faced difficult circumstances and major challenges, but at the same time it was one of our most successful seasons, thanks to everyone's cooperation and the spirit of one team. We witnessed strong league competitions, remarkable fan attendance, successful organization of H.H. the Amir's Cup and H.H. the Crown Prince's Cup, as well as the hosting of an important global event such as the French Super Cup in Kuwait, with the support of Zain, the Public Authority for Sport, and more."

"What was achieved this season confirms that collective joint work creates real and sustainable impact. When the efforts of the KFA, the private sector, the Public Authority for Sport, clubs, and fans come together, we can raise the level of Kuwaiti football and provide players with a better environment for growth and excellence."

Al-Yousef continued: "We will continue this approach in the coming seasons, and we will continue to work with our partners to support local competitions, develop talent, and strengthen the presence of Kuwaiti football in a way that reflects its history and the ambitions of its fans."

He concluded: "I once again thank and appreciate Zain for its great support, and everyone who worked and contributed to the success of this season. To the players I say: you are the future of Kuwaiti football. Continue to work and strive, because the opportunities ahead of you are great, and ambition has no limits."

Corporate Relations & Communications Director at Zain Kuwait Hamad Al-Musaibeeh said: "On behalf of Zain, I extend my sincere congratulations to Kuwait SC on winning the Dawri Zain Premier League title for the 21st time in the club's history. I also thank and appreciate all participating teams for the strong competition and high sportsmanship they demonstrated throughout the season, which delighted Kuwaiti fans and reflected the beautiful image of local football."

"This evening we celebrate excellence and honor a group of Dawri Zain Premier League stars for the 2025-2026 season, in recognition of their dedication, discipline, and competitive spirit, which contributed to enriching Kuwait's football scene."

"At Zain, we view sports as more than competition on the pitch. Sports is an ecosystem that builds people, instills values, brings fans together, inspires youth, and creates beautiful opportunities for pride and belonging. That's why our support for Kuwaiti football comes as

an extension of our corporate purpose to create Better Lives & Lasting Connections."

"Since the start of our strategic partnership with the KFA, we have believed that true sporting success is not defined by a single moment or one season. It is built through continuity, structured collaboration, talent development, and an enhanced football experience for fans, players, and clubs alike."

"Today, as we continue this partnership for the fourth consecutive season, we are proud that Dawri Zain has become a key pillar in our local sports scene, not only through competition on the pitch, but also through initiatives that help raise performance levels, honor hard work, highlight stars, and encourage future generations to continue the journey."

"Zain's incentive awards, which exceed KD 60,000 in total value per season, carry a clear message to every player, coach, and young talent: excellence is seen, hard work is appreciated, and dedication on the pitch deserves recognition."

"We also remain committed to honoring young talents across age-group competitions, because the future of Kuwaiti football begins at these levels. These players are the stars of tomorrow, and investing in them today is an investment in the future of our national sport, and in Kuwait's ability to compete and make a proud presence across different arenas."

"This year's ceremony also honors the stars of the Women's Futsal League, a step we are especially proud of as it reflects Zain's commitment to empowering female athletes and giving their achievements the recognition they deserve within the local sports scene. Kuwaiti sports can only reach its full potential when wider opportunities are created for all talents, encouraging women athletes to excel and strengthening the diversity and vitality of Kuwait's sporting landscape."

He added: "I also extend my sincere thanks to the KFA, and to the President and members of the technical committee, for their great efforts in selecting the winners with professionalism and transparency, in a way that reflects the value and standing of these awards among players and fans."

"I warmly congratulate all the winners tonight, and I say to them: this recognition is not merely the end of a season, but the beginning of a greater responsibility to continue giving, raise the ceiling of ambition, and represent your clubs, fans, and Kuwaiti football in the best possible way."

Al-Musaibeeh concluded: "At Zain, we affirm that our support for Kuwaiti sports will remain an integral part of our national and community role. We will continue working with our partners to support a more competitive, more professional environment that is more capable of creating sustainable achievement."

