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Amir congratulates US Pres. on 250th Independence Day
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Opinion



Ahmed Al-Jarallah

Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

Yes, Minister of Justice ... Allah restrains through authority what He does not restrain through the Quran

MINISTER of Justice Counselor Nasser Yousef Al-Sumait is working quietly, but with utmost dedication to achieve the vision of developing laws in accordance with the directive of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

The Minister quoted His Highness the Amir as saying, "I give you the green light to amend the legislative system." This directive indicates that the state is proceeding with well-considered steps to modernize its institutions and legislation in line with modernization in all sectors.

The ongoing legal workshop includes carrying out a tedious task. Most laws were enacted decades ago, some as far back as 1961, or even before the inde-

pendence of Kuwait. Many laws require upgrading. The legislative process will continue until all laws are updated within the deadline set by Minister of Justice Nasser Al-Sumait -- the end of December 2027.

Legislative amendments fall within the general framework established by the political leadership for the development of the state as a whole. This is proceeding along multiple lines and in all sectors, not just within a certain ministry.

Therefore, the Cabinet's decision, for example, to grant several privileges to the children of Kuwaiti women whose citizenship was revoked is viewed through the lens of the need to bolster internal social stability in order to keep pace with external conditions.

Based on this, it is preferable to extend these privileges to all those who lost their citizenship, as well as the illegal residents (Bedouns).

These individuals constitute a large segment of the population, so tightening restrictions on them could lead to social problems and crimes.

The only solution that could spare Kuwait much trouble is to create conditions that allow them to rectify their legal status by granting them passports, as it is done for the children of Kuwaiti women and others whose citizenship was revoked, and allowing them to travel and work in any country. Some could rectify their status by regaining their parents' citizenship in the countries they came from, provided that investigations into their circumstances are thorough.

The repercussions of citizenship revocation created social problems and put more pressure on the Bedouns, as their number has increased. This necessitates finding solutions that strengthen social and economic security and improve the reputation of Kuwait internationally. The issue of stateless persons (Bedouns) has long been in dire need of solu-

tion.

At the beginning of the problem, specifically in the 1960s, the number of Bedouns did not exceed 10,000. Today, their number surpassed 100,000 due to natural increase, marriage and birth.

Many Bedouns wish to move to any country to live and work freely. A huge percentage of them are highly qualified in fields that are in demand in the labor market. Granting them passports will enable them to shed the stateless status that plagues their lives, and then facilitate their acquisition of citizenship in other countries.

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Ride racket lands expats in hot soup

Kuwait nabs 10 in drug busts

By Munif Naif

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, July 4: Officers from the General Traffic Department at the Interior Ministry apprehended four expatriates of different nationalities for using their private vehicles to transport passengers in exchange for money.

A security source confirmed that these expatriates

are now under police custody and their vehicles were impounded.

The source added that legal measures were taken against them, and they were transferred to the department for completion of relevant procedures and the impounding of their vehicles.

Meanwhile, the Drug Control General Department (DCGD), led by Director of the department Brigadier General Mohammad Qabazard and his assistant Brigadier General Sheikh Hamad Al-Sabah, continued

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KUNA photos

Smiles and embraces fill the air as graduates celebrate their success.

Health Minister to grads: Shape future of medicine



Kuwait's Minister of Health Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi

KUWAIT CITY, July 4, (KUNA): Kuwaiti Minister of Health Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi on Friday urged fresh medical graduates to shape the future of medicine in the country and

to reflect the quality of the Kuwaiti educational process.

"You are the leaders who will shape the future of medicine in our homeland. You should give a testament to the quality of education you have received and the authentic values upon which you have been raised," the minister addressed the graduation ceremony for the Kuwait University College of Medicine Class of 2026.

He underlined that investing in people yields ever-growing returns over time and marks the core pillar of an advanced healthcare system that promotes the quality of health care and enables individuals to drive development and shape the future.

Kuwait raises 'alarm' over Iran attacks

NEW YORK, July 4, (KUNA): Kuwait has denounced repeated Iranian attacks on its territory, airspace, and civil and vital facilities, along with attacks against Bahrain, as a flagrant breach of state sovereignty, international law and the UN Charter.

This came in a statement read out by the Charge d' Affaires of Kuwait's Permanent Mission to the United Nations, Minister Plenipotentiary Faisal Al-Enezi, during an emergency UN Security Council session held under the agenda item "The Situation in the Middle East."

The session took place at Bahrain's request to discuss recent Iranian attacks targeting Kuwait and Bahrain, mainly the attacks that targeted both Gulf countries on June 28.

The Kuwaiti diplomat called upon the UN Security Council to take on

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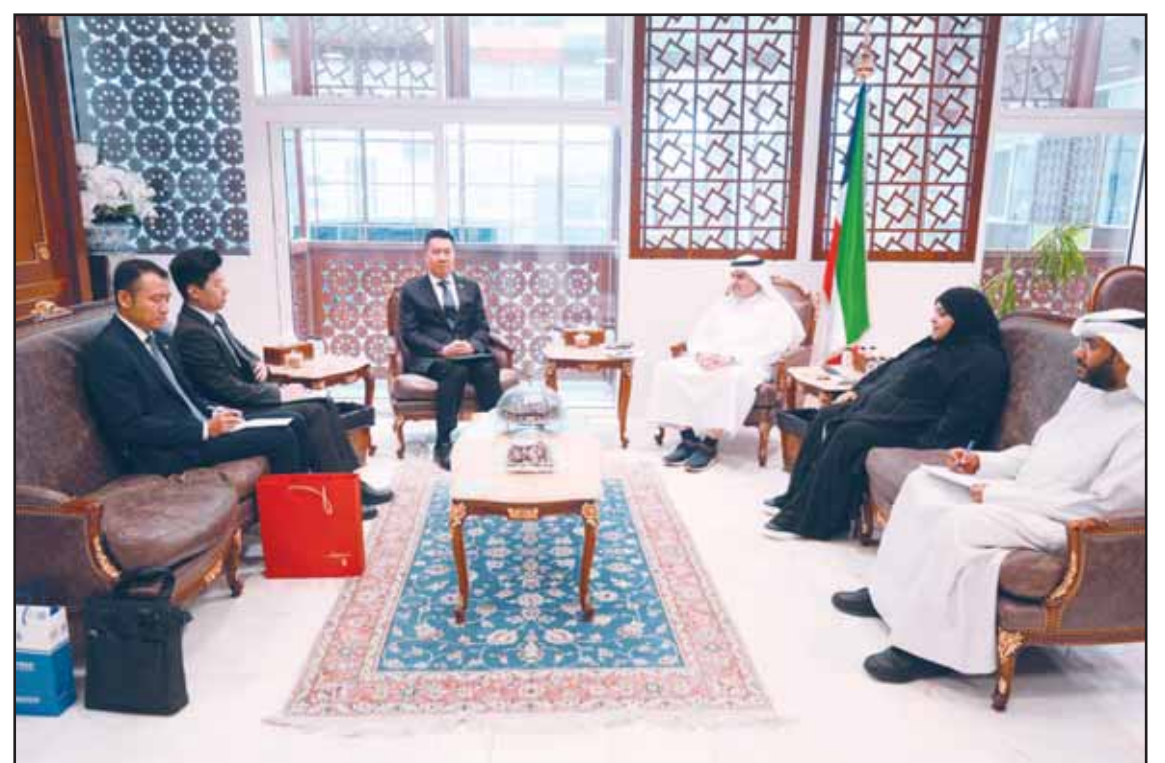


2 Get well soon Saud Al-Farhan!



9 NBK Wealth crowned Kuwait's Best for Next-Gen 2026 by Euromoney

10 ABK launches Microsoft Copilot for M365 solutions



Top: Minister of Justice Counselor Nasser Al-Sumait with the Ambassador of the Kingdom of Morocco to the State of Kuwait Ali Ben Issa. Above: Minister of Justice, Counselor Nasser Al-Sumait, with the Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to the State of Kuwait, Yang Xin.

Minister of Justice explores stronger legal and judicial ties with Morocco and China

KUWAIT CITY, July 4, (KUNA): Kuwaiti Minister of Justice Nasser Al-Sumait met separately with Ambassadors Ali Ben Issa of Morocco, and Yang Xin of China in Kuwait on Thursday.

The meetings focused on ways to promote bilateral relations and

broaden the scope of joint cooperation in legal and judicial fields, said the Ministry of Justice in a press release.

They addressed various topics of mutual interest, aiming to bolster bilateral ties between the State of Kuwait and both the Kingdom of

Morocco and the People's Republic of China.

Al-Sumait underlined his ministry's commitment to bolstering cooperation with brotherly and friendly nations and cementing partnership frameworks in the judicial and legal sectors.

Car privilege discontinued

KPC overhauls benefits for new hires

By Najeh Bilal

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, July 4: The Board of Directors of Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) adopted the recommendations of the Compensation and Development Committee for Employees and Senior Officials, as per its report issued on June 16, following a thorough review of the benefits offered to new employees in the oil sector and the recommendations of the board.

The vice chairman of the board and chief executive officer is authorized to take the necessary measures to implement this decision.

The recommendations regarding benefits for new employees in the oil sector are as follows:

First: Amend the terms and conditions for the promotion eligibility of new employees at KPC and its subsidiaries, specifically the required minimum period of ser-

vice in the highest grade, to be at least three years upon initial promotion. Subsequently, the service period will be amended to two and a half years, then two years, and finally one and a half year for the next promotions. The current policy is applicable to new employees who receive an exceptional performance evaluation rating, exceeding expectations upon initial promotion.

Second: New employees will receive five percent increase in their basic salary upon promotion to a higher grade, provided that the basic salary after the increase is not less than the starting salary in the new grade.

Third: Allocate the budget for granting the annual increase for new employees, that is, five percent of the annual basic salary. A budget will be allocated annually for promotions under this category.

Fourth: The car privilege will be discontinued for all

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Kuwait stop for India's top diplomat

NEW DELHI, July 4, (KUNA): Indian External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar will embark on a visit to the Gulf countries, the US and Belgium from July 5-15.

A statement from the Indian Ministry of External Affairs said that Jaishankar is scheduled to pay an official visit to Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait and Oman from July 05-10.

"During the visit to these countries, he will be meeting with his counterparts and the leadership. The visit will focus on enhanc-

ing our bilateral relations with the four countries and also provide an opportunity to exchange views on regional developments and issues of mutual interest," the statement said.

Jaishankar will then visit New York to launch India's official campaign for the UN Security Council tenure 2028-29. He is also slated to attend the 3rd India-EU Trade and Technology Council meeting and interact with his EU and Belgian counterparts in Brussels on July 14-15.



S. Jaishankar



Prayer Timings
 Fajr 03:19 Asr 15:26
 Sunrise .. 04:53 Maghrib .. 18:51
 Zohr 11:52 Isha 20:23

Law reforms – drastic cut in spouse abuse, drug peddling

Red light violations, speeding see major downturn: report

KUWAIT CITY, July 4, (KUNA): Less than a year after the Kuwaiti government announced the largest legislative reform and modernization plan in the country's history, new laws have moved from drafting stage to becoming actual reform tools making a measurable difference in development and social security indicators.

Since August of last year, the official gazette Kuwait Alyawm has published nearly 140 decrees, including extensive amendments to existing legislation introducing new laws.

Official statistics demonstrate the impact of these legislative reforms, which have brought significant changes to many key indicators related to public safety, protecting society, safeguarding lives and property and strengthening the state's ability to advance comprehensive development.

One of the most significant reforms was the Family Protection from Domestic Violence Law, which came into force in mid-March. The law represents a strategic step toward enhancing family stability in line with Kuwait's constitutional commitments.

The law's impact has already been reflected in the justice system. Statistics show that domestic violence cases registered with the Public Prosecution declined by 33 percent during the first three months of implementation.

Minister of Justice Nasser Al-Sumait stated that the number of cases dropped by 158, from 486 cases during the same period the previous year to 328 cases. This, he said, demonstrates the new law's effectiveness in regulating and resolving family disputes.

The legal philosophy behind the law seeks to balance stronger family protection with preventing abuse of legal procedures. It allows for reconciliation and settlement in disputes where the social nature of the case permits, while maintaining strict protection for the most serious offenses.

At the same time, the law prohibits waivers or settlements in particularly serious crimes, including sexual assault, violence committed by children against their parents and abuse of children or individuals lacking legal capacity.

Legislative reforms have also strengthened efforts to protect society from drug-related crimes.

Decree No. 159 of 2025 on combating narcotics and psychotropic substances, which took effect in mid-December, has led to unprecedented declines in drug trafficking cases.

First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah stated that the new drug law has reduced drug smuggling into Kuwait by 80 percent while in-



Sheikh Fahad



Nasser Al-Sumait

creasing street prices by 200-300 percent across all drug categories.

He also said security authorities have successfully intercepted approximately 95 percent of drug shipments attempting to enter the country.

The latest official statistics showed that drug importation cases fell by approximately 86 percent during the first half of this year compared with the same period in 2025, declining from 102 cases to just 15, and drug trafficking cases decreased by nearly 49 percent, falling from 354 cases to 184.

The law has also had a humanitarian impact. Reports of addicts increased by 14.9 percent, reflecting greater willingness to seek confidential treatment under the expanded protections provided by the legislation.

The law strengthens deterrence through two parallel approaches: tougher penalties for all narcotics and psychotropic substance offenses, and extremely severe punishments - including life imprisonment and the death penalty - for the most serious crimes.

Statistics

Authorities attribute these results to both the stronger legal framework and intensified law enforcement efforts coordinated between judicial and security agencies.

Meanwhile, the public has also witnessed major changes following the implementation of Traffic Law No. 5 of 2025, which has significantly improved driving behavior and compliance with traffic regulations.

According to Ministry of Interior statistics: red-light crossing violations dropped by 63 percent, decreasing from 140,539 violations to 51,732, and speeding violations fell by 65 percent, from 1,618,739 to 561,820.

In just the first month of the law, violations detected by automated traffic cameras - including speeding and red-light crossing offenses - declined by 83 percent.

The ministry also reported a 75 percent reduction in violations for not putting seat belts and using mobile phones while driving.

Most importantly, road fatalities declined by 55 percent, with 10 deaths recorded in May 2025 compared with 22 in May 2024.

On another front, the government recently announced plans to prequalify real estate de-

velopers for three investment opportunities under the Real Estate Developer Law No. 89 of 2025, which officially entered into force in August 2025.

The projects include approximately 5,000 housing units across the cities of Al-Mutlaa, Saad Al-Abdullah and Jaber Al-Ahmad.

Legislative amendments to the Civil and Commercial Procedures Law and the Criminal Procedures Law have also significantly reduced court caseloads.

The second half of 2025 saw total pending court cases declining by approximately 21 percent, from about 534,000 to 423,000, cases before the Court of Cassation decreased by 45 percent, from around 12,000 to 7,000, and criminal cases before the Court of First Instance fell by 27 percent, from roughly 286,000 to about 208,000.

Civil and commercial appeal cases declined by approximately 27 percent, dropping from around 6,000 to 4,000, and payment orders issued under civil and commercial procedures decreased by nearly 40 percent, from approximately 56,000 to about 34,000.

Internationally, Kuwait maintained its position in the 2025 Corruption Perceptions Index, despite an increase in the number of countries included in the ranking. Officials attribute this stability to extensive legislative and institutional reforms.

The National Assembly approved Law No. 69 of 2025, amending the founding law of the Public Authority for Anti-Corruption (Nazaha). The amendments are intended to strengthen transparency, provide additional legal safeguards, ensure all corruption allegations are subject to judicial oversight and prevent impunity.

Justice Minister Al-Sumait previously announced what he described as the largest legislative modernization initiative in Kuwait's history, involving cooperation among government agencies and civil society while leveraging digital technologies to improve access to justice and legal services.

At the end of September 2025, Kuwait Government reviewed a plan, which aims to modernize approximately 25 percent of Kuwait's legislation - around 250 laws - by December 2026.

The initiative focuses on three main strategic pillars covering: social, economic and criminal legislation.

The plan also includes clear performance indicators and implementation timelines to ensure reforms are completed according to schedule.

Since its launch, Kuwait's legislative system has undergone rapid modernization designed to keep pace with economic, administrative and technological developments, improve efficiency of the justice system and address shortcomings identified through practical experience with existing laws.



His Highness the Amir



President Donald Trump

Amir congratulates US Pres. on 250th Independence Day

KUWAIT CITY, July 4, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a cable of congratulations Saturday to US President Donald Trump on the 250th anniversary of the United States' Independence Day.

In the cable, His Highness the Amir extended his sincere congratulations, highlighting the deep-rooted historical and strategic ties binding Kuwait and the United States.

His Highness affirmed the mutual commitment of both nations to further consolidate bilateral relations and expand cooperation across various fields to serve their common interests.

His Highness also wished President Trump continued good health and well-being, expressing his aspirations for further progress and prosperity for the United States and its friendly people.

Crown Prince congratulates

His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent a cable of congratulations Saturday to US President Donald

Trump on the 250th anniversary of the United States' Independence Day.

In the cable, His Highness the Crown Prince extended his sincere congratulations, highlighting the deep-rooted historical and strategic ties binding Kuwait and the United States.

His Highness also wished President Trump continued good health and well-being.

Prime Minister congratulates

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah sent a cable of congratulations Saturday to US President Donald Trump on the 250th anniversary of the United States' Independence Day.

Defense Min. congratulates

Minister of Defense Sheikh Abdullah Ali Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah sent a cable of congratulations to US Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth on the occasion of the 250th anniversary of the independence of the United States.

This came in a press release by the Ministry of Defense on Saturday.

Get well soon Saud Al-Farhan!

KUWAIT CITY, July 4: Colleague Saud Al-Farhan is undergoing cardiovascular surgery at the Amiri Hospital, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The daily wishes him a speedy recovery and prays to God Almighty that the operation will be successful and that he will be granted good health and well-being.

The daily wishes Al-Farhan a full recovery from this health challenge and his safe return to his family, loved ones, and colleagues as soon as possible.



Saud Al-Farhan



KUNA photo

Kuwait's Permanent Representative to the United Nations and other international organizations in Geneva, Ambassador Nasser Al-Hayn, during the urgent debate on the human rights situation.

Kuwait expresses profound concern over Sudan status

GENEVA, July 4, (KUNA): The State of Kuwait expressed on Friday its deep concern over humanitarian developments in and around the city of El Obeid, Sudan.

It strongly condemned the violations committed by the Rapid Support Forces, including acts of violence and attacks targeting innocent civilians and civilian infrastructure; obstructing their access to basic services.

This came in a statement delivered by Permanent Representative to the United Nations and other international organizations in Geneva, Ambassador Nasser Al-Hayn, during the urgent debate on the human rights situation in and around El Obeid in the context of the ongoing conflict in Sudan, before the 62nd session of the Human Rights Council.

The Kuwaiti senior diplomat emphasized that the optimal path to resolving the Sudanese crisis lies in an immediate ceasefire, prioritizing dialogue, and resuming a comprehensive political process led by the Sudanese themselves. This process must preserve Sudan's sovereignty, unity, territorial integrity, and independence of national decision-making, and support efforts aimed at achieving a comprehensive and sustainable peaceful settlement that meets the aspirations of its people.

In this regard, Al-Hayn carried on, the State of Kuwait calls for a unified stance from the international community regarding the suffering of the brotherly Sudanese people and support for efforts aimed at stopping the fighting, alleviating human suffering, and achieving peace and stability in Sudan.

Kuwaiti gets 10 years jail in link to Hezbollah, Iran IRGC

KUWAIT CITY, July 4: The State Security Circuit of the Court of Appeals sentenced a Kuwaiti citizen to ten-year imprisonment for joining Hezbollah and meeting with members of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The defendant had previously received a pardon for a ten-year sentence in the Abdali Cell case.

In another case, the court upheld the acquittal of a citizen who is accused of

posting videos on social media in support of Hezbollah and the Houthi movement.

The court also upheld a five-year prison sentence for a Bedoun resident accused of offending the Amir's rights on the X platform, and ordered his X account to be suspended for one year.

The State Security Court of Appeals also upheld the decision not to punish citizens accused of expressing sympathy and inciting sedition on social media during the Iranian attacks.

Subsidies continue to ease citizens troubles

By Mohammad Ghanem
 Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, July 4: The state budget report for fiscal year 2026/2027 revealed that the government continues to provide subsidy for basic commodities to help citizens cope with the rising cost of living.

A budget of KD244.713 million was allocated for the cost of living reduction item, in addition to continuing to provide subsidized food commodities and related services.

The report clarified that the allocated amount falls under the expenditures of ministries and government agencies, specifically within the category of "Reducing the Cost of Living," which includes subsidies provided by government entities to beneficiaries to implement projects according to specific conditions.

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry is responsible for providing food supply services, which include ensuring the availability of basic and subsidized commodities for citizens, as well as maintaining commodity reserves in accordance with the state's strategy.

According to the ministry's website, it will provide 116 subsidized and discounted food commodities this year.

The ministry offers 11 food supply services, most notably issuing new ration cards to citizens, modifying ration card data, and adding or removing beneficiaries from the supply card.

Ruling upheld, man gets compensation and work

KUWAIT CITY, July 4: The Court of Appeals upheld the ruling of a lower court that obligated the Ministry of Health to grant KD5,000 compensation to a senior electronics technician, after overturning the decision to terminate the employee for being absent from work for 15 days, and then ordered the reinstatement of the employee, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Attorney Mohammad Al-Sayegh filed the lawsuit on behalf of the employee, disclosing that she joined the ministry as an electronics technician and progressed through the ranks to become a senior electronics technician. He said his client was surprised when the ministry terminated her on grounds of being absent from work.

Al-Sayegh affirmed in court that his client worked throughout the period in question, and that the termination decision was unfounded.

The Administrative Court overturned the termination decision, along with its consequences, and ordered the reinstatement of the employee.

The employee and the ministry appealed the ruling. Then, the Court of Appeals upheld the ruling of the lower court to overturn the termination decision.

After the announcement of the final ruling, Al-Sayegh filed a lawsuit seeking compensation for damages that his client suffered as a result of her termination. The court ordered the ministry to pay KD5,000 compensation to the employee.

Other Voices

Advantages & drawbacks of 65 years of experience

By Ahmad alsarraf

THE experience of the National Assembly of Kuwait is considered one of the most distinctive Arab parliamentary experiences, as it combines a written constitution, periodic elections, and a relatively broad space for political competition and accountability. However, it has been an incomplete experience, as its powers have periodically clashed with the executive branch, in addition to cases of dissolution and suspension.