Zain honored this year's winners across a number of key categories as follows:

Winner	Club	Award
Yousef Nasser	Kuwait SC	Season's Best Player, KD 10,000
Taha Al-Khenissi		Top Scorer - Local Players, KD 5,000
Saud Al-Houshan		Top Scorer - Professional Players, KD 5,000
Nebojša Jovović	Al-Nasr	Season's Goalkeeper, KD 5,000
Ali Hassan		Season's Coach, KD 3,000
		Season's Rising Star, KD 2,000

Zain also honored Qadsia SC's superstar Bader Al-Mutawa with the Kuwaiti Football Legend Award, in recognition of a career that made history and inspired generations. In addition, a number of outstanding young players from the age-group competitions were honored in recognition of their excellence and to motivate them at the beginning of their football journey.

■ Sheikh Ahmad Al-Yousef: "When efforts come together, we elevate performance and create a stronger environment for players to grow and excel."

■ Dr. Tareq Al-Jalahma: "Our hopes are high and our ambitions are even greater. Through collaboration, we can build a stronger and more sustainable sports ecosystem."

■ Hamad Al-Musaibeeh: "Sports is an ecosystem that builds people, instills values, brings fans together, and inspires youth."

Under-18 League		
Winner	Club	Award
Musfer Khaled Al-Adwani	Kuwait SC	Best Player
		Top Scorer
Rakan Mishal Al-Saeed	Qadsia	Best Goalkeeper

Under-16 League		
Winner	Club	Award
Mohammad Jarrah Al-Otaiqi	Kuwait SC	Best Player
Othman Yousef Al-Kandari	Yarmouk	Best Goalkeeper
Jaber Saud Jaber Sinan	Kazma	Top Scorer of the Season

Under-14 'Hope' League		
Winner	Club	Award
Yousef Bader Al-Enezi	Qadsia	Best Player
Ahmad Khaled Mansouri		Best Goalkeeper
Omar Hamdan Al-Hamdan	Salmiya	Top Scorer of the Season

FIFA TDS Under-13 Promising Talents League		
Winner	Club	Award
Omar Abdulwahab Al-Safi	Kuwait SC	Best Player
Salah Dherar Al-Roudhan		Best Goalkeeper
Yousef Hamdan Al-Maghribi	Kazma	Top Scorer of the Season

This year's ceremony also honored the stars of the Women's Futsal League, as part of Zain's commitment to empowering female sporting talents and highlighting their deserved presence in the local sports scene:

Women's Futsal League		
Winner	Club	Award
Maryam Abdullah Mohammad Noor	Al-Fatat Club	Best Player
Aisha Faisal Al-Saabri	Al-Fatat Club	Best Goalkeeper
Reem Ahmad Al-Mulla	Police Sports Union	Top Scorer of the Season

The media committee was also honored in appreciation of its role in the success of the season's outstanding coverage. The winners of the Best Sports Photo of the Season were also recognized, honoring the lenses that captured the most memorable moments of competition:

Best Photo Award	
Ranking	Winner
First Place	Abdullah Mulla Ali
Second Place	Abdullah Sabil
Third Place	Talal Hadi Al-Nashwan

Before the start of the current season, the Kuwait Football Association formed a technical committee comprising a number of former international players with extensive experience, tasked with developing the technical criteria and standards for selecting the winners of Zain's incentive awards. The committee included Mohammad Al-Failakawi as President, Sameer Dashti as Vice President, Adel Yousef, Hussein Hakem, and Nawaf Al-Khaldi. Zain extended its sincere thanks and appreciation to them for their efforts throughout the season.

Zain's support for Kuwaiti sports will remain a priority, with the aim of advancing national sports and motivating future generations to pursue excellence, contributing to a greater presence for Kuwaiti sports across regional and international platforms.