Since 1962, the National Assembly has been part of Kuwait's political contract based on consultation, participation, and a balance between the ruling family and society, which has led Kuwait to be repeatedly described as a unique case in the Gulf and the Arab world.

Therefore, the experience is not measured solely by the existence of a parliament, but also by its ability to exercise questioning powers, hold votes of confidence, and raise public issues.

As a result, elections have produced opposition blocs and figures, including Islamists, liberals, and independents, and have allowed for a degree of genuine debate within the National Assembly. This dynamism has also been reflected in the rising level of political discourse.

However, competition was not entirely open, and the legislative authority was not always stable or immune. Many analysts believe the experiment required a fundamental review and reassessment. It also led to distortions and negative consequences, including recurring social and political conflicts that deviated from the norm, and widespread corruption.

The failure of the experience became evident when parliamentary competition was polluted by the buy-

ing of loyalties and attempts at material gain, which had a negative impact on society as a whole.

Intervention was therefore deemed necessary to end this approach and restore order and discipline in society. As a result, a decision was made to suspend certain articles of the constitution in order to review positions and implement the necessary political, social, and economic changes.

Democracy refers to the rotation of power, as is the case in Western republics and elsewhere. There are imperfect democracies that are considered productive and stable, where social justice prevails and, in some aspects, may even surpass that of Western democracies. Wouldn't it be better for us, at this stage, to have a free press with broad scope and genuine, responsible freedom of expression, rather than a weakened parliament unable to fully hold the government accountable?

However, a free press alone cannot be considered a complete substitute for parliament, as democracy is generally understood to include popular sovereignty, elections, separation of powers, and mechanisms for public and institutional accountability.

Nevertheless, the existence of a free press, especially during transitional phases, is crucial as it serves as an important watchdog. The government can also benefit from the press in gauging public and elite opinion on its performance, identifying shortcomings and deficiencies, and addressing them.

The press plays a supervisory, cultural, educational, and political role, and is a critical factor in exposing corruption and preventing abuses. It acts as a watchdog over government performance, even in light of the broad powers granted to the Cabinet during the transitional phase.

At the same time, it is important to regulate the press through a flexible law that prevents unfounded accusations or deliberate defamation without evidence.

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diwaniya ديوانية

A DIGEST OF PUBLIC OPINION

Why do projectiles keep hitting Kuwait, Bahrain?

“THE recent developments, particularly the continued Iranian attacks on Arabian Gulf states, are not related to the claims Tehran uses to justify them. Rather, they are seen as an exploitation of the sensitive situation between Iran and the United States to exert pressure on Gulf states and declare, through these attacks, that Iran is in control of the region.” Kuwaiti journalist **Salem Al-Wawan** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

“The continuation of these attacks confirms that the Iranian regime’s approach has not changed and will not change, and it underscores the importance of collective efforts to prevent such violations.”



Salem Al-Wawan

“The joint Gulf-American meeting held in the Bahraini capital, Manama, concluded with a firm stance aimed at preventing Iran from achieving what it sought through the memorandum of understanding with the United States.”

“Despite Iran’s awareness that the military strikes it is facing primarily come from the United States and Israel, the continued launching of missiles and drones towards Kuwait and Bahrain carries messages that transcend the direct military dimension, and indicate its abandonment of the commitments it made in communications with most of the foreign ministers of the Gulf Cooperation Council states.”

“The Iranian attacks are not merely geographic targeting, but they are part of a war of influence through which Iran seeks to increase pressure on its adversaries, with Kuwait and Bahrain viewed as part of this strategy.”

“From the perspective of the Gulf security system, which is allied with the United States, any threat or attack against these countries is intended to send a message that any confrontation with Iran will not remain confined to Tehran and Washington or Tel Aviv, but could extend throughout the entire region.”

“Escalation gives Iran, or its allies, political and military leverage in any future negotiations by raising the cost of the conflict for all parties involved.”

“On the other hand, such attacks could backfire, as they provide the United States and its partners with justification to strengthen their military presence and expand deterrence measures in the Gulf.”

“Ultimately, the region faces a delicate equation. Every missile or drone targeting Gulf states not only poses a security risk but also reflects Iran’s desire to send political messages through force, while Gulf states bear the cost of regional tensions, despite not being a direct party to the U.S.-Iran confrontation.”

Also:

“The recent US-Iran agreement, brokered by Pakistan and Qatar, was not so much a victory for diplomacy and was more an example of coercive diplomacy,” Kuwaiti writer **Dr. Nasser Hussein Abbas** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

“In exchange for dismantling Iran’s uranium enrichment infrastructure, Washington left Gulf states to bear the heaviest price, which was to accept Tehran’s de facto control over the Strait of Hormuz and its transformation into a platform for collecting illegal transit fees. This shift came as a major shock, as it forced Gulf capitals to closely reassess the geopolitical situation and reconsider traditional security alliances.”

“The Gulf states must adopt strategic alternatives. Kuwait represents the most sensitive indicator of instability in the northern Gulf. Therefore, the threat of closing the Strait struck at the core of its security and economic doctrine. Kuwait relies on the Strait of Hormuz to export approximately 2.4 to 2.5 million barrels of oil per day, which accounts for around 90 percent of its revenue.”

“With shipping disruptions and insurance costs skyrocketing by 300 percent, technical challenges have emerged, threatening to force production cuts to avoid exceeding storage capacity. This situation highlights the risks of relying on a single maritime route for a country’s primary resource.”

“To overcome these constraints, Kuwait has accelerated work on Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port, with a capacity of 1.8 million containers in its first phase, alongside plans to connect it to the Gulf railway network and the development corridor.”

“The goal is to transform it from an isolated terminal into a land-based launching point extending across the desert towards open ports. Based on the principle that “preventing harm takes precedence over pursuing benefits,” Kuwaiti diplomacy has shifted from its traditional balancing approach toward “active hedging.”

“This has been reflected in strengthening strategic and defense partnerships with influential powers such as China and Turkey, as well as

establishing logistical understandings with Pakistan to ensure that Kuwait’s strategic depth is not compromised in international arrangements.”

“From Kuwait’s situation, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) has realized that individual security is threatened by the risk of closing the Strait of Hormuz, through which around one-fifth of the world’s oil supply (approximately 20 million barrels per day) passes.”

“The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) is currently moving toward becoming a “single logistical entity” with access to the wider region. The GCC is considering establishing interconnected oil pipeline projects extending to the Omani coast to ensure overland flow to secure export terminals.”

“Oman, with its access to the Arabian Sea, represents a crucial strategic depth, operating along two axes. First, the development of large-scale food storage facilities, including shared warehouses and silos in Duqm and Salalah, to secure the needs of the Gulf, which imports around 80 to 90 percent of its food. Supplies would be transported overland via a rail network, bypassing the need to pass through the Strait of Hormuz.”

“Second, the creation of a unified logistics corridor linking Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port in the north with Omani ports in the south, potentially transforming the Arabian Peninsula into a “global land bridge” connecting Asian and European trade routes.”

“The most important lesson for Kuwait and the Gulf states is that the cost of a “fragile peace” may be higher than that of war.”

“National security engineering and a shift toward Omani ports and land routes have become necessary. Protecting sovereignty and ensuring food and energy security have necessitated breaking free from the constraints of traditional geography and venturing into the open expanse of the Arabian Sea.”

“Nations are not built on material resources alone. They are built first and foremost on individuals who believe in their ability to shape the future,” columnist **Muhammad Nasser Al-Aleem** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

“Hope is not merely a feeling. It is a driving force that inspires action, strengthens confidence, and enables societies to overcome crises and transform challenges into opportunities for achievement.”

“Experience has shown that nations that maintained a spirit of optimism during the most difficult circumstances were able to recover and achieve renewal despite the hardships they faced. Hope strengthens willpower, willpower drives action, and action is the foundation upon which development and progress are built.”

“Islam established hope as a fundamental value in human life, linking faith in God with taking the necessary steps. God Almighty says, “For indeed, with hardship [will be] ease. Indeed, with hardship [will be] ease.” A believer does not surrender to despair but looks to the future with confidence, believing that every hardship has an end, that relief follows patience, and that success is the result of perseverance.”

“The cultivation of hope begins within the family, where children are raised with self-confidence, a sense of responsibility, and a belief in the value of knowledge and hard work. These values are strengthened in schools and universities through the promotion of initiative, creativity, and service to the community. Their importance extends to the workplace, which needs leaders who inspire enthusiasm, encourage innovation, and instill confidence in their employees.”

“The media plays a vital role in fostering hope by highlighting inspiring role models, showcasing success stories, and shedding light on community initiatives that strengthen confidence in the future and encourage giving back, while avoiding the exaggeration of failures or the spread of despair.”

“Preserving our nation is a shared responsibility that begins with excellence in our work, respect for the law, adherence to our values, and a commitment to serving the community.”

“Every positive word, creative idea, and sincere effort adds another building block to the foundation of development. In a world of rapid change, hope remains the force that sustains nations and drives them forward. Nations do not progress through despair, but through citizens who believe in their mission, work with dedication, and are certain that the future is shaped by hope, built through hard work, and strengthened by the cooperation of all.”

— Compiled by Simi K. Kutty



Farwaniya Governorate photo
Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Athbi Nasser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah receives officials from Kuwaiti Association for the Prevention of Family Disintegration.

Talks focus on ‘one family’, social cohesion

KUWAIT CITY, July 4: Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Athbi Nasser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah on Thursday met with Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Kuwaiti Association for the Prevention of Family Disintegration Khaled Al-Mutairi, along with board members Abdulaziz Al-Mukhaizeem, Dr. Mariam Al-Azmi and Eng. Dalal Al-Ziyadi.

During the meeting, they discussed ways to strengthen cooperation between Farwaniya Governorate and the association, as well as a number of initiatives and programs aimed at preventing family disintegration and strengthening social co-

hesion. The Governor affirmed the important role played by public benefit institutions and specialized associations in serving the community, while praising the efforts of the Kuwaiti Association for the Prevention of Family Disintegration.

The board chairman and members expressed their thanks and appreciation to the Governor for the warm reception, acknowledging his commitment in supporting community initiatives and strengthening partnership with civil society organizations in the interest of the public.



Map details the closure.

Road No. 85 closed near Jaber Al-Ahmad Block 1

KUWAIT CITY, July 4: The General Traffic Department announced the closure of Road No. 85 opposite Jaber Al-Ahmad Block 1, starting from the roundabout towards Doha Road, reports **Al-Seyassah** daily.

The department revealed that the road was closed on Saturday, July 4, and will continue to be closed for road maintenance work until Tuesday, August 4.



Municipality photo

Abandoned cars are carried away by the Municipality.

Drive on to maintain hygiene and services

KUWAIT CITY, July 4: Inspection teams from the Public Hygiene and Road Occupancy Department of the Mubarak Al-Kabeer Municipality intensified their inspection campaigns to monitor and remove violations of hygiene and road occupancy regulations, reports **Al-Seyassah** daily.

The Public Relations Department of Kuwait Municipality explained that the campaigns targeted residential areas in the governorate, aiming to improve public cleanliness and remove all obstructions to traffic.

The inspections resulted in the removal of 11 abandoned and scrap vehicles, two boats, and a caravan, which were impounded, in addition to the issuance of 15 public hygiene and road occupancy citations.

The field teams issued 19 removal warnings, including notices for abandoned vehicles and commercial containers. Twenty-four old containers were replaced with new ones as part of efforts to improve cleanliness and services provided to citizens and residents.

108 citations issued

KFF training courses to begin July 7, end on 14

By Munif Naif
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, July 4: The Kuwait Fire Force (KFF), in cooperation with the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training (PAAET), announced the opening of registration for four training courses for the first semester of the 2026/2027 academic year from July 7-14.

The courses include Bachelor of Science in Fire Engineering Technology for officer training, Fire Officer Diploma (Lieutenant), Fire Sergeant and Corporal (Firefighting-Security).

Applications should be submitted online through the official website of PAAET or the ‘Sahel’ application.

Those wishing to register are encouraged to complete the procedures within the specified period and to review the admission requirements and registration process on the official platforms.

108 citations issued: The General Traffic Department at the Ministry of Interior continued its traffic campaigns targeting vehicles parked illegally and obstructing traffic in front of hospitals.

The campaign conducted on Friday resulted in the issuance of 108 traffic violation citations and impoundment of three vehicles.

According to a security source, the violation citations were issued at the parking lots of Jaber Hospital, Jahra Hospital and Adan Hospital.

Suffocation in flat blaze

KUWAIT CITY, July 4: Four people suffered from shortness of breath when fire broke out at an apartment in a residential building in Farwaniya, reports **Al-Seyassah** daily.

Firefighting teams controlled the fire and prevented it from spreading to neighboring apartments.

According to a security source, the Operations Unit at the Ministry of Interior received information about the fire in an apartment. Security patrols, firefighters and ambulance were immediately dispatched to the location.

The source said the firefighters extinguished the fire in record time, while paramedics administered first aid on the four individuals who experienced difficulty in breathing.

Fire in scrapyard: Fire broke out in the Al-Na’ayem scrap yard on Al-Salmi Road early Saturday morning, reports **Al-Seyassah** daily.

Firefighters from Al-Shaqaya, Al-Jahra Industrial, Al-Qairawan, and Support stations rushed to the location and extinguished the fire. No casualties were reported. Investigations were launched to determine the cause of the fire.

27% decline in ‘spouse abuse’

‘No pardon for incest’

KUWAIT CITY, July 4: The Kuwait Association Against Violence praised the announcement by Minister of Justice Counselor Yousef Al-Sumait regarding a 27 percent decrease in domestic violence cases during the first months of implementing the new law, along with his confirmation that crimes of sexual assault within the family cannot be waived by the victim, reports **Al-Seyassah** daily.

The association explained that these indicators reflect the success of the legislative and institutional approach in strengthening the protection of the family and society.


Chairman of the association, Lawyer Ali Al-Ali, stated that the positive results announced by the Ministry of Justice are the fruit of integrated efforts between government agencies and civil society organizations.

He explained that the association played an active role in supporting the system for combating violence by submitting legal proposals, preparing studies, organizing seminars and workshops, and launching awareness campaigns.

The association, in a working paper submitted to the Ministry of Justice, proposed the creation of special criminal protection for the elderly and parents, which would enhance legal protection for these groups and align with the state’s direction toward developing the legislative system to protect the most vulnerable groups.


He emphasized that the Ministry of Justice’s position of not allowing waivers in cases of sexual assault within the family reflects the state’s commitment to protecting human dignity and preserving victims’ rights, and confirms that these crimes affect public order.

Al-Ali affirmed that the association will continue to present legislative and awareness initiatives and proposals, and support all efforts that would enhance the protection of Kuwaiti families.



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Other Voices

All of Kuwait is celebrating Egypt's victory ... phrase that tells tale of two loving nations

By Bassam Al-Qassas

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, July 4: The joy of Egyptians over their national football team's qualification for Round 16 of the 2026 World Cup, following their well-deserved victory over Australia, was not confined to the streets of Cairo, Alexandria or the squares of Egyptian governorates.

It extended to every Arab home. Kuwait was among the first countries to experience this achievement moment by moment. Kuwaitis celebrated the victory as if it were the victory of their own national team.

Perhaps, the most eloquent expression of these sincere feelings was the video that Kuwaiti Ambassador to Cairo Ghanem Al-Ghanem sent to me. It featured images of the Egyptian national team players, prominently displayed with a simple phrase, yet profound in meaning: "All of Kuwait is celebrating Egypt's victory."

It was not just a diplomatic congratulatory message, it was a heartfelt message from an ambassador who is fully aware of the deep-rooted relationship between the two countries. It reflects the feelings of the Kuwaiti people who share historical and human ties with Egypt that neither time nor circumstances could shake.

As soon as the referee blew the final whistle, announcing Egypt's qualification, congratulatory messages poured in from all over Kuwait, confirming that the Egyptians' joy resonated deeply with their Kuwaiti brothers.

In one Kuwaiti diwaniya (traditional gathering place), Bu Jassim, one of the famous fans of Al-Arabi Club, could not hold back his tears as he



Bassam Al-Qassas

watched the final whistle among those present at the diwaniya, who erupted in jubilation at the Pharaohs' victory. This touching scene proved how football can unite hearts.

Kuwaiti diwanias transformed into celebration venues for this achievement. Among the first to express congratulations was Secretary General of Kuwaiti Diwanias Uncle Fahd Al-Muajil who said, "Congratulations to all of us... Egypt's joy is Kuwait's joy, and this is no surprise. History testifies to the depth of this relationship."

Former Kuwaiti Ambassador and Minister of Education Rashid Al-Hamad summed up the scene, affirming, "Indeed... we are all overjoyed."

Former Kuwaiti Electricity Minister Khaled Al-Fadhel confirmed that everyone witnessed every detail of the match until the very last moment. He said, "We are all overjoyed. We watched the match from the beginning until the final penalty kick."

The joy extended to Arab diplomats in Kuwait. Omani Ambassador to Kuwait Dr. Saleh Al-Kharousi described the Egyptian national team's qualification as "a magnificent football achievement." Moroccan Ambassador Ali bin Issa congratulated the Egyptian team, saying, "Congratulations! You played a fantastic match." Former Jordanian Ambassador Jumaa Al-Abadi said, "Congratulations! Egypt's victory is a victory for all Arabs."

Congratulations poured in from Advisor Abdulaziz Al-Fahad and Advisor Yousef Al-Shammari, while United Nations Ambassador for Community Partnership and Chairman of the Board of Directors of Al-Awazem Charitable Foundation Hamad Al-Bseis summarized everyone's feelings, saying, "It is a victory for us... and for all Arabs."

Congratulatory messages also poured in from Egyptian military and civilian figures in Cairo, affirming that this achievement is not just a sporting triumph, but a pan-Arab occasion that united feelings.

At a Kuwaiti home, a gracious Kuwaiti woman expressed her feelings,

saying, "You made us so happy... you gladdened our hearts."

Meanwhile, her children and grandchildren were glued to the television, cheering for Egypt and experiencing the joy as if they were cheering for the Kuwaiti national team.

These heartwarming scenes, repeated in Kuwaiti diwanias and homes, needed no explanation. Ambassador Ghanem Al-Ghanem echoed this sentiment, saying, "All of Kuwait is overjoyed by Egypt's victory."

This is not mere flattery or a protocol phrase, but a genuine sentiment forged through many years of love, shared history and fraternal bonds between the Egyptian and Kuwaiti peoples. When Egypt rejoices, Kuwait shares that joy. Whenever Egypt achieves a milestone, thousands of Kuwaiti hearts celebrate it wholeheartedly.

This scene reaffirms that Egyptian-Kuwaiti relations have long transcended the boundaries of politics and diplomacy, becoming a relationship between two peoples united by affection, loyalty and a shared destiny. Just as Egypt stood by Kuwait at pivotal moments in its history, so does Kuwait. Kuwaitis will always hold Egypt in a special place in their hearts.

The Egyptian national team secured its place in Round 16, but at the same time, it gave millions of Arabs, especially the Kuwaiti people, an exceptional night. Among the thousands of congratulatory messages, Ambassador Ghanem Al-Ghanem's statement is the most expressive and truthful description of the entire scene: "All of Kuwait is overjoyed by Egypt's victory."

This statement tells not just the story of a match, but a tale of deep-rooted brotherhood between two nations, whose bonds have proven time and again to transcend football. The genuine affection between Egypt and Kuwait is lasting. The joy of one will always be the joy of the other, just as Ambassador Ghanem Al-Ghanem said, "All of Kuwait is overjoyed by Egypt's victory."

Amir congratulates Belarus President on 'National Day'

KUWAIT CITY, July 4, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent on Friday a cable of congratulations to President of Belarus Aleksandr Lukashenko on his country's National Day.

His Highness the Amir wished the president lasting good health, his country and people progress and prosperity.

Crown Prince congratulates

His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent on Friday

a cable of congratulations to President of Belarus Aleksandr Lukashenko on his country's National Day.

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

PM congratulates

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah sent on Friday a cable of congratulations to President of Belarus Aleksandr Lukashenko on his country's National Day.

Prompt issuance of ID cards on weekends service available

MoJ opens 'Khairan Mall' center offering legal, property advice

KUWAIT CITY, July 4: The Ministry of Justice (MoJ) announced that operations at its new service center at Khairan Mall will begin on Sunday, offering services including powers of attorney and real estate certificate issuance, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

In a press release, the ministry explained that the citizen service center at Khairan Mall was inaugurated by Ahmadi Governor Sheikh Hamoud Jaber Al-Ahmad and the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior Major General Abdulwahab Al-Wuhaib.

The center, which opened on Thursday will receive visitors as per the official summer working hours adopted throughout its service centers

The morning shift is from 7:30am to 12:45pm and the evening shift is from 5:00pm to 9:15pm.

The ministry reaffirmed its commitment to continuously developing and expanding the scope of its judicial services to enhance quality and accessibility.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Interior explained, in a press statement issued on Thursday, that the citizen service center at Khairan Mall was inaugurated by Ahmadi Governor Sheikh Hamoud Jaber Al-Ahmad and the ministry's Undersecretary Major General Abdulwahab Al-Wuhaib who then toured the center's facilities, observing the workflow and services provided. They were accompanied by the acting Assistant Undersecretary for Supporting Security Services, Brigadier General Fawaz Al-Roumi, and the Director General of the General Department of Service Centers, Brigadier General Saud Al-Tuwajri.

The governor and the undersecretary received a briefing on the technical equipment and operational plans. They emphasized the need to streamline procedures, expedite service delivery, and ensure the utmost comfort for visitors.

Major General Al-Wuhaib affirmed the ministry's commitment to implementing its plans to modernize and expand service centers in various regions, achieving the highest standards of efficiency and quality.

He noted that the center is unique in offering services during weekend evenings, in addition to providing immediate civil ID card issuance.

The ministry concluded by affirming that this initiative aligns with its objectives to develop its service center system and expand the range of services offered, thereby facilitating transactions for the public.



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Plastic ruins 'marine life'

80% pollution man-made

KUWAIT CITY, July 4, (KUNA): Kuwait Environment Protection Society (KEPS) cautioned on Friday that plastic pollution constitutes a serious global environmental danger that affects marine systems, biodiversity, food security and human health.

Speaking to KUNA to mark the International Plastic Bag Free Day, which falls on July 3, KEPS' Member Ahmad Murad said that plastic pollution affects nature and causes billions of US dollars in annual

coastal economic losses. Murad added that the latest scientific surveys show that some 11 million metric tons of plastic waste enter the seas and oceans per annum, while the total size of plastic currently accumulated in the marine environment reaches up to 190 million metric tons.

He added that around 80 percent of marine pollution originates on land due to poor waste management, random dumping, and rainwater runoff carrying waste into the sea, and 20 percent stems from maritime activities such as fishing and shipping.

The KEPS's member underlined that curbing pollution begins with changing daily behaviors and revamping waste management on land.



KUNA photo
Kuwaiti Minister of State for Communications and Information Technology and Acting Minister of Information and Culture Omar Al-Omar meets Ambassador of Brunei Darussalam to Kuwait Haji Sulaini bin Haji Said.

Kuwait, Brunei seek deeper digital, AI, cybersecurity ties

KUWAIT CITY, July 4, (KUNA): Kuwaiti Minister of State for Communications and Information Technology and Acting Minister of Information and Culture Omar Al-Omar and Ambassador of Brunei Darussalam to Kuwait Haji Sulaini bin Haji Said discussed means to promote cooperation in digital transformation, artificial intelligence and cybersecurity.

During the meeting on Thursday, both sides underlined the significance of expanding the exchange of expertise

and experiences to contribute to the development of the digital ecosystem and capitalize on state-of-the-art technology, said the Ministry of Communications in a press release.

The minister stressed the ministry's readiness to provide technical and institutional support to bolster joint cooperation, welcoming Brunei's participation in technology and innovation initiatives, including the "Sahl" program, to foster the exchange of experiences regarding digital government services.

Kuwaiti NGOs scale up global aid

Charitable initiatives target education, water and healthcare needs

KUWAIT CITY, July 4, (KUNA): Kuwait's charitable sector continued expanding its humanitarian and development projects across several countries over the past week through initiatives focused on education, empowerment, water security, healthcare and sustainable housing, reflecting the diversity of its interventions and its response to the growing needs of vulnerable communities.

The projects underscore Kuwaiti charities' increasing focus on sustainable initiatives built on strategic partnerships, the provision of essential services, improving quality of life and empowering communities to become self-reliant, further enhancing the humanitarian impact of Kuwaiti charitable work and reinforcing its contribution to international development efforts.

In this context, Tanmiya Charity Society signed a USD one million cooperation agreement with the Jerusalem Empowerment Fund to implement education and empowerment projects in Jerusalem over the next five years. The agreement was signed on the sidelines of the Second International Development Investment Workshop for Jerusalem held in Istanbul.

Chairman of Tanmiya Charity Society Dr. Nasser Al-Ajmi told KUNA that the agreement represents a strategic step toward implementing sustainable educational and empowerment projects aimed at supporting Jerusalem's residents and expanding educational, economic and social opportunities through investment in human development.

Al-Ajmi added that the society's participation in the international workshop provided an opportunity to exchange expertise with development organizations and donor agencies while exploring avenues for cooperation to enhance humanitarian interventions and achieve lasting impact in Jerusalem.

He affirmed that the society will continue expanding its regional and international partnerships and launching quality initiatives that support sustainable development while strengthening the role of Kuwaiti charitable work as an effective partner in humanitarian and development causes.

In India, Namaa Charity, affiliated with the Social Reform Society,



Left: Sheikh Abdullah Al-Nouri Charity Society lays the foundation stone for Al-Ehsan Village for widows and orphans in Kyrgyzstan. Right: Namaa Charity implements a project to drill 10 water wells benefiting more than 3,500 people in India.



Left: Tanmiya Charity Society signs cooperation agreement with the Jerusalem Empowerment Fund to support education and empowerment projects in Jerusalem. Right: Ataa Humanitarian Society implements a project to treat malnutrition among Sudanese refugee children.



KUNA photos

implemented a project to drill 10 water wells, providing clean water to more than 3,500 beneficiaries as part of its programs to enhance water security and improve access to essential services in underserved areas.

Namaa Charity Marketing Director Ibrahim Al-Sanea told KUNA that water well projects are among the sustainable development initiatives that create long-term benefits by protecting public health and improving living conditions.

He added that the project secured a safe and reliable source of water for beneficiary families, easing the hardship of accessing clean water while positively affecting education, productivity and overall community sta-

bility.

Al-Sanea stressed that Namaa Charity will continue expanding water and sustainable development projects in several countries to ensure essential services reach those most in need and generate long-lasting humanitarian impact.

In Kyrgyzstan, Sheikh Abdullah Al-Nouri Charity Society laid the foundation stone for Al-Ehsan Village for widows and orphans, which will include more than 50 housing units in addition to educational, healthcare, religious and commercial facilities as part of an integrated development project designed to provide a stable environment for beneficiary families.

Director of Resources and Media at the society Abdullatif Al-Dawas told KUNA that the project reflects the society's vision of establishing integrated development villages that provide housing, education, healthcare and economic empowerment to help families achieve long-term stability and self-reliance.

Al-Dawas added that the field visit also included laying the foundation stone for an elderly care home, a fully integrated hospital and tailoring workshops in Al-Amal Village, in addition to inaugurating several development projects aimed at improving the quality of life of beneficiary communities.

He noted that the society received

two official honors from Kyrgyz authorities in recognition of its humanitarian and development projects, reflecting the international confidence in Kuwaiti charitable work and its sustainable impact.

In Chad, Ataa Humanitarian Society, with support from the Waqf of Issa Abdullah Al-Othman, implemented a project to treat malnutrition among Sudanese refugee children in refugee camps, benefiting more than 10,000 children and their families as part of its relief efforts to support the most vulnerable groups.

Director General of Ataa Humanitarian Society, lawyer Omar Al-Shaqra, told KUNA that the project was launched in response to the

difficult humanitarian conditions facing refugees and included the provision of medicines, nutritional supplements and essential food supplies for children and their families.

Al-Shaqra said the initiative helped improve children's health and reduce complications associated with malnutrition, describing it as one of the humanitarian interventions aimed at saving the lives of the most vulnerable and easing their suffering.

He affirmed that Ataa Society will continue implementing relief and healthcare projects in partnership with supporting organizations and donors to protect children, strengthen food security and respond to humanitarian needs in crisis-affected areas.

Continued from Page 1

Yes, Minister

Certainly, sovereign rights, including the revocation of citizenship, are not subject to debate, as they are part of the constitutional rights of His Highness the Amir, which everyone must respect.

The head of state issues directives to ministers, assistants and state employees to uphold justice in the performance of their duties. The third Caliph, Othman ibn Affan, established a golden rule: "Allah restrains through authority (by the ruler or by power) what He does not restrain through the Quran (preaching)."

This principle is valid at all times, and it is upon this principle that nations progress. What Minister Nasser Al-Sumait conveyed on behalf of His Highness the Amir falls within this framework, urging all government officials to provide facilities for all those whose citizenship was revoked and those referred as 'Bedouins'.

The modernization of the state begins with maintaining social stability, which is reflected in the economy, politics and public security.

KPC overhauls

levels of new employees. Team leaders and above will receive a monthly cash allowance of KD150 as car allowance, in addition to a monthly transportation allowance of KD54. Pooling cars will be provided to companies with work sites. These cars will be used by company employees to visit these sites during working hours.

Fifth: The policy for calculating the transportation allowance, approved by the Board of Directors as per Resolution No. 24/2003 issued on June 4, 2003 and Article Six of Law No. 28/1969 on work in the oil sector and in light of the urban developments in the country, will be applied to new employees of the corporation.

Sixth: The mechanisms for granting personal grades to new employees at KPC and its subsidiaries will be discontinued.

Seventh: The current regulations and conditions for disbursement of housing allowance for new employees at KPC and its subsidiaries shall continue.

Eighth: The current annual incen-

tive bonus system is applicable to new employees, as it is linked to achievements and goal attainment.

Ninth: The current regulations and conditions for granting transportation allowance to new employees shall continue.

Tenth: The system for adjusting the job status of newly appointed employees at KPC and its subsidiaries who obtain a higher academic qualification while in service is discontinued.

Ride racket

its intensive security campaigns as part of the strategy of the ministry to combat drugs and protect society.

Ten suspects were arrested in seven separate cases for possessing large quantities of drugs and intoxicants intended for trafficking and personal use.

These operation resulted in the confiscation of 20,000 Captagon tablets, 500 grams of hashish, 84 grams of methamphetamine, 100 capsules of various psychotropic substances, seven Lyrica capsules, 28 glass vials containing a chemical substance, four weighing scales used in preparing narcotics for sale, KD1,940 cash believed to be proceeds from drug trafficking, and an undisclosed quantity of bags used for distributing narcotics.

The ministry stated that one of the suspects attempted to flee in his vehicle, ramming into the vehicles of security officers, who pursued and arrested him.

It confirmed that all suspects and confiscated items were referred to the concerned authorities to complete the necessary legal measures.

Kuwait raises

its responsibilities and adopt a clear, firm stance to halt these attacks and ensure that they would not recur.

Al-Enezi affirmed that the State of Kuwait holds Iran fully responsible for those attacks, underlining that Kuwait has never been and will never be a party to any military escalation, nor has it permitted its territory, airspace, or territorial waters to be used for hostile acts against any country.

He remarked that this stance stems from the country's steadfast policy based on respect for state sovereignty, good-neighborliness relations, and

abundance by international law.

Since the starting of the regional escalation, Kuwait has come under hundreds of missile and drone attacks, which resulted in casualties and injuries, not to mention civilian and vital infrastructure, the Kuwaiti diplomat pointed out.

Al-Enezi expressed his country's belief, despite these attacks, that security and stability could be attained through dialogue, de-escalation and peaceful means, welcoming diplomatic efforts aimed at halting military operations and de-escalating tensions.

In conclusion, the diplomat stressed that Gulf security is an integral part of global security and that regional stability is a matter of international concern pertinent to energy security, the global economy, and the safety of international navigation.

In other news, the United Kingdom and France said on Friday that they would work with the Sultanate of Oman to ensure the sovereignty of its territorial waters in the Strait of Hormuz, helping to secure safe passage and navigation.

A joint statement, issued by Prime Minister Keir Starmer and French President Emmanuel Macron, said, "The Strait of Hormuz is a vital artery for the global economy. Restoring safe transit for ships of all nations through the Strait is a matter of global concern."

It continued, "The Sultanate of Oman has agreed to work with the United Kingdom and France to ensure that its sovereign territorial waters are safe for navigation."

"The UK and France also stand ready to deploy the wider Multinational Military Mission to support freedom of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz," it added.

"The United Kingdom and France reaffirm their shared commitment to regional stability, respect for the sovereignty of all States, and their willingness to maintain close cooperation with their partners in order to uphold global security, freedom of navigation and international law," it concluded.

Oman's Foreign Minister Badr Al-Busaidi visited the UK recently where he met with Foreign Secretary Yvette Cooper, who said that her meeting with the Omani official had "discussed work to reopen the Strait of Hormuz, support demining efforts and reinforce stability and security in the region."

Policy brief calls for action to shield livelihoods

2026 crisis puts women's employment at risk – UN

CAIRO, July 4: A new policy brief released today by UN Women and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) warns that the ongoing 2026 Middle East crisis could significantly deepen risks to women's employment and economic participation across the Arab States, threatening to reverse years of progress on women's economic empowerment.

Titled Women's Employment at Risk in the Arab States: Unequal Exposure to the 2026 Middle East Crisis and Implications for Policy, the brief highlights how the economic shock generated by the crisis is disproportionately affecting women due to structural inequalities in labour markets, high levels of informal employment, and women's concentration in sectors vulnerable to fiscal pressures and economic contraction.

Scenario-based estimates referenced in the brief indicate that the crisis could lead to GDP losses of up to USD 194 billion across the Arab States, place up to 3.6 million jobs at risk, and push as many as 4 million additional people into poverty. The largest macroeconomic losses are concentrated in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and Mashreq subregions.

The brief finds that women face heightened exposure to employment instability through two interconnected channels. In the short term, demand contractions in private and informal sectors could place between 34,000 and 56,000 women's jobs immediately at risk across Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine and Syria, potentially rising to nearly 80,000 jobs under high-stress scenarios. In the medium term, tightening fiscal space could affect women's employment in education, health and public administration through hiring freezes, wage erosion and salary arrears.

Across Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine and Syria, around half of employed women work in education, health and public administration, while informality among women ranges from 40 to 71 per cent of total employment.

"The economic consequences of crisis are never experienced equally. Women across the Arab States are already navigating some of the world's lowest rates of labour force participation, high levels of informal work, and limited access to social protection," said Dr. Moez Doraid, UN Women Regional Director for the Arab States. "Without deliberate measures to protect women's livelihoods and access to decent work, this crisis risks deepening inequalities and reversing important progress on women's economic empowerment across the region."

"Historically, women in the Arab region were heavily located in the public sector and are concentrated in health, education and public administration. As countries tighten fiscal space in response to the crisis, the risk is not dramatic layoffs as the case in the private sector, but a quiet erosion through hiring freezes, wage compression, and salary arrears," said ESCWA Acting Deputy Executive Secretary Mehrnaz El-Awady. "A crisis that pushes women out of the labour force is not just a social setback, it is a macroeconomic one."

The brief also warns that women working informally remain particularly vulnerable due to limited access to contracts, social protection, unemployment benefits and income security. Women-led enterprises are also at heightened risk during periods of economic stress, as tightening credit conditions and structural barriers to finance constrain their ability to sustain operations and retain workers.

The policy brief calls for urgent and targeted measures to protect women's livelihoods and prevent long-term economic and social setbacks. Recommendations include expanding income protection and emergency support for women in informal and private sector employment, safeguarding education and health budgets, protecting women-led enterprises from credit tightening, preventing public sector hiring freezes from disproportionately excluding young women, and strengthening sex-disaggregated labour market monitoring.

The brief underscores that protecting women's employment is critical not only for advancing equality between women and men, but also for supporting economic recovery, social stability and long-term development across the region.

□ □ □

About UN Women:

UN Women advances women's rights, the empowerment of all women and girls and equality between women and men.

As the lead UN entity on women's empowerment, we support advancement of laws, institutions, social behaviours and services to close the gap between women and men and build an equal world for all. We keep the rights of women and girls at the centre of global progress – always, everywhere. Women's empowerment is not just what we do. It is who we are.

About ESCWA:

One of five United Nations regional commissions, ESCWA supports inclusive and sustainable economic and social development in Arab States, and works on enhancing regional integration.

'Communism is a mortal threat to American liberty'

Trump hails US exceptionalism before veering into speech to usher in America 250

WASHINGTON, July 4, (AP): US President Donald Trump ushered in the 250th anniversary of American independence on Friday with soaring rhetoric about American exceptionalism before veering into a darkly political speech with warnings about a sinister threat of communism that evoked one of the country's ugliest chapters.

"Communism is a mortal threat to American liberty," he said from Mount Rushmore. "It is the greatest threat to our country, including World War I, World War II, Pearl Harbor or even 9/11."

While the language was similar to several other speeches Trump has given in recent days, it was notable for being delivered in a national park that commemorates some of America's most prominent presidents. And it swerved from the typically apolitical, unifying speeches past presidents like Gerald Ford or Ronald Reagan have delivered during earlier high-profile Independence Day celebrations.

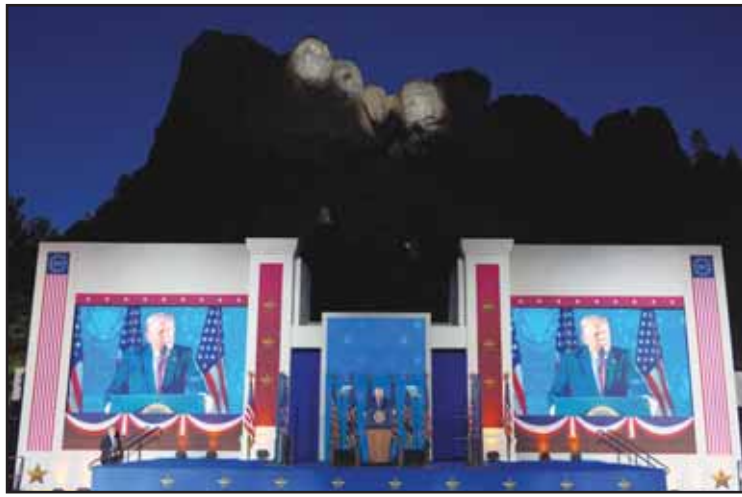
Indeed, Trump's language evoked the Red Scare of the 1950s, when alleged communists were persecuted and blacklisted from jobs across America, from Washington to Hollywood.

In New York City, Mayor Zohran Mamdani, a democratic socialist, delivered his own address that cast America as a nation of contradictions "working each day towards the perfection in which it was conceived."

The president's speech capped an Independence Day eve that was otherwise most notable for a brutal heat wave that gripped much of the eastern portion of the country. Officials have warned those celebrating the holiday to stay hydrated and take air-conditioned breaks as needed.

Philadelphia canceled its Salute to Independence parade Friday. The Great American State Fair in Washington shut down in the early afternoon before reopening at 5 p.m. The Capitol Fourth concert, a mainstay of the holiday in Washington, opened its gates a little later than normal but ultimately moved forward with appearances from Patti LaBelle, Trace Adkins, members of the Artemis II space mission and fireworks over George Washington's Mount Vernon. An Independence Day parade scheduled for Saturday in Washington was canceled.

By early afternoon Friday in Washington, hundreds of people were roaming the grounds of the



US President Donald Trump speaks at Mount Rushmore National Memorial on July 3, near Keystone, SD. (AP)

National Mall, home to The Great American State Fair. They snapped photos of the flyovers and tried to cool off inside tents that offered \$9 lemonades and \$23 turkey legs. Many were dressed in patriotic colors, their faces glistening with sweat.

Glenn Brooks, who was pardoned by Trump for his participation in the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the Capitol, said he was "thankful to be participating in this grand event."

The activity culminates in the main event Saturday, when fireworks will erupt in communities across the U.S., along with backyard cookouts and block parties. Trump will deliver another speech at the National Mall in Washington before what is being billed as a historically massive fireworks show.

As the rest of the country struggled under stifling heat, the Pacific Northwest enjoyed temperatures in the 60s

with even a few light showers.

World Cup soccer fans in Seattle were staying cool Friday as they got psyched up for Monday's big game between the U.S. and Belgium. In the nearby suburb of Issaquah, Megan Kurowski, 31, brought her two dogs to the dog park so they could get some exercise before she went to work.

Kurowski said she was feeling positive about America's 250th anniversary and was planning a possible paddleboard to watch the fireworks. "Everyone's just, from what it seems, been pretty excited about celebrating 250 years," she said.

The holiday is unfolding at a unique time in the U.S. The anniversary has served as an opportunity for the country to reflect on its history while also reminding it of the political polarization of the moment.

In New York, Mamdani, a Democrat, did not mention Trump by name, but parts of his speech appeared aimed at the president's divisive rhetoric.

"For generation after generation, we have been told that when the world has sent its people to our shores, it has not sent its best," Mamdani said in an apparent reference to a common criticism from Trump.

"Those ideals upon which our nation was built - they are strong enough to endure any authoritarian regime, but only if we reach for them."

Freedom 250, an organization aligned with the White House, has come to rival America250, a bipartisan group founded by Congress a decade ago. Freedom 250 has organized much of the activity in Washington, including the Great American State Fair. America250 is behind the ball drops unfolding in many cities, including New York, and will host a concert in Los Angeles on Saturday.

About 4 in 10 U.S. adults feel "proud" about the country's 250th anniversary, according to an April survey from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. Roughly 3 in 10 said "excited" describes their emotions.

Ahead of the holiday, auto technician Joe Fuqua-Bejarano in Topeka, Kansas, sized up "what makes us awesome" as a people. It is clearly not the politics, in his view, but rather resilience.

"We've just all got to find unity somewhere, whether that's in laughter or perseverance, and keep everybody cool," he said from the fireworks stand where he is doing a booming business as a side hustle.



A plane drops a load of water on the Aspen Acres Fire near Colorado City, Colo., on July 2. (AP)

Wildfire southwest of Denver forces thousands to evacuate

A wildfire burning southwest of Denver forced the evacuation of thousands of residents and destroyed more than 160 structures by Friday as erratic winds pushed the blaze across two Colorado counties. The Aspen Acres fire is one of about 40 uncontained large blazes burning mostly in the West, fueled by months

of dry weather and a record lack of snow this past winter in some places.

Fire personnel were scooping water from the Pueblo Reservoir to fight the Aspen Acres fire, which had expanded to about 115 square miles (297 square kilometers) by Friday afternoon with zero containment.

All of Colorado City, an unincor-

porated community of about 2,200, was ordered evacuated as well as the towns of Beulah, Rye and San Isabel, according to the Pueblo County Sheriff's Office.

About 50 National Guard soldiers were being sent in Friday to help with staffing checkpoints on roads in Custer and Pueblo counties. (AP)

Democratic govts press Postal Service to drop plan tied to Trump election order

LOS ANGELES, July 4, (AP): A group of Democratic governors asked the US Postal Service to withdraw its proposed rule seeking to implement an executive order from President Donald Trump to create a federal list of eligible voters and potentially limit who can receive a ballot in the mail.

The president signed the order in March. It directs US Citizenship and Immigration Services and the Social Security Administration to create a "citizenship list" for each state and the Postal Service to limit mailed ballots to those on the lists.

The Postal Service filed a proposed rule to implement the order in late May. Since then, a federal judge has blocked Trump's executive order and barred agencies from implementing it, saying it was unconstitutional because only states and Congress - not the president - have the power to set election rules.

The letter sent Thursday was an effort organized by Illinois Gov. JB Pritzker and included eight other Democratic governors - from California, Connecticut, Minnesota, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Washington and Wisconsin. It cited the judge's ruling and asked that the Postal Service withdraw the rule it had proposed to fulfill Trump's order.



Ballots are sorted the day after California's primary election at the LA County Ballot Processing Center on June 3 in City of Industry, Calif. (AP)

"Far from ensuring integrity in federal elections," they wrote in the six-page letter, "the Proposed Rule would undermine trust in elections, needlessly complicate voting processes, arbitrarily disenfranchise millions of eligible voters, and undermine states' constitutional role in ensuring free and fair elections."

The proposed rule would grant, they argued, "unilateral power to refuse to deliver their ballots if a state refuses to collaborate with President

Trump's unlawful directives."

The Postal Service did not immediately respond to calls and emails seeking comment. It had filed the proposed rule in the Federal Register after a judge considering a separate lawsuit against Trump's executive order declined to block it because the administration - at that point - had not taken steps to implement it. The Democratic and civil rights groups that filed that lawsuit have appealed the ruling.

Putin shrugs off fuel shortages in Russia

Ukrainian drones hit St Petersburg oil terminal: officials

KYIV, July 2, (AP): A Ukrainian drone attack struck an oil terminal in St. Petersburg on Saturday, Russian officials said, as Kyiv presses on with bombardment of Russia's oil infrastructure.