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Serena enjoys moment despite 3-set loss
 LONDON, July 1, (AP) The roars began even before Serena Williams stepped on Centre Court. Then they grew louder when the 23-time Grand Slam champion arrived to play her first singles match in nearly four years.
 And when it was all over and the 44-year-old Williams had performed admirably in a three-set defeat to an opponent less than half her age in the opening round of Wimbledon with her two daughters cheering her on, Williams smiled as she walked off to a loud round of applause.
 "It was really great to be back at Wimbledon. I never expected to be here," Williams, who did not meet with media after the match, said in a statement released by Wimbledon organizers. "The atmosphere was amazing. Walking out was amazing. I definitely relished it and missed it and enjoyed the moment more than anything."
 In a 6-3, 6-7 (6), 6-3 loss to 20-year-old Maya Joint of Australia on Tuesday, Williams showed she can still crank out serves faster than 120 mph and dictate points with her heavy groundstrokes.
 Movement was an issue for Williams, though, and the 87th-ranked Joint was able to handle Williams' pace and win more of the big points by hitting beyond the American's reach.
 While Williams played two doubles matches just before Wimbledon to announce her comeback to the sport she once dominated, she hadn't played a singles match since the 2022 U.S. Open.
 "She has such an aura, she's just a legend and this court has so many huge names that have played on it," Joint added. "I've been dreaming about this moment since I was a little kid, so this is pretty crazy."
 Williams has 98 career victories and seven titles in singles on the hallowed grass of the All England Club. By contrast, it was Joint's first Wimbledon victory in just her second appearance at the All England Club after losing in the opening round last year.
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FIFA explains ruling that led to disallowed Germany goal

ATLANTA, July 1, (AP) — FIFA explained the tighter regulations that resulted in Germany having a potentially game-winning goal disallowed in its shock elimination from the World Cup.

Defender Jonathan Tah's headed goal in extra time against Paraguay on Monday was ruled out after a video review because of a foul on goalkeeper Orlando Gill.

Replays showed Germany's Waldemar Anton push Gill to the ground, but the minimal contact led to criticism of the decision.

Germany went on to lose the round of 32 game in a penalty shootout, with Tah firing a decisive spot kick over the bar.

FIFA's referees chief Pierluigi Collina said officials had been told to punish incidents when players try to block opponents and make no attempt to play the ball, especially where goalkeepers are concerned.

"Although keeping a position is not a foul per se, when an attacking player is not interested in the ball and deliberately moves, even marginally, with the clear intention of obstructing opponents' movement and prevents him from defending, then referees, and VAR when needed, should carefully analyze the incident and intervene," Collina said. "This is especially the case when the tactic aims to prevent the opposing goalkeeper from being able to defend the goal."

"Coaches and players were informed so it should come as no surprise that referees will punish these fouls."

Collina said moves to curb timewasting had been successful. There are now time limits on goal kicks, throw ins and substitutions, while players are forced to leave the field for one minute after an injury.

"These measures have all been very effective and unanimously considered as very positive innovations," Collina said.

False hope and disappointment: Familiar feelings for Germany after another flop



Germany stands to watch shoot out goals during the World Cup round of 32 soccer match between Germany and Paraguay in Foxborough, Mass., near Boston. (AP)

Fan Zone



A vibrant sea of World Cup fans fills the stands with color, passion, and celebration as supporters from around the world unite in the excitement of the beautiful game. (AP)

MUNICH, July 1, (AP): Another World Cup, another early exit.

Germany should be getting used to disappointment, but it doesn't make it any less painful for a traditional soccer heavyweight that had been tentatively hoping for a fifth World Cup title to restore lost pride.

Germany did manage to survive the group stage for the first time since winning the trophy in 2014, but it's little consolation after Monday's loss to unheralded Paraguay on penalties sent the team home after the first knockout game.

"We messed it up," Joshua Kimmich told reporters after the match in Foxborough, Massachusetts.

It was a familiar feeling for the German captain who also struggled for explanations after the team's group-stage exit at the 2022 World Cup in Qatar.

"As a child, when you watched the

national team during tournaments, it was always semifinals, finals, or world champions. There was always lots of success. You grew up with that, cheering them on," the 31-year-old Kimmich said Monday, when he apologized for the team failing to meet expectations.

"All of us who were on the pitch should feel that, rather than looking to blame someone else. We blew it," Kimmich said in comments reported by dpa.

Germany coach Julian Nagelsmann is in the firing line after some contentious calls - particularly after recalling veteran goalkeeper Manuel Neuer from international retirement just before the tournament after months of denials.

The 40-year-old Neuer failed to justify his inclusion at the expense of Hoffenheim's Oliver Baumann, and was arguably at fault for Ecuador's winning goal in the last group game.

"I gave it my all," Neuer said.

Nagelsmann finally bowed to pressure and gave forward Deniz Undav his first start against Paraguay, but

the move didn't pay off as the Kurdish Yazidi player was unable to add to his three goals and two assists from his first two games as a substitute.

Nagelsmann was also criticized for not playing forward Nick Woltemade at all until he sent him on with extra time looming against Paraguay. Woltemade was among three players who missed in the penalty shootout.

Nagelsmann had raised expectations by saying Germany was aiming to win the title. Ultimately, his team failed to show any justification for such hopes.

Germany played four games at the World Cup, winning two against debutant Curaçao and Ivory Coast, before the losses to Ecuador and Paraguay.

While Paraguay's win was joyously celebrated on the streets of its capital, Asunción, it was considered a major shock - few German fans knew any of the Paraguayan players before the match, and they were already looking forward to a Round of 16 meeting with France.

"You have to beat such a team,"

Neuer said of Paraguay. "That's a fact when you want to measure yourself against teams like France."

Nagelsmann has vowed to stay on as coach, though he was also criticized for his prickly responses to questions after the game.

"I'm still convinced that he's probably the right one to continue," Germany team director Rudi Völler said. "It's not only up to me."

Bernd Neundorff, the president of the German soccer federation, said Tuesday he already met "at length" with Nagelsmann, Völler and sporting director Andreas Rettig, and they agreed "our performance at the World Cup fell short of our standards."

"In the coming days, we will calmly look at the reasons why the team was unable to realize its potential and failed to meet both its own expectations and those of the German football community," Neundorff said. "After such a crushing blow, we cannot and do not wish to simply return to business as usual."

Nagelsmann vows to stay on as coach

Penalty shootouts at WC are drama of 'inhumane' pressure

LOS ANGELES, July 1, (AP) — The World Cup is in the lose-and-go-home stage of the tournament and the pressure keeps rising with every minute of every match.

The biggest pressure cooker of them all: the penalty kick shootout. Exhausted players and goalkeepers face off in a tense one-on-one confrontation that carries the hopes and dreams of entire nations.

Two of the first four matches in the round of 32 were settled by shootouts: Morocco beat the Netherlands and Paraguay bested Germany.

A miss can mean humiliation. A goalkeeper's save or the final bulge of the ball in the back of the net can bring tears of joy to millions.

That kind of pressure can reach "inhumane" levels, almost all of it focused on the penalty takers, said Geir Jordet, a professor at the Norwegian School of Sport Sciences and author of the book, "Pressure: Lessons from the Psychology of the Penalty Shootout."

"In our research, the only emotion everyone agrees is present is anxiety," Jordet said.

Expect more shootouts, more pressure, more anxiety. A record five games at the 2022 World Cup in Qatar were settled by penalty kicks, including the final when Argentina beat France.

"As you go into knockout football it's something that becomes more prominent in the games," England winger Noni Madueke said. "So like every part of our game we want to be at the highest level when it comes to that."

This tense battle of wills is fought over a 12-yard (11-meter) distance between the penalty spot and the goal line. The shootout was added to the game in 1970 and has settled several of the world's biggest tournaments.

The first World Cup final to be settled by penalty kicks was Brazil's 1994 victory over Italy. That shootout also produced one of the most infamous misses in soccer history when Italy great Roberto Baggio sent the final kick over the crossbar.

Techniques vary. Some take the kick quickly. Others pause, taking deep, calming breaths before they approach. Some run and strike it hard. A popular variation is the stutter-step, waiting for the goalkeeper to commit to which way he's going.

The penalty taker faces the most pressure in the moment because he's expected to score, Jordet told The Associated Press by email.

Research shows that the players who start toward the ball almost immediately after the referee's whistle more often miss than those who wait between two and five seconds, he said.

"We suspect this is because those who (wait) extremely short sometimes do so because they, understandably, just want to get this stressful situation done and over with," Jordet said.

It takes guts to be in that moment, United States forward Christian Pulisic said. "For the people that go up and shoot, it takes a lot of courage. It's not easy," Pulisic said. "Goalkeepers get better and better every single year."

Standing between the posts, goalkeepers have three basic choices. Dive left, dive right or stay in the middle in a guessing game of anticipation.

Morocco keeper Yassine Bounou did something critically different. On the decisive save against the Netherlands, he moved to his right while standing up.

By staying upright, Bounou used his left hand to easily swat away the kick from Crysencio Summerville, who was shooting for the upper corner. Had Bounou dived, the ball would have easily found the net.