Almost daily long-range attacks on Russian oil facilities have created a fuel crisis and heaped political pressure on the Kremlin as its all-out invasion of Ukraine stretches into its fifth year.

Gov. Alexander Beglov said the city's Kirovsky district on the Baltic Sea was hit. He also said that air defenses shot down 72 Ukrainian drones across Russia's second-largest city and the surrounding region.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy described the attack as part of Ukraine's "long-range sanctions" against Russia. He said that Ukrainian forces also hit a military target on the island of Kronstadt, just off the coast of St. Petersburg.

"The Ukrainian defense forces hit the port oil infrastructure, which earns money for the Russian war, and there were also hits on Kronstadt - an important military target," he said in a post on Telegram.

St. Petersburg's Kirovsky district was previously hit in June, ahead of Russia's flagship St. Petersburg International Economic Forum.

The Crimean peninsula, which Russia annexed in 2014, has suffered particularly from heavy strikes, causing local authorities to suspend gasoline sales to civilians. A Ukrainian attack on Saturday killed one person and injured two more, including a 10-year-old child, the Moscow-installed Gov. Sergei Aksyonov said.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has shrugged off Ukraine's strikes on Russia's energy facilities as "not critical," and insisted the war will continue until his goals are met.

He has described the attacks on Russian energy as an effort by Ukraine to distract attention from its losses on the battlefield, although analysts say the

advance of Russian forces has been stymied in recent months.

On Friday, Putin visited the Russian military headquarters directing the war in Ukraine and received a report on the capture of the city of Kostyantynivka, after weeks of intense street battles. He hailed it as a key step toward capturing the nearby cities of Sloviansk and Kramatorsk, the key remaining strongholds in the so-called "forest belt" of heavily fortified cities in the Donetsk region that remain in Ukraine's hands. Despite severe fuel shortages across Russia, Putin appears unbothered by Ukraine's increasing attacks on his country's oil refineries.

He has shrugged off the setback for one of the world's leading oil-producing nations as "not critical," dismissed ceasefire proposals and insisted the war will continue until his goals are met.

The capture of Kostyantynivka, a big transport and industrial hub, is of "major strategic importance," Putin, clad in military fatigues, said in televised comments.

Zelenskyy denied that Russia took control of the city. "It is just another Russian lie, an attempt to generate some kind of a news story," he wrote on social media Saturday. "If Kostyantynivka were under Russian control, then perhaps Putin would have no problem meeting me there to find a diplomatic way to finally end this war. But the fact is, he won't cross the front line - reality is very different from Putin's words."

Zelenskyy's post also seemed to appeal to U.S. President Donald Trump. "Now, on the eve of America's Independence Day, Putin has chosen to lie to the world and to the President of the United States about the situation on the front."

Putin appears to believe his government can keep the fuel crisis from eroding his authority and support for the war he launched more than four years ago. At the very least, the attacks have brought the war home even more poignantly for millions of Russians, shattering Putin's narrative of the conflict as something that doesn't affect the lives of ordinary people in his country.



In this photo provided by Ukraine's 93rd Kholodnyi Yar Separate Mechanized Brigade press service, Soldiers of the Alcatraz battalion,

AfD party elects leaders as protesters and police clash

ERFURT, Germany, July 4, (AP): Thousands of protesters aimed to disrupt the national convention of Germany's far-right Alternative for Germany party on Saturday, with some clashing with police in riot gear outside the meeting.

Alternative for Germany, or AfD, is meeting in the eastern city of Erfurt to elect its leaders, which German parties do every two years. The party seeks to show unity while extending the terms of leaders Alice Weidel and Tino Chrupalla, who have run the party together for four years.

The demonstrations outside the convention reflect how AfD has divided Germany even as it is the nation's biggest opposition party nationally.

The weekend convention has drawn additional controversy by coinciding with the 100-year anniversary of a Nazi Party meeting held nearby that consolidated Adolf Hitler's power over the fascist movement. Historians and political opponents say the timing carries powerful symbolism, an accusation the AfD rejects.

Weidel said recently that "2026 is a year of destiny for AfD." Mainstream parties say they won't work with it, a stance often known as a "firewall."

But AfD is capitalizing on the unpopularity of a government that is trying to reform the sluggish economy. The party has become adept at harnessing discontent with issues well beyond its signature theme of curbing migration, which powered its rise in the mid-2010s.



Protesters gather before a party convention of Alternative for Germany, or AfD in Erfurt, Germany on July 4. (AP)

Moldova's prime minister steps down, triggering government's resignation

CHISINAU, Moldova, July 4, (AP): Moldova's Prime Minister Alexandru Munteanu announced Friday that he's stepping down, in a surprise move that automatically triggers the government's resignation.

Munteanu did not give a clear reason for his departure, which comes less than a year after he was sworn in to lead the European Union candidate country's pro-Western government following a tense election widely viewed as a choice between East and West.

"Today I end my term as prime minister," Munteanu wrote in a statement posted on social media. "The moment I understand that I can no longer exercise my mandate in accordance with my principles and beliefs, I choose to walk away." He added: "I accepted the proposal to be prime minister with a lot of responsibility and strong conviction that I can contribute to changing things for the better."

When a prime minister announces their resignation in Moldova, it takes effect immediately, but the government continues in a caretaker capacity



Prime Minister of Moldova Alexandru Munteanu attends the Three Seas Summit in Dubrovnik, Croatia on April 28. (AP)

until a new cabinet is formed.

In a press statement following his resignation, Moldovan President Maia Sandu thanked Munteanu for his leadership

through a "complex period" for Moldova, but said she expected "more involvement in complicated decisions, more openness to listening to people."

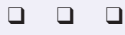
Asia

Chinese vice PM meets Belarusian first deputy prime minister: Chinese Vice Premier Liu Guozhong met with Belarusian First Deputy Prime Minister Nikolai Snopkov in Beijing on Thursday.

Liu, also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, said that the two presidents' fruitful meeting on Monday has injected new impetus into the development of the China-Belarus all-weather comprehensive strategic partnership.

He said both sides should effectively implement the important consensus reached by the two heads of state, fully leverage mechanisms such as the China-Belarus Intergovernmental Cooperation Committee, deepen and solidify mutually beneficial cooperation, and better promote their respective modernization efforts and national rejuvenation.

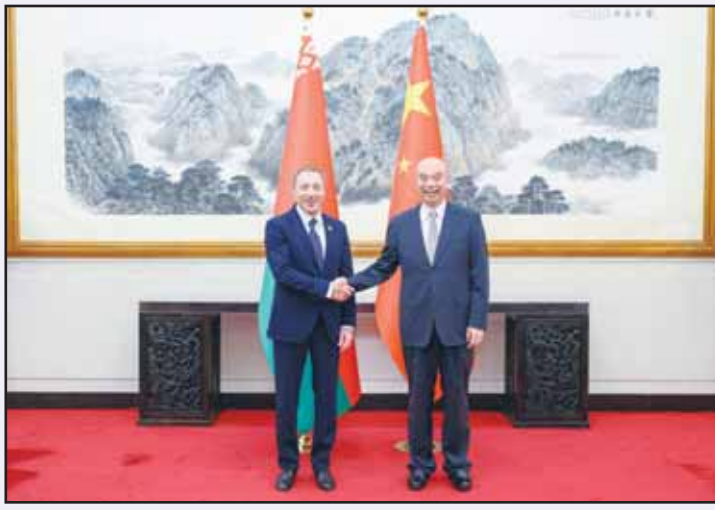
Snopkov expressed his willingness to deepen practical cooperation with China across various fields and advance Belarus-China relations to new heights. (Xinhua)



Probe finds safety violations behind China railway accident: China's railway regulator said Friday that safety violations and management failures resulted in a railway accident in southwest China's Yunnan Province last year that claimed the lives of 11 people and injured two.

The accident occurred on Nov. 27, 2025, at Luoyangzhen Station in Kunming, the provincial capital, when an inspection train operated by China Railway Kunming Group Co., Ltd. struck railway maintenance workers who had entered a work area without proper authorization, according to an investigation report released by the National Railway Administration.

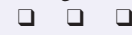
The accident caused direct economic losses of 14.52 million yuan (about 2.13 million U.S. dollars), the report said.



Chinese Vice Premier Liu Guozhong, also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, meets with Belarusian First Deputy Prime Minister Nikolai Snopkov in Beijing, capital of China, on July 2. (Xinhua)

The report said the site supervisor ordered the work to begin in violation of safety rules, before a dispatch order approving the operation had been issued. It

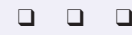
also found that a station liaison officer failed to properly warn workers to clear the track before the train passed through on its scheduled run. (Xinhua)



Vietnam alerts over 56,000 vessels as Typhoon Maysak approaches: Vietnamese authorities have alerted 56,240 vessels and 249,184 people to Typhoon Maysak's latest developments and projected path, helping them to avoid dangerous waters and move to safe areas, the Vietnam Disaster and Dyke Management Authority said Friday.

Typhoon Maysak is forecast to move toward waters off northern Vietnam and affect the country's northeastern region in the coming days, according to the National Center for Hydro-Meteorological Forecasting.

The northern province of Quang Ninh banned vessels from going to sea from Friday noon, while Ninh Binh province imposed a similar ban from 2:00 p.m. the same day. (Xinhua)



2 killed, 1 injured in Hanoi townhouse fire: Two people were killed and another seriously injured when a fire broke out at a four-story townhouse in Vietnam's capital Hanoi on Friday afternoon, local media VnExpress reported.

The blaze erupted at around 1:30 p.m. in the Van Phu urban area of Kien Hung ward.

The approximately 70-square-meter house was used as a furniture store on the first and second floors, while the upper floors served as living quarters.

Firefighters later found two victims dead on an upper floor. Their identities have yet to be confirmed.

Police are investigating the cause of the fire. (Xinhua)

Manila prepares for VP Duterte impeachment trial

PM Carney and President Marcos deepen Canada-Philippines security, trade ties

VANCOUVER, British Columbia, July 4, (Agencies): Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney and Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. pledged to strengthen trade, energy and security ties as Canada works to diversify its economy beyond the United States and deepen its engagement in the Indo-Pacific.

Carney said Filipino-Canadians are "at the very heart" of Canada, and both countries can benefit in energy security and critical minerals through a strategic partnership.

"We share the same aspirations, in terms of what we would want to achieve in the world," Marcos said.

The two leaders pledged to pursue a Canada-Philippines free trade agreement, deepen defense and maritime cooperation in the Indo-Pacific, and strengthen economic ties supported by Canada's one million-strong Filipino community.

Canada is currently negotiating a trade deal with both the Philippines and a broader bloc of southeast Asian nations. Carney hopes to con-

clude those talks ahead of his visit to Manila in November, when Marcos will be chairing the summit of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

Carney has set a goal for Canada to double its non-US exports in the next decade, saying American tariffs are causing a chill in investment.

Also:

MANILA: The Philippine National Police said on Friday it will deploy around 6,000 police officers to secure the Senate and surrounding areas in the country's capital, Manila.

As the impeachment trial of Philippine Vice President Sara Duterte is set to begin on Monday, the police said they will stay alert and ensure that the proceedings are conducted safely and peacefully.

In Pasay City in Metro Manila, where the Senate complex is located, some roads will temporarily be closed starting on Monday, according to local media reports on Friday.

The Senate impeachment court on



Canada's Prime Minister Mark Carney, (right), and Philippines President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. answer questions from media in Vancouver, on July 2. (AP)

Thursday directed the vice president to appear before it, either in person or through counsel.

The Office of the Vice President (OVP) on Thursday said it received

an unmodified opinion from the Commission on Audit (COA) for calendar year 2025. According to COA's 2025 Report, the OVP's financial statements were fairly pre-

sented and complied with applicable financial reporting standards. However, the audit opinion is separate from the impeachment proceedings.

Sara, the daughter of former President Rodrigo Duterte, announced her candidacy for the 2028 Philippine presidential election in February this year. If more than two-thirds of senators vote in favor of the impeachment, she will be convicted, removed from office, and barred from holding public office for life. Enditem



BEIJING: A Chinese think tank report released reveals the legal fallacies in the intention of Japan and the Philippines to initiate maritime delimitation in the waters east of China's Taiwan Island.

The move announced by Japan and the Philippines violates international law and seriously infringes upon China's legitimate rights and interests, according to the report titled "Legal Opinion on the Announcement by Japan and the Philippines on the Launch of Bilateral

Maritime Delimitation," which was released by the China Institute for Marine Affairs under the Ministry of Natural Resources.

In the waters east of China's Taiwan Island, China, Japan and the Philippines are neighboring states at sea. The proposed delimitation between Japan and the Philippines substantially overlaps with the exclusive economic zone and continental shelf to which China is entitled under international law, said the report.

The announcement, undertaken without consultation with China and in disregard of the region's specific geographical circumstances, violates international law, including sovereign equality, the duties of cooperation and self-restraint, as well as the principle of good faith, which has constituted an internationally wrongful act, it said.

The report urged Japan and the Philippines to immediately cease their pursuit of bilateral delimitation and actively engage in negotiations with China. Enditem

Fallout from Venezuela quakes turns political as opp'n leader seeks return

CARACAS, Venezuela, July 4, (AP): The fallout from Venezuela's powerful twin quakes has evolved into a major test for acting President Delcy Rodríguez, sending her scrambling to prevent the humanitarian disaster from becoming a political one as her mandate as interim leader expires Friday.

A day after Rodríguez angrily defended the competence of her government's relief effort at her first news conference since the June 24 disaster, her main rival, exiled Venezuelan Nobel Peace Prize laureate María Corina Machado, issued her own appeal.

Machado on Friday argued that the government's quake response exposed its critical weaknesses and that she should return to Venezuela to help "the transition process, especially after the tragedy."

"My presence stabilizes the situation; it is part of the organizing forces that the country needs at a time when the total absence of the state has become evident," Machado said, referring to widespread criticism of the government's earthquake response as slow and disorganized. "The country needs figures it can trust." She spoke to reporters from Panama.

The quakes have killed 2,645 people and injured over 12,500 others, according to tallies released Friday by the government. Mach-



Part of the San Judas Tadeo school collapsed in Caracas, Venezuela, on July 3, days after it was damaged in the earthquakes. (AP)

ado's opposition movement has set up an online database to locate the missing - a list of 36,000 people as of Friday. The party has mobilized volunteers to collect donations in Venezuela and solicited aid from the country's vast diaspora.

Machado was barred from running in a 2024 presidential election in which President Nicolás Maduro claimed victory. Vote tallies that the opposition collected from voting machines used in the election showed that the candidate Machado endorsed, Edmundo González, beat Maduro by a more

than 2-to-1 margin.

When the earthquakes hit, Machado saw an opening to return home for the first time after fleeing in December to accept a Nobel Peace Prize in Norway. Ever since the United States captured Maduro in a brazen military operation in January, Machado has been seeking a comeback and calling for a democratic transition.

But the Trump administration has thrown its support behind Rodríguez since Maduro's ouster, praising her business-friendly reforms of the country's lucrative oil sector.

Overcrowded bus plunges into ravine in southwest Pakistan, killing 40 passengers

QUETTA, Pakistan, July 4, (AP): A speeding, overcrowded passenger bus plunged from a highway into a rocky ravine in southwestern Pakistan early Friday, killing 40 people and injuring eight others in one of the deadliest road accidents in recent years, officials said.

The bus went out of control and fell into the ravine in Dana Sar, a remote area near the border of Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provinces, Shahid Rind, a spokesperson for the Balochistan government, said.

He said the bus was carrying not only its own passengers but also those from another bus that had broken down, leaving the vehicle overcrowded. Rind said rescuers were working to identify those killed in the crash.

One of the injured survivors told local media from his hospital bed that some passengers protested after the driver stopped to pick up people from the other bus. He said an argument followed, during which one passenger allegedly grabbed the driver by the neck. Moments later, the driver lost control of the bus, which fell into the ravine.

The account could not be independently verified and police said they were investigating.



In this photo released by Balochistan Emergency Services Department, soldiers and volunteers take part in a rescue work at the site of an overcrowded passenger bus plunged from a highway into a rocky ravine, in Dana Sar, a remote area near the border of Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provinces, in southwestern Pakistan on July 3. (AP)

News of the crash triggered a wave of grief across Pakistan as relatives frantically called emergency services, hospitals and local police seeking information about their loved ones.

Reaching the wreckage proved difficult as emergency workers, backed by paramilitary forces, climbed down a steep mountainside to the ravine up to 25 meters (80 feet) deep. Several hours later, rescuers carried the injured on stretchers and recovered the dead in makeshift carts, painstakingly hauling them back up the rugged slope, official Noor Zaman said.

In the northwestern city of Peshawar, Nasir Khan said his brother last night had called from Quetta to say he was on his way home on the bus that crashed early Friday. When he failed to arrive as expected, the family feared the worst. Khan said he had been desperately trying to reach authorities for information about his brother's fate.

A regional government administrator, Hazrat Wali Kakar, said rescuers transported the injured and dead to nearby hospitals. Most of the casualties were identified through documents but three bodies remained unidentified, he said.

Rescue officials said the bus was carrying 48 passengers when it crashed.

President Asif Ali Zardari expressed sorrow over the crash and offered condolences to the victims' families.

Conservative candidate Fujimori wins Peru's presidential election in runoff

LIMA, Peru, July 4, (AP): Conservative politician Keiko Fujimori on Friday was declared the winner of the presidential runoff election in Peru, which was dominated by people's concerns over surging crime.

Fujimori, 51, the daughter of a disgraced former president, was running for the presidency for the fourth time. She will be Peru's ninth president in 10 years when she takes office later this month.

Fujimori's victory, along with that of Abelardo de la Espriella in Colombia and José Antonio Kast in Chile, confirms a regional shift toward the conservative wing, a stark contrast from the panorama of a few decades ago when left-wing leaders such as Hugo Chávez in Venezuela or the current Brazilian president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva emerged.

The election win was certified Friday by the country's top election authority. Figures released by election officials earlier in the week showed that with 100% of ballots tallied, Fujimori received 9,223,000 votes, or 50.135% of the total, while nationalist congressman Roberto Sánchez earned over 9,173,000 votes, or 49.865%.

Fujimori and Sánchez made it to the June 7 runoff election after defeating 33 other candidates in an April vote. Voters were primarily concerned



President-elect Keiko Fujimori speaks next to Sen-elect Miguel Angel Torres during a news conference after electoral authorities declared her the winner of the presidential runoff in Lima, Peru on July 3. (AP)

with increasing levels of crime, especially extortion by violent organized crime gangs, and Fujimori pledged to combat crime with an iron fist.

Fujimori said on social media Friday that "each day of this process of transition is an opportunity to listen, discuss and arrive prepared for the start of a new government."

The winner is the daughter of the late Alberto Fujimori, the former president whose government in the 1990s defeated the Shining Path ex-

tremist rebel group but also took an authoritarian turn. He was convicted in 2009 of human rights abuses in the fight against the rebels, and later of corruption charges.

Keiko Fujimori promised to build four prisons and another similar to El Salvador's Terrorism Confinement Center known as the CECOT, and to force prisoners to work in the prisons. She also announced plans to militarize the borders to curb crime and deport undocumented migrants.

Africa

Somali military airstrikes kill 27 militants: The Somali National Army (SNA), backed by international partners, killed 27 al-Shabaab militants and wounded dozens more during a series of airstrikes in the last two days in southern Somalia, the government confirmed.

"The operations also destroyed vehicles, weapons, military supplies and positions used by the terrorist group to organize and carry out attacks," the Ministry of Defence said in a statement issued in Mogadishu, the capital of Somalia.

The ministry lauded the international partners for their continued support in combating and eliminating terrorism. (Xinhua)



Nigeria land dispute clashes kill 18: At least 18 people have been killed in protracted clashes related to a land dispute this week in the north-central region of Nigeria, police said Thursday.

The killings occurred in the Rafi area of Niger State between Monday and Wednesday and involved gun attacks and arson, police spokesperson Wasiu Abiodun said in a statement.

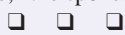
Abiodun said two people were killed on Monday, setting off violence on Wednesday in which 15 people were burned to death in a house, and another person was killed at a different place. He added that the violence was linked to "a lingering land dispute between two tribes."

"A reconciliation committee headed by the local government council officials are working with the security agencies toward addressing the crisis, as joint



Somali soldiers march during celebrations marking the 66th anniversary of the country's independence in Mogadishu, Somalia on July 1. (AP)

police and military patrols have been deployed to the area to restore peace," the spokesperson said. (AP)



7 villagers killed in Cameroon: Seven villagers were killed and several others injured during a nighttime raid by suspected Boko Haram fighters in Cameroon's Far North region, a local traditional ruler told Xinhua.

The attack happened overnight Thursday into Friday in Dabanga village, located along National Highway 1 in the Waza district of the Logone-et-Chari division.

According to the traditional leader, who asked not to be named, roughly 30 gunmen arrived on about a dozen motorcycles and entered the village after dark. (Xinhua)

Khalifa to lead World Bank's Middle East Division

WASHINGTON, July 4, (KUNA): The World Bank announced on Thursday the appointment of Dahlia Khalifa as Division Director for the Middle East Department, succeeding Jean-Christophe Carret, who has served in the role for the past four years.

Based in Amman, Khalifa will lead the World Bank's strategic engagement across

Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria, working closely with governments, development partners, the private sector and other stakeholders to support country priorities and advance the Bank's mission to end extreme poverty and boost shared prosperity on a livable planet, creating more and better jobs for everyone.

Business

S&P GCC composite index declined by 1.3% in June 2026

Markaz: The markets fell mildly during June as geopolitical uncertainty and rate hike concerns weighed on sentiment

KUWAIT CITY, July 4: Kuwait Financial Centre "Markaz" stated in its Monthly Market Review that Kuwait markets navigated a challenging month, remaining relatively resilient despite geopolitical turbulence. The mild dip in the monthly returns of Kuwait's All Share Index was triggered by the weakness in banking sector stocks and subdued activity in the real estate market. Kuwait's banking stocks remained under pressure, with seven out of nine banks witnessing a fall, dragging the banking index down by 2.8%. National Bank of Kuwait and Kuwait Finance House, the two largest lenders, fell by 5.3% and 1.7%, respectively. Among premier market stocks, Oula Fuel Marketing and The Commercial Real Estate Company were the top gainers, with monthly gains of 24.8% and 10.2%, respectively. Among other key market developments, Boursa Kuwait introduced an Exchange-Traded Fund (ETF) framework with specific governance provisions, enabling the launch of new ETFs. The move is expected to support the exchange's drive to broaden its product offerings.