The best goalkeepers are "creative, deliberate and volatile" in their attempts to disrupt the shooter, Jordet said.

Tactics can include throwing the ball away, verbal insults and physical confrontation at the penalty spot. The mind games can get so hostile they can result in a yellow card for the goalkeeper.

He noted Bounou's well-timed body twitches and hand fakes to disrupt shooters' timing. The "master" of the mind games, Jordet said, is Argentina keeper Emiliano Martínez, who has won his last six penalty shootouts, including the 2022 World Cup final.

"I would say everyone's different, every keeper's different, everyone's got their own routines," said England goalkeeper Jordan Pickford. "You see last night with Bounou. With his saves, it's a different save and they put them off and that happens."

Selecting the lineup for a shootout has its own rhythms and risks for a coach and a team. It is a delicate balance between analytics, experience and gut feeling.

Some players will be automatic choices. Imagine France in a shootout without Kylian Mbappé or Argentina without Lionel Messi with the World Cup on the line.

"The guys who feel the most confident to go up and shoot will want to go shoot. I think that's normal," Pulisic said. "We haven't been in many shootouts with these guys, but like I feel it's a pretty brave, courageous team."

Soccer is a generational story

World Cup buzz has potential to mint more fans among kids — some just toddlers now

LENEXA, Kan., July 1, (AP) — Jude Cornell joined a swarm of toddlers crawling after soccer balls, tossing training cones into the air and relocating a goalie net that was proving to be very, very portable.

"He just started walking," laughed his mother, 27-year-old Kyra Cornell. She's already plotting her son's soccer career during a World Cup-themed event for toddlers at a suburban Kansas City library, about 20 miles (32 kilometers) from the stadium where six matches are being played.

Across the country, experts are watching to see whether the World Cup will give a boost to youth soccer - and mint fans for decades to come.

Soccer already ranks among the most popular youth sports in the country. Among 6- to 12-year-olds, 7.5% played youth soccer in 2024, a slight drop from a decade earlier, but only baseball and basketball recorded higher stats, according to a report from the Aspen Institute.

Look at Haley Garbowski, a midfielder who has been to more professional women's soccer matches than she can count.

Just days after her private Kansas City, Missouri, high school won the state championship match, the 18-year-old was helping out at a summer camp on the Kansas side of the metropolitan area, leading a gaggle of grade-school girls around a circuit of sports that includes rugby, tennis and, of course, her own beloved soccer.

"We were killing it," gushed Garbowski, as she recalled the title game victory in the small school division. In the fall, she is headed to San Diego State University as a business major and considering a career in sports marketing.

Are her grandparents soccer fans? She laughs at the thought. Her mother has become a fan but didn't start out that way, unaware her high school had a soccer team until Garbowski went snooping in an old yearbook.

None of this comes as a surprise to Michael Lewis, an Emory University professor who focuses on the intersection of sports analytics and sports marketing.

"Soccer is a generational story that's building generation after generation, but it takes a long, long time," Lewis said.

Overall, soccer doesn't have the draw of the big three of baseball, basketball and the American brand of tackle-heavy football. Ipsos Sports research shows that only about 1 in 10 Americans consider themselves fans of U.S. soccer or international soccer.

Boomers in particular grew up play-



Ten-month-old Zain Fawaz plays with a soccer ball at a program introducing toddlers to the sport ahead of the World Cup soccer tournament in Lenexa, Kan. (AP)

ing the big three and that influences what they watch now, Lewis said. Ipsos data shows that those 65 and older are especially likely to call themselves fans of the popular trio.

But market researchers see promise with millennials - and Gen Z, those between the ages of 14 and 29.

America's sports landscape began to change in the 1970s, when the now-defunct North American Soccer League signed greats like Pelé, the winner of three World Cups with Brazil.

By the 1980s, U.S. kids were playing, too, including girls thanks to Title IX, the federal law that bans sex-based discrimination in education.

But the gym teachers and parents who coached this first batch had little experience to draw from. Some learned the rules from books. And those in football-dominated towns sometimes resisted soccer, fearful it would pull talent away from the gridiron. Players faced taunts and slurs, and were even accused of being communists.

"I cannot repeat the things I got called," said Darin White, 58, who played and then coached at the college level before becoming the executive director of the Center for Sports Analytics at Samford University in Alabama.

But kids kept playing. The U.S. hosted the World Cup in 1994. Major League Soccer played its inaugural season two years later. Today's parents frequently have played themselves. There are highly competitive travel teams. MLS has joined the player development effort with its MLS Next program. Its players have gotten better, and viewership is up.

When American sports fans are asked why they became a fan of sports generally, about half say it was because of their family's connection to the sport, or that they grew up as a fan of a particular team, Ipsos data shows.



Serena Williams of the United States greets the audience as she leaves after losing to Maya Joint of Australia in their first round women's singles match at the Wimbledon Tennis Championships in London. (AP) — See Page 14

Sports

France continues title charge



Sweden's Besfort Zeneli (22) challenges for the ball with France's Aurelien Tchouameni (8) during the World Cup round of 32 soccer match between France and Sweden in East Rutherford, N.J., near New York. (AP)

Mbappé breaks knockout record

EAST RUTHERFORD, N.J., July 1, (AP): Kylian Mbappé put France ahead with a brilliant crossover step in the 45th minute and then added a second-half goal to break a World Cup knockout round scoring record, and Les Bleus beat Sweden 3-0 Tuesday to set up a round of 16 match against Paraguay.

Bradley Barcola added a 53rd-minute goal for France and Mbappé capped the scoring in the 74th minute for his third two-goal game in four matches. His six goals tied Argentina forward Lionel Messi for the tournament lead and gave him 18 in his World Cup career, one shy of Messi's record.

"I'm very aware of who I am, how I play, what I shall do, but it's not just about me," Mbappé said through a translator. "The entire team is aware of what should be done. It is a new competition that has started today. We did play well, but we were timid. We could have done better at the beginning."

Mbappé's 10 knockout round goals are two more than the previous high by Brazilian greats Leônidas and Ronaldo. France coach Didier Deschamps bowed when his star came to the bench after he was

substituted in the 85th minute.

"We're on a mission. - so am I with them," Deschamps said through a translator.

France, the World Cup runner-up four years ago and a tournament favorite this time, has outscored opponents 13-2, with Michael Olise assisting on five goals.

"They are skilled at knowing when to change the pace and increase it,



France's Kylian Mbappé (10) waves to the crowd as he leaves the game during the World Cup round of 32 soccer match between France and Sweden in East Rutherford, N.J., near New York. (AP)

when to possess the ball, went to fall back," Sweden captain Victor Lindelöf said through a translator.

Seeking to reach its third straight World Cup final, France plays Paraguay on July 4 in Philadelphia, and the winner advances to a quarterfinal against Canada or Morocco five days later at Foxborough, Massachusetts.

On a brutally hot afternoon at MeLife Stadium, site of the World Cup final in July 19, France outshot Sweden 25-7, including 15-3 in the first half. It was 90 degrees Fahrenheit (32 degrees Celsius), sunny and humid at the 5 p.m. kickoff with poor air quality. During the first half hydration break, France defender Lucas Digne let himself be doused by a sprinkler.

Mbappé hit a post in the 32nd minute, raising both hands in disgust, and France nearly went ahead four minutes later on Olise's spectacular bicycle kick from just inside the penalty area, which also clanked off a post.

In the first World Cup meeting between the nations, Mbappé scored after goalkeeper Jacob Widell Zetterström tipped Olise's shot just outside the post.

Olise played a short corner kick to Ousmane Dembélé, who passed to Mbappé near the byline. Mbappé took a crossover step to get around Viktor Gyökeres and from just outside the 6-yard box sent a diagonal shot inside the far post.

Mbappé ran up the center of the field to celebrate his 61st international goal, colliding with Dembélé, and jogged to the bench to hug Deschamps, who returned for the match after going to France for his mother's funeral.

"He knows that he will never be alone with us and we will support him," Mbappé said.

Gustaf Lagerbäck lost the ball ahead of France's second goal. Aurélien Tchouaméni passed to Olise, who nutmegged Lagerbäck, and Barcola took a centering touch and sent the ball past Zetterström's outstretched right hand.

Mbappé entertained the crowd with a backheel pass to Barcola in the buildup to France's third goal. Barcola passed to Olise, who passed to Mbappé as the star sprinted into the penalty area. He steadied the ball with a touch and fired the ball inside the far post.