Kuwait has issued a comprehensive regulatory framework governing long-term residency permits for foreign investors (up

to 15 years). The new rules are designed to streamline investment residency procedures while imposing strict legal, financial, and compliance requirements to strengthen oversight and attract foreign investment. Domestic credit growth strengthened to 6.7% y/y in May, driven by a pickup in corporate lending. Kuwait's real estate market remained under pressure, with total transaction values falling 17.8% m/m and 38% y/y to KD 228.9 million in May 2026. This was the second-lowest monthly sales value in over two years, indicating investor uncertainty.

GCC market performance remained divergent, with markets that have fallen sharply since the start of the U.S.-Iran war exhibiting a mild rebound in June. Dubai's DFM General Index gained the most at 3.4%, reducing its YTD losses to 1.5%. The rise was driven by foreign investors returning to the markets after assessing developments around a preliminary US-Iran peace agreement, the UAE's resilient economic fundamentals, and strong corporate earnings. Overall, the S&P GCC Composite index declined by 1.3% during the month. Ongoing regional uncertainty surrounding peace negotiations and the lack



of a clear resolution kept investors on edge during the month. Saudi Arabia's Tadawul Index declined by 2.5%. Abu Dhabi's ADX increased by 1.1%, whereas Qatar's QSE declined by 3.0% for the month.

Saudi Arabia's economy remained resilient despite regional headwinds, with the IMF projecting GDP growth to slow to 2.0% y/y in 2026 from 4.5% y/y in 2025, while expecting the fiscal deficit to narrow and inflation to average 2.3%. Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia's merchandise trade surplus doubled in April as exports rose 9.3% y/y, driven by an 11.7% y/y increase in oil exports, while the Cabinet approved new regulations allowing foreign real estate ownership in selected projects across Riyadh, Makkah, and Madinah to support investment and the property sector. The UAE demonstrated resilience amid regional disruptions, with Moody's affirming its Aa2 sovereign rating with a Stable Out-

look, citing strong fiscal buffers and low debt. The country's oil exports rebounded to 4.3 mb/d in early June, around 85% of pre-conflict levels, supported by alternative export routes and storage drawdowns.

Global markets ended their two-month bull run in June 2026, with the hawkish stance of the U.S. Fed leading to a retreat in both developed and emerging market equities. The MSCI World Index, the S&P 500, and the Nasdaq Composite index declined by 0.8%, 1.1%, and 0.2%, respectively, during June 2026. Rising expectations of a possible Fed rate hike by September 2026, along with a broad repricing of high-valuation tech stocks amid tighter financial conditions and macro uncertainty, drove risk-off sentiment. Emerging Markets, as measured by the MSCI EM Index, declined by 1.7% during the month, weighed down by a stronger U.S. dollar and expectations of higher U.S. interest rates. Among EM markets, Taiwan and India gained 3.1% and 2.3%, respectively, in June 2026.

The yield on the 10-year U.S. Treasury notes slightly decreased by 1 bps during the month to 4.44%. The U.S. Fed kept interest rates unchanged at 3.50 - 3.75% but

remained hawkish by signaling one 25 bps rate hike in 2026, raising inflation forecasts, and ending forward guidance under Chair Kevin Warsh as the Fed shifted to a more data-dependent policy approach, leading markets to increase expectations of future policy tightening.

Oil (Brent) prices declined over the month, settling at USD 72.92/bbl., reflecting a 20.8% monthly drop, as expectations that the U.S.-Iran ceasefire would broadly hold outweighed the impact of recent escalation. Improved oil flows through the Strait of Hormuz and hopes that both sides would avoid a wider conflict helped contain the geopolitical risk premium despite lingering regional tensions.

Looking into July 2026, the trajectory of the U.S.-Iran ceasefire and the direction of diplomatic developments will drive market movements. Although markets have priced in some of this volatility, any material disruption will be reflected both in equity and debt markets. GCC equities are likely to remain sensitive to oil prices, geopolitical events, and expectations of further U.S. interest rate hikes. Inflation readings in the U.S. and comments from U.S. Fed officials are also key market drivers to watch.

Other Voices

Plunge in oil prices: will OPEC intervene again?

By Kamel Al-Harami
Independent Oil Analyst

OIL prices are currently hovering between \$69 and \$72 per barrel, down from the recent high of around \$120 per barrel during the closure of the Strait of Hormuz. With prices now stabilizing near the \$70 level, there are few signs of further increase. Instead, the market could experience further decline unless OPEC intervenes once again, as it usually does.

How far will oil prices fall before OPEC decides to act?

Reducing production primarily benefits competing oil producers, while offering limited gains for OPEC itself.

How long can OPEC continue intervening in the oil market each year while steadily losing market share? What alternative strategies can it adopt to maintain stable global oil prices without losing revenues and market share?

Meanwhile, non-OPEC producers continue to benefit from OPEC's protection without sacrificing much and enjoying all the benefits by increasing production and expanding exploration.

OPEC is meeting on Sunday in search of another quick solution to address the decline in oil prices and the resulting pressure on monthly and annual revenues.

Once again, the organization is expected to discuss the usual issue of falling oil prices, with further production cuts likely to be on the agenda. But how long will OPEC continue asking its members to make additional sacrifices? At nearly every meeting, the same solution is proposed - reduce production to support prices, but within one week, the same problem often

reappears. Some members fail to fully comply with their production quotas, and oil prices begin to weaken once again.

The same OPEC tradition and pattern of full adherence gradually weakens over time. Some members leak additional oil into the market, taking advantage of higher prices and enjoying the financial benefits. With continued non-compliance, more oil enters the market, causing prices to weaken again.

This leads back to the same cycle - OPEC meets, decides on further production cuts, and attempts to stabilize the market. Yet within a short period, the same pattern of weak adherence reappears.

Now that global markets have stabilized and the Strait of Hormuz has reopened for normal business, oil prices are expected to decline further. As a result, OPEC will likely return to addressing the weakening in oil prices through its traditional routine of meetings, consultations, and decisions.

This typically involves discussions on additional production cuts and renewed calls for members to adhere more strictly to their assigned quotas and output restrictions.

The calm global situation and the free passage through the Strait of Hormuz mean increased oil supply to the market and lower crude oil prices. This may justify OPEC intervention and a single primary response - reducing and curtailing oil production.

This would involve standard notifications to OPEC members to restrict output in order to bring prices to an acceptable level, perhaps in the range of \$70 to \$75 per barrel. This is likely the most suitable level OPEC can aim for at the present time.

As the market remains well supplied with oil, let us hope that there will be no further decline in prices.

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Al-Harami

As recognized by Asian Banking & Finance 2026

Gulf Bank wins 'Branch Innovation' & 'Gen Z Product' awards

KUWAIT CITY, July 4: In a new achievement that reflects its leadership in Kuwait's banking sector, Gulf Bank announced that it has won two prestigious awards from Asian Banking & Finance 2026: the Branch Innovation Award and the Gen Z Product Award. This recognition further reinforces the Bank's position as one of the leading banks combining innovation, sustainability, and youth empowerment.

The Branch Innovation Award comes in recognition of Gulf Bank's efforts to transform its branches into sustainable, environmentally friendly spaces that adopt the latest digital technologies and align with future aspirations. This comes as part of a plan that covers many of the Bank's branches across Kuwait. The award also affirms that innovation at Gulf Bank is not merely an option, but a way of working that is reflected in every aspect of its operations and services.

The newly designed branches feature a modern concept that combines comfort and ease of use, with a strong focus on environ-



mental sustainability through the use of clean energy, reduced paper consumption, and the provision of eco-friendly spaces. This reflects Gulf Bank's commitment to enhancing the customer experience, making branch visits a smoother and more enjoyable journey toward the future, supported by integrated digital services that enable customers to complete their transactions quickly and flexibly.

The Gen Z Product Award recognizes the Bank's success in offering innovative banking prod-

ucts tailored to young customers, particularly the red account and the red Plus prepaid card, giving this important segment access to exclusive offers and discounts that help them manage their spending smartly.

Gulf Bank offers young customers the red account, a savings account designed for students and youth aged 15 to 25. The account has no minimum opening balance and comes with the red Plus prepaid card, which gives young customers 5,000 welcome Gulf Points

when transferring their student allowance. New joiners can also benefit from a KD 50 fuel voucher from Oula, in addition to a range of exclusive benefits, including 50% daily discounts on cinema tickets and discounts at selected restaurants and retailers.

This international recognition reflects Gulf Bank's ongoing commitment to innovation and youth empowerment. It also confirms that the Bank's strategy places Gen Z at the heart of its future vision, empowering young customers to achieve their ambitions and remain at the forefront, while ensuring that its new branches serve as a model for sustainability and innovation.

Founded in Singapore in 2006, Asian Banking & Finance is a specialized platform that tracks developments across the banking and financial sector in Asia. The institution organizes annual awards programs covering innovation, technology, management, and excellence in banking services. These awards aim to highlight leading banks that are driving meaningful transformation in the banking industry.

Iran warns oil tankers to use approved routes in Strait of Hormuz or face 'forceful response'

DUBAI, July 4, (AP): Iran's joint military command warned Thursday that all oil tankers moving through the Strait of Hormuz must use its approved routes or face a "forceful response," ratcheting up tensions again over a waterway crucial for international energy supplies.

The strait, the narrow mouth of the Persian Gulf, has emerged as one of the top issues in negotiations seeking a permanent end to the Iran war. The statement from the Khatam al-Anbiya military command, reported by Iranian state television, comes after both U.S. and Iranian diplomats met with mediators Wednesday in Qatar.

Iran is preparing for the funeral of the late Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who was killed in the war's first moments in February. On Thursday night, Iranian state media broadcast images of what it said was the casket with Khamenei's remains arriving at the Imam Khomeini Hussainiya, for the farewell ceremony.

Hundreds were seen in the footage, praying and grieving near the casket covered with a green cloth. The weeklong official funeral is expected to start on Saturday.

It wasn't clear what sparked Iran's warning Thursday about oil tankers moving through the Strait of Hormuz. However, the U.S. military's Central Command had put out a statement about a meeting with

officials from Mideast nations in Bahrain that said "leaders underscored their shared commitment to the free flow of commerce through" the strait.

That could have been the phrase that angered Iran.

"Any failure to comply, deviation from the designated route, or disregard for the navigation protocols of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the Strait of Hormuz will be met with an immediate and forceful response from the armed forces, endangering the security of the violating vessels," the Iranian statement said.

It also said that interference by U.S. forces in the strait "will be met with a rapid and decisive reaction." Iran and the United States agreed as part of an interim deal to allow ships to pass without paying charges for 60 days. But Tehran insisted it must control the routes of the vessels and later charge fees for passage, upending decades of practice in the waterway.

The U.S. and many Gulf Arab states say they won't agree to Iran charging for passage through the strait. An effort by Oman and a United Nations agency to launch a new route near Oman's shore sparked attacks across the Mideast last weekend, highlighting the tensions.

Despite the attacks, ship traffic in the strait continued to rebound. At least 258 ships transited the waterway last week, a period that included Iranian strikes

on two commercial vessels, according to marine data and analysis company Lloyd's List Intelligence. That's up from 138 ships the previous week.

Iran's attacks on June 25 and 27 "seem to have been forgotten," Richard Meade, editor-in-chief at Lloyd's, said Thursday during a webinar.

Traffic in the strait has slowed somewhat since the strikes and remains far below levels seen before the war, when about 130 vessels passed through daily. And with ship operators having to choose between complying with Iran's demands or braving the route off Oman watched by U.S. forces, "nothing about this situation is stable," Meade said.

"Routes are being chosen on an hour-by-hour basis ... and they are contingent on shifting political approvals and real-time security assessments," he said. "This is not the new normal."

Earlier this week, Iranian state television reported that a foreign ship got stuck in the strait after ignoring instructions from Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard. However, the vessel's shape, reported location and other details indicate the ship is tied to Iran and appears to have been stranded for months.

Despite the tensions, Wednesday's talks saw "positive progress," Pakistani Foreign Ministry spokesperson Tahir Andrabi said. He told journalists that Pakistan hoped the next round of talks would be scheduled as soon as possible after Khamenei's funeral.

Iran claims a foreign ship got stuck in Strait of Hormuz. But it is tied to Tehran

DUBAI, July 4, (AP): Iranian state television claimed this week that a foreign ship got stuck in the Strait of Hormuz after ignoring instructions to use a route laid out by the Islamic Republic's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard.

But the ship is tied to Iran - and seems to have been in the strait for months.

The vessel, based on its shape, reported location and other details, is the container ship Arista, reportedly flying a false flag linking it to the island nation of Comoros. That ship was known last year as the Panama-flagged Gauja, which the U.S. Treasury included in sanctions targeting what it described as a network that had been "generating tens of billions of dollars in profit" for Iran's ruling elite.

Here's a closer look.

Iranian state television aired on-screen alerts Wednesday about what it described as a foreign ship that got stuck ignoring the commands of the Guard's navy.

"A foreign container ship, because of choosing a route other than the one designated under the Iranian order, has run aground in the Strait of Hormuz," a state TV news anchor said in the segment, which included im-

ages of the ship grounded. "This comes as the navy of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps has consistently warned that any entry into or exit from routes other than 'the Route of Authority' in the Arabian Gulf could lead to irreparable incidents."

The report appeared aimed at underlining Tehran's claim that it controls the strait, a major corridor for oil and natural gas shipments. Since the U.S. and Israel launched the war against Iran on Feb. 28, Tehran has used its ability to choke off the waterway as a key source of leverage, disrupting global markets for energy and other critical goods.

TankerTrackers.com, a company tracking oil shipments at sea, was one of the first expert sources to identify the ship as the Arista. Footage shot by an Armenian news outlet matches the ship in the state television footage to the Arista, pointing to the colors of the containers on its deck and the paint scheme of the vessel. Iranian state TV did not air a close-up image of the ship's name or its registration number. In one shot, it blurred the vessel's name.

Marine tracking data shows the Arista has been stuck north of Hormuz Island in Iran's territorial waters since the middle of March. The ship had been traveling between Hormuz and Asaluyeh, another Iranian port, when

it got stuck, tracking data shows.

Iranian state television and Iran's mission to the United Nations did not immediately respond to questions Thursday from The Associated Press.

On July 30, the U.S. Treasury linked the Arista - under its former name, the Gauja - to a massive oil smuggling ring run by Mohammad Hossein Shamkhani, a son of Ali Shamkhani, who had been a top security adviser to the late Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. The senior Shamkhani was killed in an airstrike at the start of the war along with Khamenei.

The Treasury Department alleged the smuggling ring moved sanctioned Iranian and Russian oil and other goods to buyers around the world.

"The Shamkhani family's shipping empire highlights how the Iranian regime elites leverage their positions to accrue massive wealth and fund the regime's dangerous behavior," Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said in a statement at the time.

After the sanctions were levied, the Gauja changed its name to the Arista and began flying a Comoros flag, which shipping data shows is a "false" flag for the ship - a flag used to disguise a vessel's origins. Sanctioned ships in Iran's so-called shadow fleet frequently use this practice.

Strengthening legacy planning leadership

NBK Wealth crowned Kuwait's Best for Next-Gen 2026 by Euromoney

KUWAIT CITY, July 4: NBK Wealth, the region's leading wealth management group, has been named Kuwait's Best for Next-Gen 2026 by Euromoney, the leading global financial publication, as part of its 2026 Private Banking Awards.

This recognition reflects NBK Wealth's excellence in spreading awareness of the value of investment among future generations and equipping them with the skills they need to manage their wealth in the future with extreme professionalism, through its exclusive educational program "Generation W", which targets the sons and daughters of the group's senior private banking clients.

The award recognizes institutions that have proven themselves as exemplary providers of services and engagement for younger family members. Such services include, but are not limited to, innovative events and content, and values-driven investment solutions.

It also recognizes institutions that demonstrate true development of meaningful connections between next-generation clientele and their family wealth, as well as excellence in creating tailored programmes that bridge generational gaps.

The program is a comprehensive educational experience carefully designed by NBK Wealth Group to provide participants with a deep and thorough understanding of the world of wealth management, through expert-led sessions, real-world case studies, and interactive workshops based on the latest data and research, along with cultural activities and nature adventures that aim to build long relationships and enhance critical thinking, as well as widen both the personal and professional horizons of the participants.

Euromoney's Private Banking Awards are among the most prestigious global awards programs in the wealth



NBK Wealth secures prestigious Euromoney award.

management and private banking industry. The awards recognize institutions that demonstrate excellence and innovation in the sector, with winners selected based on rigorous criteria that include strong growth, strategic initiatives, and digital excellence.

NBK Wealth's role extends beyond seeking to help clients grow their wealth. The Group strives to be the trust-

ed partner and preferred choice in wealth management by delivering innovative, specialized, and comprehensive solutions that evolve with clients' needs, seek to create lasting value, and generate meaningful impact. Through this approach, NBK Wealth seeks to help clients build enduring legacies that can be preserved and passed on to future generations.

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

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

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

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

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

Alternative export routes & fiscal buffers differentiate credit exposure to geopolitical risk – Moody's Rating

The Middle East conflict crystallises the geopolitical risk that we have long highlighted for sovereigns in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), in particular, the risk of tensions involving Iran escalating into shipping disruption through the Strait of Hormuz. Notwithstanding the recently signed memorandum of understanding between the US (Aa1 stable) and Iran, which extends a fragile ceasefire and provides for free passage of shipping through the strait albeit prone to volatility, it will invariably take time for maritime traffic to return to pre-conflict levels. In addition, developments over the past few months have confirmed structural vulnerabilities that will persist in the absence of a long-term agreement leading to a credible and durable de-escalation, given the ease with which Iran can impede strait traffic. Our political risk scores for GCC sovereigns differentiate their credit exposures based on, primarily, the ability to circumvent shipping disruption for key exports and trade more generally. They also consider the presence of sovereign buffers to mitigate the conflict's impact on government revenue to support spending and the balance of payments.

Besides shipping disruption through the Strait of Hormuz which has led to substantial economic and fiscal losses for those sovereigns with no alternative export routes, the conflict has had a significant impact on sentiment sensitive sectors such as tourism and real estate. In the event of a return to open conflict, large-scale attacks on critical energy and civilian infrastructure or persistent security concerns undermining either non-hydrocarbon based economic models or long-term diversification prospects would expand the channels through which GCC sovereigns are affected. We consider the probability of such attacks to remain low. A structural weakening in the region's long-term economic prospects because of a fundamental reassessment of security risks also remains unlikely at this stage. In the event of a large scale attack on water desalination facilities or water contamination in the Gulf – critical given the region's high levels of water stress and heavy reliance on desalination – where disruptions could have material and wide-ranging credit consequences, the credit impact may be particularly acute. Strikes on nuclear plants resulting in a radioactive leak would be another highly credit negative event because of the GCC countries geographical proximity to Iran and to each other. Should the prospect of such outcomes increase, our GCC sovereigns' political

risk scores would need to incorporate the potential consequences of such low probability, high severity events.

Oman (Baa3 stable) has the lowest geopolitical risk exposure because its oil and gas export infrastructure and seaports are located outside the Strait of Hormuz. Its oil and liquefied natural gas (LNG) exports and goods trade are consequently unaffected by disruption in the strait. In addition, Oman's neutral geopolitical stance, stable relations with both the US and Iran – including acting as a key mediator between both – and the absence of US military assets in its territory have helped it avoid Iranian strikes. These considerations inform our assessment of Oman's political risk score at "baa". Oman can also benefit from higher oil prices and increased traffic through its ports whenever shipping through the strait is disrupted.

Other GCC sovereigns are more directly exposed as they are affected by disruption through the strait and host US military bases. Saudi Arabia (Aa3 stable) and the United Arab Emirates (UAE, Aa2 stable), including Abu Dhabi (Aa2 stable), are less exposed within this group as they benefit from alternative oil export routes. Saudi Arabia's East-West pipeline and Abu Dhabi's Habshan-Fujairah pipeline have enabled both countries to sustain hydrocarbon exports at about 75% and 50% of pre-conflict levels, respectively. The ability to export oil at higher prices than pre-conflict levels is also offsetting lower export volumes, supporting Saudi Arabia and Abu Dhabi's fiscal positions. Moreover, Saudi Arabia's main seaport handling cargo is on the Red Sea, away from the Gulf, while the UAE has two seaports outside the strait, one of which is a container terminal in Sharjah (Ba1 stable). The location of these ports limit the disruption in goods trade, especially for Saudi Arabia. These factors support our "ba" political risk assessment for Saudi Arabia, Abu Dhabi, the UAE federal government, and Sharjah.

For the governments in the UAE, Abu Dhabi's very large stock of government financial assets exceeding 300% of GDP reinforces our political risk assessment. In addition, a new pipeline Abu Dhabi is constructing parallel to the current one, will double its export capacity bypassing the strait as early as 2027. It would also further reduce the emirate's exposure to shipping disruption through the strait.

While Kuwait (A1 stable) and Qatar (Aa2 sta-

ble) do not have alternative routes for their oil and LNG exports, and their seaports are located in the Gulf, both sovereigns have very large fiscal buffers that can mitigate the impact of the shipping disruption for a considerable time. Our estimate of these sovereigns' government financial assets amount to more than 400% of GDP for Kuwait and 00% of GDP for Qatar (Exhibit 1). These assets can be used, when needed, to support government spending even if hydrocarbon revenue falls sharply for some time (at least several months, if not years). By limiting the speed at which event risk exposure translates into deterioration in credit metrics, the fiscal buffers underpin our "ba" assessment of both sovereigns' political risk.

By contrast, Bahrain (B2 negative) has the highest exposure to geopolitical risk among GCC sovereigns, because it has no alternative export route for its oil and aluminium, nor does its government have the liquid financial assets to counter the shipping disruption's impact on its revenue. Bahrain's maritime borders are fully within the Gulf, which also constrains goods trade more generally. The absence of fiscal buffers increases the credit impact of current or potential disruptions in shipping and travel on Bahrain and the risk that events rapidly translate into credit pressure, since spending will have to be debt financed. Our "b" political risk assessment reflects this greater exposure and vulnerability compared to other GCC sovereigns. However, it also incorporates our assumption that financial and liquidity support will be forthcoming and timely from key GCC partners, if needed, based on past occasions where it has been provided.

This approach is consistent with the approach we have taken in assessing political risk in other regions facing military conflicts or persistent geopolitical tensions (Exhibit 2).

Endnotes

1 Our political risk assessment considers both the probability and impact of a political event. For the GCC, geopolitical risk is the main driver of our assessment, as domestic political risk is contained by generous government support programmes for GCC citizens, which in some cases constitute only a small fraction of the population.

2 Our estimates of the GCC sovereigns' government financial assets mainly comprise sovereign wealth assets that we consider to be reasonably liquid, as well as government deposits at their respective central banks.

Excelling at wealth, safety & real estate

KFH secures top Euromoney Awards across key segments

KUWAIT CITY, July 4: Euromoney highlighted Kuwait Finance House (KFH) as a leading force in Kuwait's private banking sector, recognizing the bank's achievements across private banking, wealth management, safety, and real estate financing through three prestigious awards: Best Private Bank, Safest Private Bank, and Best for Real Estate Financing in Kuwait.

Best private bank

Euromoney stated that KFH Private is the standout private bank in Kuwait, offering an authentic Islamic, end-to-end proposition at scale with clear client impact.

During the review period, the bank completed its integration of Ahli United Bank and turned its Bahrain, UK and Egypt operations Shariah-compliant, for seamless cross-border banking.

In 2024, KFH also restructured its local businesses into a unified private banking and wealth management group. These strategic moves have helped to position KFH as a leader in terms of client experience, Islamic banking, talent retention and scale.

KFH's Islamic banking proposition demonstrates considerable breadth. During the review period, KFH Capital led or arranged around \$18 billion of sukuk for sovereigns and corporates and coordinated KFH's own \$1 billion issuance.

Private clients have access to five Shariah compliant funds: these include two ijarah funds, two real estate funds and a USD money market fund. Salary transfer propositions other product launches combine innovation with Shariah compliance, while the KFH Turkey service centre removes friction for families with cross border ties

Digital delivery is fast, secure and transparent within an Islamic framework. The KFH Wealth app and a new investment portal give a cleaner, faster view of holdings and subscriptions. Through KFHOnline, the bank has also added Western Union transfers, Mobile ID-Civil ID updates, push notifications, instant payments and KFH Pay for private banking clients. Business owners benefit from eCorp with public authority for civil information (PACI) integration, face ID sign in and live rates. KFH boasts the largest ATM network in Kuwait, whilst Tam is the market's only fully Shariah-compliant digital banking.

KFH's emphasis on Islamic banking and its principles of stewardship read across to a deep commitment to environmental, social and governance (ESG) and sustainability. Governance in this area is rigorous: a board level Governance and Sustainability Committee oversees a Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) aligned, independently audited sustainability report. In 2024, ESG sukuk exposure rose 162.3% year-on-year to \$653.2 million, supervised by the bank's fully independent Fatwa and Shariah Supervisory Board.

Safest private bank
According to Euromoney, safety is a defining attribute of private banking in Kuwait, where wealthy clients place a premium on institutional strength, governance and long-term stability. KFH stands out as the country's safest private banking platform, combining strong financial foundations with the disciplined risk culture associated with one of the region's leading Islamic banking institutions.

A key pillar of this reputation is the strength of KFH's balance sheet, which provides a stable foundation for its private banking and wealth management activities. The bank's stability is reinforced by a shareholder base that includes major Kuwaiti public institutions, such as the Kuwait Investment Authority and other government-linked entities, linking the institution closely to the strength of the state. In addition, the Central Bank of Kuwait provides deposit protection across Kuwaiti banks, further reinforcing client confidence.

Best for real estate financing

Euromoney stated that Kuwait Finance House's (KFH) real estate financing capabilities offer scale, cross-border reach and fully Islamic execution. Customer exposure to construction and real estate rose 83.7% year-on-year in 2024, while on balance-sheet real estate investments increased 18.7%.

Governance is rigorous, based on a formal three lines of defence framework, with day to day suitability safeguarded by Shariah Research & Advisory, Internal Shariah Audit and an External Shariah Auditor.

For opportunity origination and pricing, the bank utilises both in house platforms such as KFH Real Estate and a network of established firms and asset managers to source, screen and price transactions. Through KFH Capital, private banking clients can access one of the region's largest Shariah compliant real estate fund platforms, with more than KWD1.5 billion in assets under management (AUM). KFH also offers the market's first and only listed Shariah compliant Reit, for investment grade exposure.



Beyond balance-sheet strength, KFH's Shariah-compliant operating model also plays an important role in shaping its risk profile. Islamic finance principles impose structural discipline that aligns closely with conservative wealth management. Investments are screened for ethical compliance, excessive leverage is avoided and structures are designed around tangible underlying assets. This approach supports a quality-focused investment philosophy that helps limit extreme exposures during periods of market stress.

Governance is equally central to KFH's safety proposition. The bank operates a comprehensive three-lines-of-defence framework integrating risk management, compliance and internal controls across decision-making and product governance processes. Compliance teams review new offerings before launch, while Shariah advisory functions supported by internal and external audits provide an additional layer of oversight.

Client protection is embedded throughout the private banking process. Suitability assessments link client objectives and risk profiles to recommended investments, supported by ongoing monitoring and portfolio adjustments. Meanwhile, a group-wide anti-money laundering and counter-terrorist financing framework aligned with Central Bank of Kuwait instructions supports rigorous onboarding, due diligence and transaction monitoring.

By combining strong capitalisation, disciplined Shariah governance and rigorous compliance controls, the bank offers private clients a stable and resilient environment in which to manage and preserve their wealth.

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The bank's cross border pipeline includes a UK student housing fund and a US real estate fund, in addition to other non standard financings such as Kuwait state/usufruct industrial, and commercial and agricultural assets via ijarah.

Cross border execution has been strengthened by KFH's conversion of its Bahrain, UK and Egypt operations to Islamic banking, and by a 2025 memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Sakan – a digital real estate marketplace and mortgage enablement platform – to support Shariah compliant onboarding and listings.

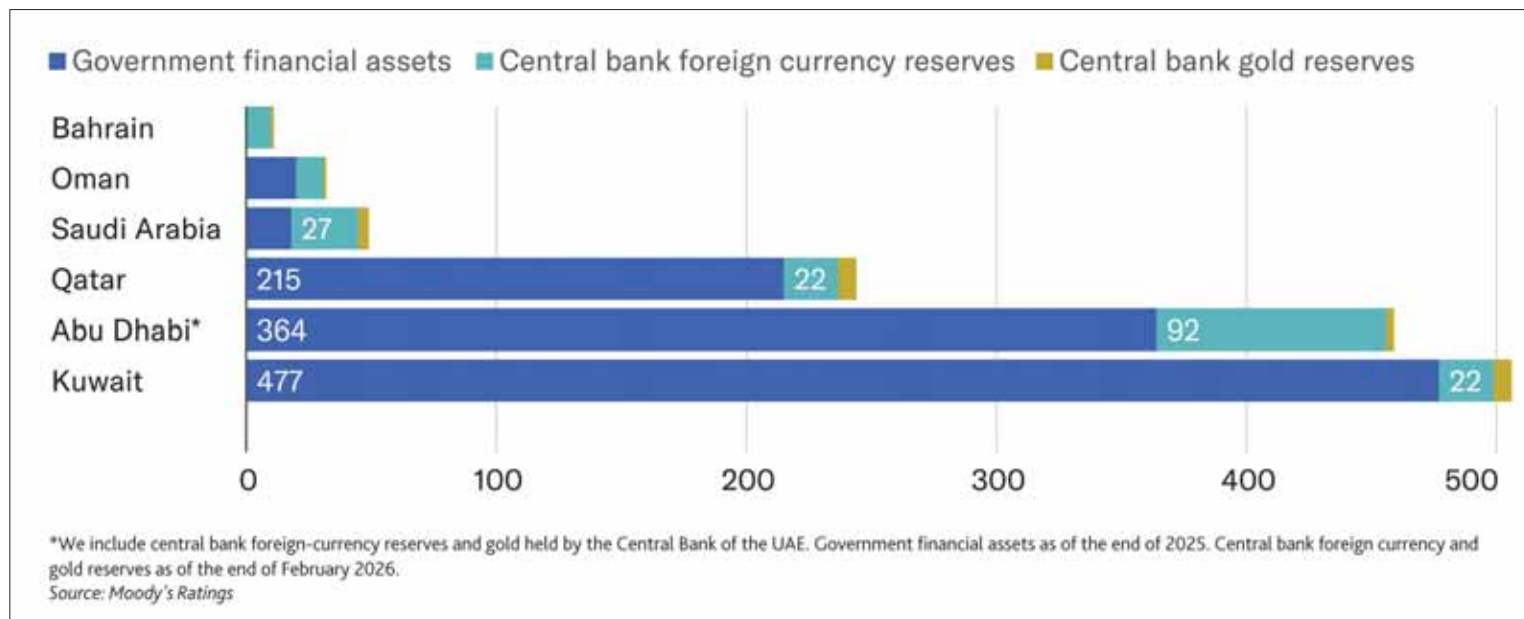


Exhibit 2
Political risk scores in regions affected by geopolitical tensions

Political risk score	Middle East conflict	Russia-Ukraine conflict	Great Lakes conflict	Other regions with geopolitical tensions
baa	Oman	Finland Germany		
ba	Abu Dhabi Jordan Kuwait Qatar Saudi Arabia Sharjah UAE	Estonia Latvia Lithuania Poland		Azerbaijan South Korea Taiwan, China
b	Bahrain Egypt Israel		DRC Rwanda	Armenia
caa	Iraq Lebanon			
ca		Belarus Ukraine		

DRC= Democratic Republic of the Congo; UAE= United Arab Emirates. The political scores for Iraq and Lebanon also reflect elevated domestic political risk. Source: Moody's Ratings

Supports next-gen talent in engineering, sustainability

ALSAYER Group awards Kuwaiti teams for reaching Global Hydrogen Racing Finals

KUWAIT CITY, July 4: ALSAYER Group proudly recognized and awarded prizes to the winners of the Horizon Educational Regional Race, hosted at ALSAYER Group's KFTZ 1 Office on June 24, 2026. As a strategic partner of Horizon Educational, the Group has been instrumental in nurturing students' skills in clean energy, hydrogen fuel cell technologies, engineering design, and teamwork.

Chairman of ALSAYER Group, Mr. Faisal Bader Al-Sayer described the event as a leading global initiative in clean energy and hydrogen technologies, offering students practical experiences that strengthen creativity, engineering thinking, teamwork, and problem solving. He added that the participation of teams from schools, Kuwait University, and the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training reflects a unified national effort to support young talent, and the results demonstrate the strong potential of Kuwaiti youth to excel in modern science and technology.

Dr. Noura Aljeri, Assistant Professor in the Department of Computer Science at Kuwait University noted that hosting the competition along with ALSAYER Group as the strategic sponsor highlights both entities role in fostering innovation and equipping youth with fu-



ALSAYER celebrates student excellence in hydrogen tech.

ture ready scientific and technical skills.

The national qualifiers concluded with several teams earning the opportunity to represent Kuwait in the global H2 Grand Prix Pro Finals in Switzerland. The Sonic team from Al Sabahiya School secured first place among schools, Kuwait University claimed first place in the university category, the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training team came second, and Maria Al Qibtiyya School finished third. Special awards were also presented: the Team Spirit Award went to Salman Al Farsi School and Al Waha School, the Innovation Award was given to Maria Al Qibtiyya School, the Marketing Award was awarded to Al Israa Secondary School for Girls, and the Outstanding Design Award was presented to Al Sharqiyah Secondary School for Girls.

By celebrating and rewarding these achievements, ALSAYER Group reaffirmed its dedication to supporting educational initiatives that prepare young people to lead in sustainability, engineering, and innovation. The Group also pledged continued support for the Kuwaiti teams as they advance to the international stage in Switzerland, carrying the nation's spirit of creativity and excellence to a global audience.

To enhance operational efficiency through AI-powered capabilities

ABK launches Microsoft Copilot for M365 solutions

KUWAIT CITY, July 4: Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) has launched Microsoft Copilot for M365 AI-powered solutions, marking another important milestone in the Bank's digital transformation journey. The advanced solution is designed to enhance employee collaboration, streamline operations, and improve operational efficiency, enabling the Bank to deliver faster and more responsive services.

Through the integration of Microsoft Copilot, ABK employees gain access to intelligent daily assistance that helps automate routine tasks, accelerate document preparation, summarise information, and facilitate more effective collaboration across divisions. This contributes to reducing the time spent on repetitive manual tasks while allowing employees to focus on higher-value activities such as customer service, advisory services, and innovation.

On this occasion, Khalil AlQattan, Chief Digital Transformation and Innovation Officer at ABK,



Khalil AlQattan, Chief Digital Transformation & Innovation Officer

said, "The adoption of Microsoft's AI solutions reflects ABK's commitment to embracing technologies that redefine productivity and customer experience. By empowering our teams with AI capabilities, we enable them to work more effectively, collaborate more efficiently, and deliver services with greater speed and accuracy."

He added, "This will allow our customers to benefit from faster



Salem Al Sarraf, Chief Information Officer

service, greater engagement, and personalised solutions that anticipate their needs. For our employees, it creates a smarter work environment where technology supports creativity, decision-making, and efficiency, enabling them to focus on the tasks that matter most in delivering exceptional value."

In a related context, Salem Al Sarraf, Chief Information Officer at ABK, added, "The adoption of Co-

pilot Pro is supported by a robust infrastructure fully integrated with Microsoft cloud services, ensuring the highest levels of security, reliability, and performance efficiency. This technical will enable the Bank to fully leverage the potential of artificial intelligence across various operations."

The rollout of Microsoft Copilot solutions supports the Bank's vision of building a future-ready workforce by integrating innovation, agility, and digital capabilities into daily operations. By enhancing internal productivity and facilitating access to information, the Bank aims to further strengthen and reinforcing its ability to scale and adapt to the evolving banking landscape.

This initiative demonstrates ABK's commitment to leveraging artificial intelligence to improve internal efficiency, further strengthening its leading position in innovation and operational excellence within Kuwait's banking and financial sector.

'Admin workers turn to AI'

Admin jobs decline, but AI opens new pathways

With their numbers already in decline, secretaries and administrative assistants face another growing threat: artificial intelligence tools like ChatGPT and Claude that can accomplish aspects of their workload with a tap.

Employment projection data offers a grim outlook for the women-dominated profession that may be particularly vulnerable to AI-induced job displacement compared to the broader workforce. But some admins are embracing the technology - and even using it as a tool to get ahead.

Deanna Danger, 43, has worked in an administrative role since 2003. She says adapting and staying ahead of the curve is a key part of her constantly-changing role, and AI is no exception.

"All you do is have to evolve," she says.

Danger started using AI professionally in 2022, learning through experimentation and collaboration with fellow admins. Today, she no longer takes notes during meetings - she's set up Copilot and ChatGPT to do it for her. That has freed her to "actually participate in the meetings, and not just worry about making sure I typed everything out that was said," says Danger, executive assistant to the chief information officer at Vanderbilt University. "Honestly, what used to take me hours I'm now done with in under five minutes."

How - and to what extent - AI might reshape her profession remains to be seen, but jobs for administrative assistants and secretaries have been dwindling for decades. In 2004, about 3.5 million people worked in the role - nearly 97% of them women, according to Current Population Survey data. Twenty years later, that number slid to 2.1 million - despite overall workforce growth during the same period. And except for medical secretaries and administrative assistants - a category projected to grow 4% by 2034 thanks to growth of the healthcare industry - economists at the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics predict a continued decline in the profession.

The unemployment rate for office and administrative support workers - a broader category that also includes accounting clerks, postal service workers and more - ticked up to 4% compared to 3.6% in June last year, according to Labor Department data released Thursday, although that level remains lower than the overall unemployment rate.

"The overall story in office and admin occupations from the projection standpoint for the last several cycles has been one of productivity-enhancing technologies, limiting demand for employment," said Emily Rolan, lead economist for the division of employment projections at the BLS. Technological advances - word processing, speech-to-text transcription, scheduling tools and apps - each transformed the duties of administrative professionals and contributed to overall decline.

Clerical and administrative workers may be more exposed to AI-induced job displacement than other professionals because they "lack adaptive capacity due to limited savings, advanced age, scarce local opportunities, and/or narrow skill sets," according to a Brookings Institution report published in January. About 86% of these 6 million workers are women.

Indeed, more secretaries and administrative assistants are 55 and older compared to the workforce at large (34% vs. 23%), median pay is lower than that of all U.S. workers (\$47,460 vs. \$49,500), and a high school diploma is sufficient for many entry-level roles.

But what labor data doesn't capture - as noted by the Brookings report - is an individual's ability to navigate a changing environment, including administrative assistants like Danger, who say they "are way more capable than people think."

Danger hosts a biweekly virtual coffee chat for peers through the American Society of Administrative

Professionals, a professional group that says it serves about 132,000 members. Participants in a May session shared their AI use cases: creating flyers, scouting out restaurants for executive events, coming up with captions for employer social media accounts, drafting standard operating procedure language, and more.

But despite the overall atmosphere of enthusiasm, some participants raised concerns, including data security and the lack of AI regulation. Others emphasized that AI cannot, and will not, replace the emotional intelligence and relationship building skills that are hallmarks of a successful admin.

Fiona Young, founder of Carve, a business focused on training executive assistants on AI, says she has seen "a massive shift in demand" for her services since 2023. Young, a former executive assistant herself, says she has delivered AI training to administrative professionals globally, including at Google, Amazon, Uber, Salesforce and LinkedIn. In her experience, employers want staff to be able to leverage AI - "not just loosely understanding it, but genuinely using it as an integral part of how people are working every day," she says.

Oana Manolache takes an even stronger stance. The founder and CEO of Sequel.io, a platform that enables companies to host webinars on their own websites, wrote in a LinkedIn post last year: "I will fire anyone who doesn't use AI."

But even Manolache says AI could not replace her executive assistant, Stephanie Martinez.

Manolache says Martinez uses AI to "free herself" from tasks like note-taking and meeting prep to focus on the "human work" of building team connectivity, making judgment calls, understanding executives' relationships with stakeholders and communicating accordingly.

Maybe AI could supplant the "traditional" assistant, but "it doesn't replace what an executive assistant does now as the role has evolved," Manolache says.

Martinez works remotely from El Salvador through Viva Talent, which - in another example of the shifting landscape for the role - trains and matches assistants from Latin and South America to primarily U.S.-based tech companies.

"The people who truly want to succeed in this role have a massive opportunity," Manolache says. "This person has access to information across the entire organization."

For instance, when the company aimed to drive more customer reviews on a software review platform, Martinez, who manages most invoices and billing, approached the problem innovatively. She leveraged AI to sift through all customer communications, pinpoint good candidates for reviews, and draft outreach emails. Without AI, "it would have taken her so long to do this," Manolache says, adding that it also freed up Martinez to "think creatively."

That freedom to strategically implement AI is just as important as education and training, since many assistants are interested in adopting AI but lack the bandwidth to incorporate it, says Melissa Peoples, an Austin, Texas-based executive assistant coach and former C-suite executive assistant.

Gender dynamics compound that challenge in an industry dominated by women who are often paired with male leaders, Peoples says. "You see those that are early adopters, and are crushing it, and are partnered with really empowering executives, and can do all of these things," she says. "And then you see the other side of this, where literally assistants are being told, 'You're not smart enough to be in the room. Just bring me my coffee.'"

With effective AI training, Peoples says admins can "find their voice" and "have higher impact so they are protected against what is going to happen as agentic AI becomes more commonplace and more easily accessible." (AP)

Targeting summer demand with Nice route

Kuwait Airways adds French Riviera route

KUWAIT CITY, July 4, (KUNA): Kuwait Airways announced on Saturday the launch of commercial flights to the French city of Nice, operating twice weekly on Saturdays and Tuesdays starting today as part of its Summer 2026 schedule.

Acting Chief Executive Officer Abdulwahab Al-Shatti told KUNA that the launch of the Nice route is part of the airline's strategy to expand its European network and meet growing demand for leisure destinations during the summer season.

Al-Shatti said Nice is one of the leading tourist destinations on the French Riviera, adding that its inclusion in the airline's summer schedule reflects Kuwait Airways' commitment to meeting customers' expectations by offering a diverse range of destinations.

He affirmed that Kuwait Airways will continue implementing its expansion plans aimed at strengthening its route network and enhancing operational efficiency, further reinforcing its position

as a leading national carrier at both the regional and international levels.

Al-Shatti added that the airline's Summer 2026 destinations were selected following a comprehensive assessment of market needs and travel demand, noting that Nice represents a valuable addition to Kuwait Airways' European network thanks to its strong tourism appeal and strategic location as one of Europe's premier summer destinations.

Trump receives diamond ring after tariff win

BRUSSELS, July 4, (AP): Dozens of diamonds spell out two giant letter T's next to the Stars and Stripes and "1776" and "2026." Dozens more frame the numbers 45 and 47 in the shape of Superman's logo. A diamond-winged eagle carries a ruby shield and clutches an olive branch of emeralds, below a radiant "250" and atop the phrase "250 YEARS USA" etched in 18-karat gold.

All told, 321 diamonds, 56 sapphires, 13 emeralds and six rubies encrust the watch-sized gold ring presented this week to Bill White, the U.S. ambassador to Belgium, to give to U.S. President Donald Trump.

"A very special thank you to my friends from Antwerp for the magnificent Freedom 250 ring," Trump said in a prerecorded video message during an event marking America's 250th birthday in Brussels.

Isidore Morsel, president of the Antwerp World Diamond Center, or AWDC, gifted the ring on behalf of the centuries-old diamond community in the Belgian port city, a central node in the worldwide trade of the precious stones that found itself struggling last year under the weight of Trump's sweeping trade war.

"May this ring serve as a lasting reminder that true partnership, like the finest natural diamonds, are formed under pressure, endure the test of time, and shine brightest when built on trust," Morsel said. The ring's interior is engraved with the phrase "Crafted in Antwerp for Donald John Trump."

In dollar terms, the ring's value pales beside gifts like the \$400 million plane donated by Qatar that Trump ordered converted into a new Air Force One. But it's a glitzy window into the role that ostentatious - and almost always gilded - gifts are playing by those seeking to curry favor with the U.S. president.

A White House official, speaking on the condition of anonymity to discuss the matter, said Thursday that the ring has not been presented to Trump yet.

The gift comes months after Belgium's diamond industry won the removal of U.S. tariffs on diamond imports. In September, AWDC said it had "succeeded in securing a zero percent import tariff" on Antwerp's annual export of more than \$2 billion of polished diamonds to the U.S. A spokesperson for the group said on Thursday that the AWDC provided "input" to the European Commission as it negotiated with Trump on a broad deal on tariffs in 2025, but did not itself lobby the administration.