A crowd of 80,663 raised the record total for the expanded 104-match tournament above 5 million. A majority of fans wore France's blue, with a pocket in Sweden's yellow at one end.

"If we look at where we were not so long ago - we're here and we've played in the World Cup," Lindelöf said. "We lost against one of the best countries in the world."

Mbappé wasn't quite ready to turn his attention to Paraguay just yet.

"I'm looking forward to the changing room and the AC," he said.

Haaland scores deciding goal

Norway edges Ivory Coast for landmark knockout victory

ARLINGTON, Texas, July 1, (AP): Erling Haaland savored the moment after Norway won a knockout game at the World Cup for the first time, a celebration that included a horned helmet atop his head and again sitting on the field with teammates to do the Viking Row in synch with their red-clad fans.

"This is unbelievable. This is history," Haaland said on the field after the game.

A slight tap from Haaland's left foot in the 86th minute was the difference as Norway beat Ivory Coast 2-1 on Tuesday, setting up another World Cup match against five-time champion Brazil - 28 years after a victory that many consider the greatest ever for the Norwegians.

For now, they prefer to enjoy their latest accomplishment.

"What we're going to think about now is to enjoy the win today. We're really happy and proud of ourselves," said Martin Odegaard, the team's captain who banged the drum to set the pace for the postgame row. "Hopefully we can keep dreaming and keep believing and keep performing like we did."

Antonio Nusa scored the opening goal in the first half with a curling kick for Norway, which in its fourth World Cup will next play in the round of 16 against Brazil on Sunday at MetLife Stadium in East Rutherford, New Jersey.

"This is really a dream come true," Nusa said in translated remarks. Norway is in its first World Cup since that 1998 appearance, when the team got to the knockout round only after scoring goals in the 83rd and 89th minutes for an incredible 2-1 comeback win over then-reigning World Cup champion Brazil in the group finale.

Amad Diallo, who had prevented Norway from taking a two-goal lead earlier in the second half, evened the match for Ivory Coast with a left-footed kick in the 74th minute.

Even after Haaland's go-ahead goal, his Norway-record 60th in 53 matches, Ivory Coast kept pressing and had a chance to equalize with a direct free kick by Diallo in the sixth minute of stoppage time. Orjan Nyland made a leaping stop, the last of his four saves, when he deflected the ball away as he extended his left hand across his body.

"After their equalizer, it was easy to panic. But we got our players in the right position and managed to play our game again," Norway coach Ståle Solbakken said.

Haaland's 27 touches were the fewest of any Norway player who played the full match, but he was open after three defenders converged when Patrick Berg moved into the penalty area with the ball before making a quick pass. It was a slow roll over the line after coming off the foot of Haaland, who lunged forward as if he might have to kick it again.

It was his Haaland's fifth goal in three games at this year's tournament. That is one behind Lionel Messi, who has six for Argentina and scored three of those in two group games at the home of the NFL's Dallas Cowboys.

Haaland, who won the Golden Boot in the Premier League last season with 27 goals for Manchester City, has scored in 13 straight competitive international games - a total of 25 goals in that span.

The youthful Elephants, ranked 31st by FIFA, had never before won twice in the same World Cup. This was the fourth World Cup appearance for the West African nation, the same as Norway.

"We are proud for what we achieved," Diallo said. "But a big disappointment because we knew we have quality in the team, we have players that can make a difference anytime."

Nusa scored his first World Cup goal in the 39th minute when he took a few strides past the left corner of the penalty area and sent a right-footed kick between two defenders toward the far post.

Ivory Coast goalkeeper Yahia Fofana made a diving attempt at the ball that was just beyond his extended reach, and he was still in air when he turned his head back to see the ball curl into the net. It was Nusa's ninth international goal in 28 games for Norway.

Diallo evened the score at 1-1 after a give-and-go with Nicolas Pepe, who had scored both Ivory Coast goals in its previous game and was stopped by Nyland in the 55th minute. Diallo found space for his left-footed blast.

That came only about eight minutes after Torbjorn Heggen had a shot for Norway that was deflected away by Diallo, who was right next to his keeper.

Nusa's yellow card in stoppage time before the half set up a free kick by Pepe, but the ensuing header went left of the post.