U.S. presidents have considerable discretion to accept gifts from domestic and foreign sources



U.S. Ambassador to Belgium Bill White presents a ring designed for U.S. President Donald Trump and crafted by Antwerp diamond designer David Gotlib, during the America 250 event in Brussels, Sunday, June 28, 2026. (AP)

and may determine themselves whether a gift was meant for them personally or the nation. The exception is those from foreign governments, which are prohibited by the foreign emoluments clause of the Constitution without congressional assent, though presidents could use personal funds to reimburse the Treasury for the full value of an official gift if they wish to retain it.

Personal gifts are also supposed to be registered on the president's annual financial disclosure. Trump's 2025 disclosure, released this week, revealed a \$250,000 gift of a sculpture depicting his triumphal gesture after surviving a 2024 assassination attempt at a campaign rally in Butler, Pennsylvania, and tickets to 10 sporting events, including 10 to the upcoming World Cup final in New Jersey from FIFA's Gianni Infantino, valued at a collective \$15,000.

Four U.S. ethics experts told The Associated Press that Trump has broken with decades-old custom in the White House to avoid accepting such gifts.

To forge the ring, the AWDC turned to David Gotlib, an Antwerp-based high-end jeweler whose cufflinks can sell for more than 15,000 euros (\$17,000).

Neither AWDC nor Gotlib would provide a valuation of the ring, but two independent jew-

elers told AP they estimated the value at between \$25,000 and \$35,000.

Paris- and London-based jewelry consultant Alexander Levinson calculated the cost at \$25,928, while David Saad, a third-generation luxury jeweler in Canada, priced the ring between \$33,000 and \$35,000. Both said half the cost was in materials, half in labor.

After the ring was presented on a star-spangled stage in Brussels, musician Alexis Wilkins, the girlfriend of FBI Director Kash Patel, sang the U.S. national anthem to more than 8,000 people drinking Budweiser and bourbon from Tennessee and Kentucky.

Ambassador White said he raised more than \$5.5 million for the 250th anniversary event from corporate sponsors like defense industry titans Lockheed Martin and Northrop Grumman, tech firms like Intel, Google and Meta, as well as the European chocolate companies Leonidas and Ferrero. AWDC said it contributed funds, too.

"The media was asking, 'Why does it have to be so big?'" White said of the event. "Because we are the United States of America!"

The ambassador posted on social media Friday that after he gives the ring to Trump, it will be displayed in the Oval Office.

Wedding brings stars of music, film and sports to New York

Taylor Swift, Travis Kelce tie the knot at MSG

NEW YORK, July 4, (AP) — Taylor Swift and Travis Kelce married Friday night at Madison Square Garden, where actor Adam Sandler was the surprising officiant at a ceremony packed with stars of sports and entertainment. The deep secrecy that surrounded the buildup to the nuptials lifted when a marquee outside the Midtown Manhattan arena proclaimed “JUST&T MARRIED” once the deed was done.

The couple did not have bridesmaids or groomsmen, instead having Swift’s younger brother Austin Swift serve as her man of honor with Kelce’s big brother and podcast co-host Jason Kelce his best man, Swift’s publicist Tree Paine said in an email.

The bride and groom’s outfits came from Christian Dior Haute Couture and its designer Jonathan Anderson with shoes custom-made by Christian Louboutin. She wore Cartier jewelry.

The long anticipated union of sports and song brought hype to new heights at a venue made more for historic NBA games and bucket-list concerts. The Kansas City Chiefs’ superstar tight end and the music megastar married as fans and spectators gathered outside in blistering heat, eager to be part of the occasion, even though the event was almost entirely hidden.

Actors Bradley Cooper, Zoë Kravitz, Hugh Grant and Ethan Hawke; models Gigi Hadid and Karlie Kloss; comic Chris Rock; director Steven Spielberg; singer Camila Cabello and author Jenny Han were among the guests from the world of arts and entertainment. Kelce’s coach Andy Reid and Chiefs teammates including running back Kareem Hunt were among the sports figures in the arena, along with retired NFL superstar Tom Brady, Seattle Seahawks receiver and recent Super Bowl champ Cooper Kupp, New York Giants receiver Juju Smith-Schuster and ESPN personalities Joe Buck and Stephen A. Smith.

In a culture obsessed with famous couplings it may have been the apex celebrity wedding, with perhaps only royal unions getting more attention. Holding such a ceremony in a huge, iconic space that sits at the center of the U.S. media universe while keeping all the details secret made for a surreal scene, but it was a mix of hype and hush that is not out of character for Swift.

An Associated Press camera outside the arena showed a long line of black SUVs dropping off wedding-goers



A ‘Just Married’ sign is displayed on Madison Square Garden during a wedding between singer Taylor Swift and National Football League player Travis Kelce on Friday, July 3, 2026, in New York. (AP)

in tuxedos and evening gowns, surrounded by New Yorkers in shorts and Swifties amassing for the occasion. Rain briefly cut the heat shortly after the marriage was announced.

There was a seemingly total lack of social media posts from guests once they had entered the arena, with phones apparently banned.

Weddings have been a constant subject in Swift’s songs since she was a teenager, and her actually

walking the aisle for the first time at age 36 added to the drama. It was also the first marriage for the 36-year-old three-time Super Bowl champ Kelce, who could have been one of the jock characters in Swift’s early hits.

Sandler, star of “The Wedding Singer” and many other hit comedies, can’t have been high on anyone’s betting list for who would marry the couple, though he’s become

an increasingly warm and paternal cultural figure with age. The email announcing the marriage described him as “a friend” of the couple. Kelce was one of the many athletes who appeared in “Happy Gilmore 2,” Sandler’s 2025 sequel to one of his first hits, and Sandler appeared last year on the Kelce brothers’ “New Heights” podcast.

The Swift-Kelce relationship has thrilled and fascinated millions

around the world - particularly the Swifties, the pop star’s enormous and ardent fan base - ever since the pair first started dating in 2023 after he showed up at her Eras Tour concert at the Chiefs stadium.

Happy fans mixed with frazzled tourists outside the arena.

Lori Powers, who lives an hour north of Manhattan and rode the train in to be near the nuptials, said Swift’s “music is the soundtrack be-

hind so many amazing moments in my life. Relationships, friends, like my husband and my kids.”

She stood outside the arena before the marriage was announced with her friend Cecily Hall.

“Just being here and witnessing all the energy and the excitement, it’s so much fun,” Hall said. “The combination of sports and music makes perfect sense as to why they’re at Madison Square Garden today.”

New on your screen: Blockbuster horror, rock royalty and TV reboots

‘Backrooms’ hits streaming as Rolling Stones drop new album

THE latest Rolling Stones album and the streaming debut of the hit movie “Backrooms” are some of the new television, films, music and games headed to a device near you.

Also among the streaming offerings worth your time this week, as selected by The Associated Press’ entertainment journalists: a new version of “Little House on the Prairie,” new albums from Adam Lambert and Finn Wolfhard and “College Football 27” from EA Sports.

■ The box-office sensation “Backrooms” is making its premium video-on-demand debut on July 7, available to purchase on all the major streaming services. Kane Parsons, 20, directed the feature length adaptation of his viral web-series about the dread of liminal space, starring Chivwet Ejirofor as a furniture store salesman. In his review, Associated Press Film Writer Jake Coyle wrote that it’s a “fitfully unsettling nightmare that never convincingly builds beyond its creepy, dated-decor premise.”

■ Maika Monroe plays a woman looking to rebuild her life after prison, heartbreak and tragedy, opposite Tyriq Withers in the Colleen Hoover adaptation “Reminders of Him,” streaming on Peacock on Friday, July 10. In his review for the AP, Mark Kennedy called it a “a well-crafted, well-acted sad-happy Hoover adaptation,” praising Monroe, who, he writes, “stretches out her dramatic muscles to play Kenna and nails the assignment, a woman with a hard shell who is looking for a little grace, a tricky role that’s both flirty and maternal.”

■ And just in time for the Fourth of July comedown, “The Long Walk,” set in a dystopian, postwar America, arrives on HBO Max on July 10. Cooper Hoffman and David Jonsson star in this adaptation of the Stephen King story in which 50 boys are selected by lottery for a harrowing contest in which the walk only ends when one survivor remains. Fittingly, “Hunger Games” veteran Francis Lawrence directed.

■ AP Film Writer Lindsey Bahr ■ Only the Rolling Stones have the flex to get Anya Taylor-Joy and Charles Melton to appear in one of their music videos. The movie stars play a frustrated couple in the video for the new soulful R&B single



This combination of album cover images show, top row from left, “Adam,” by Adam Lambert, “Foreign Tongues” by The Rolling Stones, “The Story of Michael and Tanya” by The War and Treaty, bottom left, and “Fire From the Hip” by Finn Wolfhard. (AP)

“Jealous Lover.” That’s from the upcoming album “Foreign Tongues,” out Friday, July 10, which includes the Cure’s Robert Smith on guitar for the rollicking single “Divine Intervention.” The album also has contributions from Steve Winwood, Paul McCartney and the Red Hot Chili Peppers’ Chad Smith. “Foreign Tongues” will also include a special appearance from drummer Charlie Watts, lifted from one of his final recording sessions before his death in 2021.

■ Finn Wolfhard isn’t resting on his music or TV successes. The “Stranger Things” star has his sophomore solo album out Friday, July 10, a year after the intriguing multi-hyphenate artist dropped “Happy Birthday.” And things are looking up - or is that Upside Down? - for Wolfhard: While his debut was a lo-fi, distortion-heavy sneer of garage-band strut, the singles from the 12-track “Fire From the Hip” so far reveal a more mature songwriter, with a more melodic bent and less dense, punky production. The lead

single “I’ll Let You Finish” cheekily nods to the viral VMA moment when Kanye West interrupted Taylor Swift at the 2009 Video Music Awards.

■ Adam Lambert struts away from Queen for his sixth solo studio album, simply titled “Adam.” Lambert says he was inspired by ’90s alternative rock and electronica, including Nine Inch Nails, Björk, Prince and Muse. Singles from the 12-track album include the vampire-dance of “Eat U Alive” and the infectious glam of “Under the Rhythm,” which samples ATC’s “Around the World (La La La La La).” Both tracks explore losing control with a lover: “I know I look a mess, but I’m gon’ sweat it off,” he sings in the second.

■ AP Entertainment Writer Mark Kennedy ■ “The War and Treaty” in 2018, writing: “Michael Trotter Jr. and Tanya Blount-Trotter, the pride of Albion, Michigan, are husband and wife and a powerhouse R&B duo who sound as though they were born to sing together.” The assess-



This combination of images show promotional art for the film “Backrooms,” from left, the series “Little House on the Prairie,” and the film, “Reminders of Him.” (AP)

ment holds true nearly a decade later, as they prepare to release their latest album, “The Story of Michael and Tanya.” Lead single “Don’t Say Goodbye” is a smooth throwback, timeless with its harmonies and soulful production. If that’s not enough to sway you, maybe this is: The album also features Wynonna Judd and Whoopi Goldberg. You read that correctly.

■ AP Music Writer Maria Sherman

■ A reboot of “Little House on the Prairie” debuts on Netflix Thursday, July 9. Like the original series starring Michael Landon and Melissa Gilbert, the show is based on the classic books by Laura Ingalls Wilder. Set in the American West in the late 19th Century, the tight-knit Ingalls family settles in Kansas, but their new home comes with a variety of challenges. Luke Bracey plays the father, Charles. Crosby Fitzgerald is Caroline, the family matriarch. Sky-walker Hughes plays eldest daughter, Mary, and Alice Halsey is the feisty younger daughter, Laura, also

known as Half-Pint.

■ J.K. Simmons stars in the new MGM+ crime drama “The Westies,” about the real Irish gang that ruled the Hell’s Kitchen neighborhood in Manhattan in the early 1980s. In the series, the Jacob Javits Convention Center is under construction in their backyard, promising an abundance of (illegal) ways to make money. The Westies’ turf is threatened by a clash of ideas between the young and old-school members. The eight episode series debuts on Sunday, July 12.

■ AP Writer Alicia Rancilio

■ The World Cup may still be raging, but EA Sports would like to remind you that the other kind of football is right around the corner. “College Football 27” promises streamlined play-calling, a new “Dynasty Blueprint” mode for aspiring athletic directors and an revamped “Road to Glory” campaign that lets you rake in the sponsorship cash as you fight for the Heisman Trophy. Ole Miss running back Kewan Lacy, Miami wide receiver Malachi Toney

and Oregon quarterback Dante Moore are the cover models, but the buzziest addition may be Mascot Mashup, which pits team mascots against each other in 11-on-11 slug-fests. Kickoff is Thursday, July 9, on PlayStation 5, Xbox X/S or PC.

■ The title location in Bandai Namco’s “Echoes of Aincrad” is a 100-story floating castle. The first floor is pleasant enough, with plenty of amiable villagers ready to help, but once you get to the second floor you may have to contend with giant cows and other monsters. The whole edifice is really one giant virtual reality maze, and you’ll need mad sword skills to escape. “Echoes” is a spinoff of the long-running Sword Art Online franchise, which encompasses novels, manga, anime and games, but it represents the first time you’ll be able to create your own avatar rather than playing as teenage protagonist Kirito. Start slashing Friday, July 10, on PlayStation 5, Xbox X/S or PC.

■ Lou Kesten (AP)

Tech

Shift to real-world evaluation

AI era pushes universities to reform teaching, study finds

LONDON, July 4, (Xinhua): Universities must fundamentally rethink how they educate students in a world where artificial intelligence (AI) is transforming the workplace, according to a new study released Friday by the University of Manchester.

The rise of AI means that higher education needs to place greater emphasis on critical thinking, ethical judgment and communication, according to the study written by Kelechi Ekuma from the university's Global Development Institute.

The study said that while AI tools are rapidly changing how people learn and work, many universities continue to rely on teaching and assessment models designed for the pre-AI era. This could create a gap between graduates' skills and employers' expectations.

Universities should therefore move beyond simply integrating AI into classrooms to rethink the purpose of higher education, thereby preparing students to work alongside increasingly capable AI systems rather than compete with them, said the

study. Graduates will increasingly need strong critical thinking and communication skills, ethical awareness and the ability to make sense of complex situations, alongside an understanding of how AI works, according to the study.

"AI is changing how knowledge is created, how decisions are made and how many jobs are carried out, universities need to think carefully about how they prepare students for that future," Ekuma said.

The study calls for significant changes to assessment methods, arguing that traditional examinations and coursework should give way to more authentic forms of evaluation that test students' ability to solve complex problems, exercise judgment and apply knowledge in real-world settings.

According to Ekuma, institutions should embrace AI as a teaching partner rather than treating it solely as a threat, helping students develop AI literacy alongside discipline-specific expertise.

Decongest UNESCO city

Venice eyes higher fees on busiest travel days

MILAN, July 4, (AP): Venice's new mayor is proposing a dynamic pricing system for the city's three-year-old day-tripper access fee, seeking government approval to raise the charge to as much as 50 euros (\$59) on the busiest days to ease overcrowding in the UNESCO world heritage city.

Mayor Simone Venturini told The Associated Press in an interview Friday that the current 10-euro fee for last-minute reservations has not done enough to discourage visitors on peak days. Instead of imposing a fixed higher fee, the city wants to enact a form of surge-pricing, allowing the charge to rise with demand on the busiest days.

Venturini said the system would both discourage overcrowding and help cover the costs of maintaining the city.

"We spend 100 million euros a year just to maintain Venice physically, and nobody gives us that money. Not Europe. Not the Italian state. International critics don't pay it either. It's paid by the people of Venice, and in part through tourism taxes," said Venturini, who was elected

mayor last month after serving as the city's top tourism official when the day-tripper tax was launched in 2024.

The access fee itself has been widely criticized by activists, housing advocates and opposition politicians for not doing enough to ease crowding in the city, while reducing Venice to a tourist attraction by charging admission. They also say the focus is too much on managing tourist flows, and not enough on bringing more residents back to the historic part of the city.

Venturini said the money is necessary to clean and maintain the city. The proposal for a surge-pricing structure would require an amendment to Italy's special law governing Venice, and Venturini said he had already discussed the idea with the tourism minister.

"Day-trippers obviously generate waste - they eat, they drink, they throw things away. That comes at a huge cost," which he said are driven up "because everything has to be done by hand, with brooms, boats and handcars."



In this file photo, stewards check tourists QR code access outside the main train station in Venice, Italy, on April 25, 2024. Venice's new mayor is proposing a dynamic pricing system for the city's three-year-old day-tripper access fee, seeking government approval to raise the charge to as much as 50 euros (\$59) on the busiest days to ease overcrowding in the UNESCO world heritage city. (AP)

The Conversation

Tracing American music from origins to the 1960s in a 1964 box set

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



By Ted Olson

East Tennessee State University

Long before the Revolutionary War, numerous traditions of Indigenous music flourished in places later incorporated into the United States. European music was heard in the New World from the earliest days of exploration and settlement. Disgruntled colonists in taverns and town squares borrowed British melodies to support new lyrics expressive of a developing national consciousness. After the U.S. became a nation in its own right, Francis Scott Key also pulled from British songs to pen the national anthem.

Over the ensuing decades, the young nation incorporated the musical repertoires, instruments and expressions of immigrants from various European and African groups. While the restless spirit of musical reinvention continues today, it is a challenge to comprehend the full scope of how American music has evolved.

Musicians throughout the nation's history have been fearless documentarians of American life and experience. As a historian of American music, I believe that Americans can increase their understanding of their national legacy by listening to and learning from the nation's music. Music can help Americans see their shared story of a national identity forged through an often fraught coexistence with people of different ethnicities and backgrounds.

Those seeking to better understand the evolution of American music might seek out and listen to "The Folk Box," a landmark but overlooked piece of audio history. Compiled in 1964 by Elektra Records founder Jac Holzman, this four-LP, 83-track box set was intended as an accessible survey of the roots and branches of American vernacular music.

"The Folk Box" combined recordings from the Elektra Records stable of artists, with significant contributions from the Folkways Records catalog. It

featured a 48-page booklet written by Bob Dylan biographer Robert Shelton, who outlined the narrative arc of the set.

"The Folk Box" portrayed the nation's music heritage as a dynamic and diverse soundscape that had consistently absorbed new influences, reinventing itself by reflecting the shifting demographics of a nation constantly changing. This modest documentary album illustrates how American music has always contributed significantly to the telling of America's story.

In 1776, as the nation's founding generation proclaimed democratic ideals, music in the emerging United States consisted largely of British ballads, fiddle tunes, sea chanteys and hymns. These traditions had been transported across the Atlantic but were adapted to reflect new realities. "The Folk Box" explores this transitional era by featuring songs like "Good Old Colony Times," performed by Ed McCurdy, and "Jefferson and Liberty," as sung by Oscar Brand.

During the Revolutionary Era, music mobilized political action and helped forge community bonds. Broadside - sheets of paper containing lyrics to be sung to familiar, traditional melodies - were a common medium for disseminating songs. The early American songs and tunes were characterized by their simplicity and portability. Most everyone could sing or play them anywhere.

The music soon began to diverge from its European origins. Isolation in many American settlements required a self-reliant approach to performing music. In Appalachia, a regional style of song emerged that transformed the narrative focus of British ballads into shorter lyric folk songs suitable for presentation on commercial recordings. These songs were less detailed than the ballads but conveyed intense emotion gleaned from an often hardscrabble existence. "The Coo-Coo Bird," performed by Clarence Ashley and Doc Watson on "The Folk Box," illustrates this process of transformation, with references to a log cabin and the Fourth of July.

Throughout the 19th century, as the nation expanded its borders and people from around the world immigrated to the United States, the American musical landscape diversified. Much of this cultural change was inextricably tied to systemic oppression. Forced migration and enslavement of millions of African people brought a new sonic DNA to the United States - one that would

fundamentally transform global culture.

"The Folk Box" represents this cultural shift by highlighting such classic recordings as Huddie "Lead Belly" Ledbetter's "Pick a Bale of Cotton and Blind Willie Johnson's "Dark was the Night, Cold was the Ground" - songs associated with forced labor, spiritual devotion and the post-emancipation struggle.

African musical traditions were characterized by polyrhythms, call-and-response structures and the expressive vocal bending that created "blue notes." These musical techniques merged with European harmonic structures, yielding spirituals, which masked coded messages of escape and resistance beneath religious imagery.

By the end of the 19th century, this melding of musical elements yielded the blues. A secular music, the blues encapsulated hardship, resilience and a longing for freedom. When introduced to cities, the blues - represented on "The Folk Box" by artists like Josh White and Big Bill Broonzy - formed the bedrock for subsequent music genres, including jazz, rhythm and blues, and rock and roll.

The American West generated its own mythologies. Irish and Scottish laborers moved to the West to work on railroads, while Mexican vaqueros herded cattle on the open range. Westward migration and cowboy culture are traced on "The Folk Box" in songs like Harry Jackson's "I Ride an Old Paint" and Cisco Houston's "Zebra Dun." These cowboy songs were meant to soothe restless cattle during the night or break the monotony of isolation.

Cowboy music employed a strong sense of place by blending European storytelling traditions with images from a regionally specific way of life. This combination would go on to influence commercial country and bluegrass music.

By the early 20th century, the nation's regional sounds were being preserved in songbooks and on commercial and documentary recordings. New technologies such as the phonograph and the radio spread this regional music, introducing various traditions to new communities. These technological leaps coincided with the national crises of the Great Depression and the Dust Bowl. American music transformed localized entertainment into a powerful vehicle for social critique and political protest. (AP)

Haruki explores a woman's perspective in new novel

Murakami's 'The Tale of KAHO' hits shelves

TOKYO, July 4, (AP): Haruki Murakami's new book went on sale in Japan on Friday, but dozens of enthusiastic fans marked the release at a countdown event at a major Tokyo bookstore to get their first copies as soon as the clock struck midnight.

"The Tale of KAHO" is the Japanese author's first full-length novel featuring a lone woman protagonist, according to Shinchosha Publishing Co.

"Kaho, a picture book author, is just an average young woman. But truly bizarre things start happening around her," Murakami said in a brief message posted on the publisher's campaign website. "I wrote this novel as I put myself in her shoes."

His statement drew the attention of many fans, because most of Murakami's protagonists are young or middle-aged men.

"I'm excited about finding out how the story evolves around a female main character," said Naoyuki Yamano, the first customer to buy the new Murakami novel.

Initially, the novel started as a short story titled "Kaho," which Murakami rehearsed at a book reading event two years ago at Waseda University, his alma mater in Tokyo, with Mieko Kawakami, a renowned female author and fan of his work. The story was published in the June 2024 edition of Shincho magazine.