Norway's Erling Haaland (9) clears the ball during the World Cup round of 32 soccer match between Ivory Coast and Norway in Arlington, Texas, near Dallas. (AP)

Historic night as Mexico ends 40-year knockout drought

MEXICO CITY, July 1, (AP): The 40-year wait is over. Mexicans had learned to live with defeats in the knockout stages of the World Cup. On seven occasions, El Tri fans were left heartbroken at this stage.

Not anymore.

Julián Quiñones and Raúl Jiménez scored within a nine-minute span in the first half and Mexico defeated

Ecuador 2-0 to break a four-decade drought in the knockout stage and progress to the round of 16.

Quiñones opened the scoring in the 22nd minute and Jiménez added a goal in the 31st for the Mexicans, who had not won a knockout-stage match since defeating Bulgaria in the round of 16 when they hosted the tournament in 1986. Mexico coach

Javier Aguirre was one of the starting midfielders in that team in '86.

"It means a lot to me because I am one of those who could not progress in the knockout stage," Aguirre said. "We are in the round of 16 and it is happening a great connection with the fans. We are like a family. It is spectacular."

Mexico lost seven consecutive times at that same stage from 1994 to 2018 and didn't advance past the group stage in 2022.

Aguirre, who returned as Mexico's head coach in August of 2024, was an assistant in 1994 and was the coach in 2002 and 2010.

"We will be on high alert from here until Sunday. We will try to have the players recover from this and we will see if we are able to win again," Aguirre said.

For Quiñones, it was a third goal in the tournament and he is now El Tri's second-highest scorer in World Cup history behind Luis "Matador" Hernández and Javier "Chicharito" Hernández, who scored four each.

Quiñones, who was the scoring leader in the Saudi Pro League last season, has become the spark in the attack that Mexico lacked in previous World Cups.

"I am just happy with the result, that is all that matters now," said

Quiñones, who is playing in his first World Cup with Mexico.

The 29-year-old forward arrived in the country from Colombia at age 17 and became a naturalized citizen in 2023.

"Life is about struggle and fight until you get what you want," he said. "and I am taking full advantage of the opportunity that I got."

Jiménez scored his second goal of the tournament and has 47 with the national team to break a tie with Jared Borgetti. He is five away from tying "Chicharito" Hernández as the all-time leading scorer for Mexico.

Mexico will play another home match on Sunday.

Playing at the iconic Azteca Stadium, the Mexican squad boasts an undefeated record across 10 World Cup matches. Mexico has just two official losses at the venue - the last being a World Cup qualifying defeat to Honduras on Sept. 6, 2013.

With the win, Mexico extended its unbeaten run to 12 games, dating back to a friendly loss against Paraguay in November.

Mexico also became the first CONCACAF side to eliminate a team from CONMEBOL in a World Cup knockout match. Teams from South America won the previous five meetings.

Netherlands coach Koeman resigns

KANSAS CITY, July 1, (AP): Netherlands coach Ronald Koeman resigned after his team was knocked out of the World Cup with a Round of 32 loss to Morocco in a penalty shootout, the earliest exit ever from the tournament for the Dutch team.

The 63-year-old Koeman, who had been leading the Dutch national team for the second time after reaching the semifinals of the 2024 European championship, announced his decision in a social media post.

The Netherlands had reached at least the round of 16 in 11 previous World Cups, including a quarterfinal appearance four years ago in Qatar. This year's tournament expanded to 48 teams, sending 32 to an enlarged first round of the knockout stage.

In his announcement, Koeman said

he shared a dream of a World Cup that would "make history" and no one was more disappointed than he is that it didn't happen. The Netherlands has reached the World Cup final three times but never won it.

The loss to Morocco was the third consecutive time the Netherlands has been eliminated from the World Cup in a shootout. The Dutch had scored a tournament-high 10 goals in the group stage, but scored just one goal from the field against Morocco in a match that was 1-1 before it went to the penalty shootout.

The early departure from the World Cup resulted in some pointed criticism online toward Dutch players, and the Royals Netherlands Football Association said in a statement that some players had been "treated in a racist and discriminatory manner."

World Cup Fixtures

Spain vs Austria 22:00

Friday

Portugal vs Croatia 02:00

Algeria vs Switzerland 06:00