A man receives a copy of Haruki Murakami's new book titled "The Tale of KAHO" minutes after the clock struck midnight as others wait in line during a countdown event at a Kinokuniya bookstore in Tokyo, Friday, July 3, 2026. (AP)

Takumi Hashimoto, a 33-year old office worker who attended the launch event with three fellow members of a Murakami book reading club, said he hopes to read a story from a female protagonist's perspective and find out how the story evolved from a series of magazine stories into a full-length novel.

His companion, Mizuki Shiota, 33, said she was struck by the way Murakami portrayed the female pro-

tagonist's emotions in the magazine version.

"The story was written in a way that makes you very aware of lookism, or how I, as a woman, am perceived by men ... there were parts that I even felt startled a bit," Shiota said. "So I want to read that again in the book."

Beaming and in all smiles, the group headed to a coffee shop open all night to immediately start reading

the book.

One day, 26-year-old Kaho goes on a blind date arranged by her book editor. Over dinner, her date tells her that, although he has dated a number of women, "I've never seen one as ugly as you." Baffled rather than outraged, curious Kaho tries to uncover the meaning of his words. Soon, bizarre things begin happening to her, including encounters with other mysterious characters, such as an anteaater and a jaguar.

Murakami has since released three subsequent "Kaho" stories in Shincho magazine, most recently in the March edition. He weaves the four stories into a 352-page new novel with four chapters: "Kaho and the Motorcycle Man," "The Anteaater of Musashi-sakai," "Kaho and the Termite Queen" and "The Guardian Angel, Elephant Egg and Scarlett Johansson."

The magazine version of the first "Kaho" story has been published in English in The New Yorker, but the novel for now is available only in Japanese. Translation plans have not been disclosed.

The new book comes out three years after his previous novel, "The City and Its Uncertain Walls," which follows a male protagonist navigating love, loss and the boundaries between real and subconscious worlds.

Food

Tourists turn match days into tasting tours across host cities

Local cuisine adds to World Cup festivities

NEW YORK, July 4, (AP): World Cup fans came from overseas for the cheering. But they're also doing a lot of chewing, delighting their hosts with rave reviews of North American cuisine.

"It's greasy, it's disgusting, but it's absolutely glorious," Jack Goodwin, a soccer enthusiast from London, said about the American food he has tried in Dallas, Boston, New York and Atlanta.

"I don't want to say this because it's a little bit harsh, but the portions are a little bit larger - a lot more tastier - so I can understand the, um, obesity here. I don't want to be harsh, but yes, the food is fantastic here."

Many fans are making a point to try regional specialties or chains they can't find where they live, like In-N-Out Burger or Buc-ee's convenience stores. Erling Haaland, a striker for Norway's World Cup team, posted a photo on X of himself outside Katz's Delicatessen in New York.

Harrison Murphy, who was traveling from London with his brother for the knockout rounds, had breakfast at a Chick-fil-A in Atlanta this week.

"Have you had Chick-fil-A? It was fantastic and so cheap. The sauces are free! It was remarkable," Murphy said. "I said, 'This is my first time, what should I try?' The woman said, 'You've got to try the Chick-fil-A sauce.' My God, was it fantastic."

Gary Bishop had never heard of poutine - often considered Canada's national dish - until he arrived in Toronto for the World Cup. But the Glasgow, Scotland, resident proclaimed it "absolutely delicious."

"It was like chips with gravy, cheese. But it was a really thick gravy. Different from back home. Vinegar, there was lots of vinegar through it," said Bishop, who was sporting a Scotland jersey on a recent stroll through Toronto's FIFA Fan Festival. "Really nice."



Principal Paul Barker serves lobster rolls to World Cup tourists at Pauli's sandwich shop in the North End of Boston, Wednesday, June 24, 2026. (AP)

Others are looking for a taste of home. Texas beer distributor Andrews Distributing welcomed a bus full of Dutch fans to its Dallas warehouse for Heinekens and dancing.

It's a thrill for restaurant owners, from Cuban spots in Miami to barbecue joints in Kansas City and taco trucks in Mexico City.

"I have not seen anything like this ever in my life," said Paul Barker, the principal and founder of Pauli's, a Boston restaurant known for generously filled sandwiches and comfort foods. Fans from Scotland, Brazil, England and elsewhere have lined up for his famous lobster rolls and taken photos with staff members, Barker said.

"Food becomes a natural conversation starter," he said. "It's just been

incredible for us to be part of this."

Some chains are leaning into the World Cup. Waffle House, the all-day breakfast chain with 2,000 restaurants across the South, opened a pop-up shop in downtown Atlanta to sell branded soccer balls, jerseys and patriotic gear. In a statement, the chain said it was "honored by the enthusiasm and curiosity" shown by visiting fans.

For other restaurants, World Cup fever has been a delightful surprise. Whataburger, a Texas-based chain with 1,100 locations, found itself in the spotlight after fans from Japan and elsewhere posted on social media about their visits.

"The attention has been completely organic and honestly pretty entertaining," Whataburger President and

CEO Debbie Stroud said. "We knew the World Cup would bring the world to Texas and our footprint across 17 states. We just didn't realize so many visitors would leave talking about a patty melt."

Terry Black's Barbecue, a small Texas chain, figured authentic barbecue would be on many fans' must-try lists. It started sourcing extra meat more than a month ago for its locations in Dallas and Fort Worth, Texas, which are each about 20 minutes from the stadium where World Cup matches are played.

It takes Terry Black's four days to season and prepare its beef brisket and 12 hours to barbecue it. The chain also smokes turkey, pork and sausages on its pits, which run 24 hours a day.

Africa CDC chief warns outbreak remains 'very serious'

Researchers launch study on Ebola treatments as Congo outbreak worsens

KINSHASA, July 4, (Agencies): Researchers began a highly anticipated study of two possible Ebola treatments in hopes of fighting the still-growing outbreak in eastern Congo, as the World Health Organization announced the enrollment of the first participant.

The virus causing this outbreak, called Bundibugyo, is less common than others that cause Ebola disease and there are no specific treatments or vaccines for it. Already more than 1,400 people have been diagnosed and 438 have died, WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said.

Standard supportive care, especially if started early, can help and the WHO says more than 200 people have recovered. But there's an urgent need for better options.

The trial "offers real hope that we can deliver concrete results for - and with - the communities at the heart of the outbreak," Tedros said in a statement.

Researchers will be testing if two drugs could improve survival. One is Gilead Sciences' remdesivir, a broad-acting antiviral approved to treat COVID-19 but that has shown some hints in lab tests that it may help fight the currently spreading virus. The other is Mapp Biopharmaceutical's experimental MBP134, antibodies engineered to target Ebola viruses including Bundibugyo.

All patients enrolled in the trial would receive today's best standard care and be randomly assigned to also receive remdesivir, MBP134, both or neither, said WHO research adviser Dr. Vasee Moorthy. Survival will be tracked for 28 days after starting treatment.

It could take months and possibly as many as 1,000 study participants to tell if either drug works, Moorthy cautioned, explaining that scientists could tell more quickly, and with fewer patients, if one or the other turns out to be highly effective.

Currently the study is being offered only in one Ebola treatment center in Congo's Ituri province. The region has been hit hard by violence, including toward healthcare workers trying to fight a virus spread by contact with sick patients' bodily fluids. Officials plan to expand to other locations once it is safe to do so.



In this photo provided by the South African Government Communications and Information Services (GCIS), South Africa's President Cyril Ramaphosa, left, speaks as Democratic Republic of the Congo President Felix Tshisekedi, center, looks on during an African Union solidarity visit, in Kinshasa, Congo on July 2. (AP)

Moorthy said enough of each drug had been donated by Gilead and the US government, which has funded MBP134 research and owns those doses, for the trial. If either proves effective, the next step would be ensuring patients can continue to access the treatment outside the study.

The WHO-supported trial is a collaboration between Congo's national biomedical research institute INRB, Britain's Oxford University, Antwerp's In-

stitute of Tropical Medicine and other international health groups.

The Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) Director-General Jean Kaseya warned that the ongoing Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) remains "very serious".

Kaseya made the remarks in Kinshasa during a visit by DRC President Felix Tshisekedi and his South African counterpart, Cyril Ramaphosa, to the country's National Institute for Biomedical Research.

Compared with previous Ebola outbreaks in the DRC and the West African Ebola epidemic at the same stage, the current outbreak has recorded a particularly rapid increase in both cases and deaths, Kaseya said.

"The objective is to contain this outbreak where it is today," he said. "We do not want this outbreak to last two years, as was the case in West Africa."

According to the latest situation update released by the Congolese government late Wednesday, the DRC had reported 1,406 confirmed Ebola cases, including 438 deaths, as of June 30.

Kaseya said the outbreak was still expanding to some extent, but the Congolese government was taking the right steps to interrupt transmission and bring the outbreak to an end.

Tshisekedi underlined the need for a regional response to the outbreak, saying that "health risks know no borders and call for a regional, coordinated and solidarity-based response founded on shared responsibility."

Ramaphosa urged financial pledges to be rapidly translated into concrete assistance for affected communities. He also called for a ceasefire in conflict-affected areas, saying that fighting was hampering the access of humanitarian aid and the deployment of health workers.

The South African president urged communities to protect frontline health workers from stigma and violence, while reaffirming Pretoria's support for African innovation in vaccine development.

DRC Health Minister Samuel-Roger Kamba called for accelerating clinical trials on monoclonal antibodies and the development of effective vaccines against Bundibugyo ebolavirus, for which no approved treatment currently exists.

WHO chief says cruise ship-linked hantavirus outbreak officially over

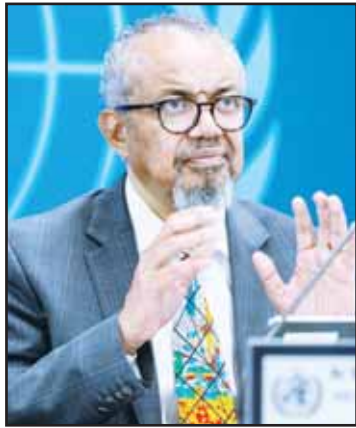
GENEVA, July 4, (Agencies): The World Health Organization (WHO) on Thursday declared the hantavirus outbreak linked to the cruise ship MV Hondius officially over, following the completion of quarantine for the final contact and no new cases reported for more than five weeks.

"Today, the final contact of a person exposed to hantavirus on the cruise ship MV Hondius completed their quarantine period, tested negative and returned home. No further cases have been reported since May 25. We are therefore very pleased to say that WHO considers the outbreak of hantavirus over," said WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus during his opening remarks at the media briefing on Thursday.

The WHO was notified of the outbreak on May 2 by Britain's International Health Regulations (IHR) National Focal Point. It involved a cluster of severe acute respiratory illness aboard the Dutch-flagged cruise ship.

A total of 13 cases were recorded, including three deaths. More than 650 contacts were identified and followed up by health authorities.

The outbreak response was supported by multiple countries in line with the International Health Regulations, including Argentina, Cabo Verde, Chile, the Netherlands, South Africa, Britain, and notably Spain, which demonstrated "incredible solidarity in supporting the safe disembarkation and repatriation of pas-



Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director General of the World Health Organization (WHO), speaks at the media regarding the epidemic of Ebola and global health issues during a press conference, at the World Health Organization (WHO) headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland on July 2. (AP)

sengers and crew in Tenerife," the director-general said.

Although the outbreak is now over, WHO will continue working with governments and partners to advance understanding of this outbreak and of hantavirus more generally.

WHO is coordinating a study involving 21 countries to understand how the disease develops, which will support the development of diagnostics, therapeutics, and vaccines for

future outbreaks.

Measles: At least four people have died following a measles outbreak in Zambia during the first half of 2026, health authorities said Friday.

Kennedy Lishimpi, permanent secretary for technical services at the Ministry of Health, said during a press briefing in Lusaka, the country's capital, that the country recorded 700 suspected cases from January to June this year, of which 119 were laboratory-confirmed.

He added that 92 patients are currently admitted to health facilities.

While noting that cases have been reported in several parts of the country, Lishimpi said the western part of the country has emerged as the epicenter of the current outbreak, with 329 suspected cases reported.

"Analysis of the confirmed cases shows that 87.4 percent of cases have an unknown or missing immunization history, highlighting significant immunity gaps within affected communities," he said.

Lishimpi said the government has activated the national public health emergency operations center to coordinate a comprehensive response across all affected districts.

According to him, the ministry will conduct targeted vaccination campaigns in the affected districts and surrounding high-risk areas for children aged six months to nine years.



This photo provided by NASA shows Kieran Wilson, LINK's principal investigator, and Hunter Robertson, a space systems engineer, both at Katalyst Space, standing next to their spacecraft inside the SES (Space Environment Simulator) at NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center in Greenbelt, Md., April 17, 2026, ahead of thermal vacuum testing. (AP)

Rescue mission launches to save NASA telescope

A three-armed spacecraft rocketed into orbit Friday to rescue a NASA telescope that's in danger of crashing back to Earth.

Northrop Grumman launched Katalyst Space Technologies' Link spacecraft from the Marshall Islands in the Pacific. The Pegasus rocket blasted off from the belly of a modified airplane, putting Link on course to reach and capture NASA's Swift Observatory in about a month.

Launched in 2004, Swift is sinking

faster than ever because of recent solar storms. NASA is paying \$30 million for Katalyst to capture the telescope and boost its orbit so it can continue tracking some of the biggest explosions in the universe, like gamma ray bursts and exploding stars.

If all goes well, Swift could be back scanning the cosmos by September. Observations are currently on hold to preserve the telescope's orbit as long as possible.

NASA's Hubble Space Telescope

could be a candidate for a similar salvage operation in a few years. It's also slipping in altitude because of increased atmospheric drag caused by the sun's outbursts.

The 1.6-ton (1.4-metric ton) Swift currently is circling 224 miles (360 kilometers) above Earth. Katalyst aims to raise the telescope's altitude by 150 miles (240 kilometers), back to where it all began. Link's thrusters will fire to boost Swift slowly, so there's no heavy jostling. (AP)



Kadiatou Diallo spends time with her autistic child, Kazaliou Balde, at their home in Fria, Guinea, Saturday, May 16, 2026. (AP)

Mother in Guinea fights for her child

Autism remains widely misunderstood in parts of Africa

FRIA, Guinea, July 4, (AP): Kazaliou Balde's parents started worrying about him when as a small child he avoided eye contact and had difficulty communicating.

First, the family in the West African nation of Guinea turned to a traditional healer who suggested protective amulets. Then, as the boy dragged himself along the ground instead of walking, they took him to a hospital in the capital, Conakry, where he was diagnosed with autism - something the family had never heard of before.

Neither had their neighbors. Some of them made rude comments about the child.

"Some suggested that I take him to the bush and throw him away," said his mother, Kadiatou Diallo, a 55-year-old trader.

Misconceptions are common around children with autism in parts of Africa that lack reliable data, awareness and government support. Some mistakenly attribute autism to evil spirits. Experts say the misconceptions have often delayed diagnosis and brought stigma for children and their families.

Autism is a complex developmental condition now known as autism spectrum disorder that affects people in different ways. It can include delays in language, learning or social and emotional skills. For some people, profound autism means

being nonverbal and having intellectual disabilities, but the majority of people experience milder effects.

Guinea's government does not keep records around autism. The World Health Organization says about one in 127 people worldwide had autism in 2021, but it notes that the prevalence in many low- and middle-income countries remains unknown.

Diallo decided to stand up for her son and seek better care. She said she has four children but loves him especially "because I've suffered so much with him."

In Guinea, a nation of about 15 million people, only a few schools cater to children with autism and they can cost up to \$300 per month. Not many families can afford it in a country where the minimum wage is 550,000 Guinea francs (\$63) a month, and where 43.7% of citizens live below the poverty line, according to the World Bank.

"In Guinea, the care for autism is very poor," said Dr. Alhassane Cherif, a psychologist and clinician in Conakry. "Private organizations and nonprofits are the only ones addressing this disorder and training staff to try to identify children."

Balde first attended both private and public schools, but none fit him. His teachers did not introduce him to writing and reading, his mother

said, recalling their comments that her son "has no provision for school."

"I refused to consider these negative judgments. I refused to take him out of school," Diallo said.

She said her late husband "went to every corner of the country" looking for assistance for their son before dying in a road accident.

The solution appeared in their own hometown.

In 2023, Balde enrolled in the newly opened Salim Foundation for Children with Autism, a rare free school for children with autism. The school's authorities were conducting an outreach program when they learned of Balde and visited his family.

The school teaches him and 14 other students in a large house with three teachers. It has toys in bright colors and pictures of animals on the walls.

The school, registered with Guinea's educational authorities but not receiving government funding, is the brainchild of Mariam Aisha Barry, a social worker and philanthropist who said her daughter with autism was her inspiration.

At the school, children are taught basic things like identifying objects and assembling toys as well as everyday skills such as operating a TV remote.

Last year, the school organized what it called the country's first international seminar on autism.

Portugal declares state of alert

Deaths surged 29% in France during week of record heat, says health agency

PARIS, July 4, (Agencies): Deaths surged by nearly a third in France during the hottest week of a record heat wave last month, the country's public health authority said Friday, reporting at least 2,000 more deaths than in the previous week when temperatures were already climbing and filling emergency wards with heat victims.

The new and still incomplete figures from Public Health France doubled its first preliminary estimate of at least 1,000 additional deaths that it gave last Sunday. That earlier estimate covered just three of the hottest days of extreme, deadly heat.

In Paris, funeral service directors have said they've struggled to find places to store bodies before burial or cremation, with some mortuaries saying they were full and having to turn bodies away.

The updated tally of deaths from Public Health France spans the week of June 22 to June 28, during which France saw its hottest-ever days and records shattered for peak daytime and nighttime temperatures in many cities and towns across the country. The heat also broke temperature records in many other parts of Europe.

Public Health France said it has counted 8,973 deaths so far for that week, cautioning that the number is still only partial. It said the preliminary total was 29% more than the 6,948 deaths registered for the previous week of June 15 to June 21, when the heat wave started.

The difference between the two sets of figures - a total so far of 2,025 - is

therefore considered to be additional deaths from one week to the next, from all causes and covering all age groups, it said.

At the Paris-Saclay Hospital, patients suffering from heat exposure started arriving in a surge on June 20. Dr. Nicolas Gonzales, head of the emergency department, told The Associated Press.

He said they treated heat victims for heart attacks, dehydration, kidney malfunctions and other heat-related problems, from children to older people living alone.

Public Health France said there was a particularly sharp increase week-on-week in the number of deaths in private homes, with those figures up 91%. Deaths in care homes for older people increased by 37% and in hospitals by nearly 20%.

The Paris region appears to have been hit hardest, with a nearly 63% increase in deaths from one week to the next, it said.

The health agency cautioned that its tallies underestimate the true death toll, because they're based on incomplete data.

"The mortality will as a consequence be higher than these first figures," it said.

Also:

LISBON: The Portuguese government said that a nationwide state of alert will take effect from Friday as extreme heat are expected to last till next

Monday. Exceptional emergency measures will also be taken to reduce wildfire risks.

Portugal's Interior Minister Luis Neves made the announcement following a meeting of the Integrated Prevention and Operations Command (CIPO) at the Leiria Fire Brigade, warning of a "very significant deterioration in weather conditions."

"For major emergencies, the government will issue a state of alert, which involves exceptional measures for extraordinary and difficult circumstances and also triggers emergency legislation," Neves said, calling on all citizens to cooperate.

Under the emergency measures, work in forest areas involving any type of machinery will be prohibited, except for operations directly related to combating rural wildfires. Brush-cutting equipment with metal blades or discs will be banned to be used in other rural areas. Setting off fireworks are also prohibited.

According to the Portuguese Institute of the Sea and Atmosphere (IPMA), 12 of the 18 districts on Portugal's mainland will be under red alert -- the highest level on a three-tier scale -- from Thursday till at least Saturday due to forecast of "extremely high temperature".

The remaining six districts are also under elevated warning levels, meaning that virtually the entire mainland area faces maximum or very high wildfire risk.

Board backing project with resources

Al Jahra eyes handball comeback in revival push

By Khaled Al-Enezi

Al-Seyessah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, July 4: Al Jahra Club is exploring the possibility of bringing its senior handball team back to domestic competition; with club president Yousef Karim confirming that the initiative is among the board's top priorities.

Karim said the club is conducting a comprehensive assessment covering the technical, administrative, and financial requirements needed to ensure a successful return.

"Handball has always been an important sport at Al Jahra," he said. "Its return would benefit not only the club but also Kuwaiti handball, especially with the game's remarkable development in recent years and the growing competitiveness of the domestic league."

He acknowledged that rejoining the league will be a significant challenge, given the higher standard of competition, and stressed that careful plan-

ning will be essential.

"Our goal is to build a team capable of competing from the outset," Karim said. "That means recruiting quality players, investing in young talent, and combining them with experienced players to create a balanced and competitive squad."

Karim emphasized that the board will not rush its decision until all aspects of the project have been thoroughly evaluated. He said the club's objective is to establish a sustainable team that can compete consistently, rather than simply participate in the league.

He added that the project will be guided by a clear long-term strategy aimed at restoring Al Jahra's handball team to a level that reflects the club's proud tradition in the sport.

Concluding his remarks, Karim said the board is committed to providing the resources and environment needed for the project to succeed in cooperation with the club's technical and administrative staff. He expressed optimism that tangible



Yousef Karim, president of Al Jahra Club.

steps will soon be taken to return Al Jahra's senior handball team to the Premier League, strengthening competition and enriching Kuwait's domestic handball championships.

Traditional identities fading

Football between talent and the rise of the 'robot player'

KUWAIT CITY, July 4: Modern football has undergone a dramatic transformation. The game's tactical and physical demands have evolved to the point where natural flair and individual brilliance appear to be increasingly rare. As a result, much of the entertainment and creativity that once defined football has gradually given way to a more uniform style of play.

For generations, football was built on distinct national identities. Every major footballing nation had its own philosophy and style, reflecting the culture, mentality, and strengths of its players. Today, however, many of those traditional identities have faded, replaced by tactical systems that look remarkably similar regardless of the team or country.

England, for instance, was historically known for its direct approach, aerial strength, and physical intensity. Those qualities formed one of football's most recognizable schools of play. In recent years, however, the English national team has adopted a more standardized style, making it increasingly difficult to distinguish it from many of its international rivals.

Italy's transformation has been equally striking. Long admired for defensive organization and disciplined counterattacking football, the Azzurri gradually moved away from the philosophy that shaped decades of success. Critics argued that Italian football needed to modernize, but abandoning its traditional identity has coincided with an unprecedented decline, including three consecutive failures to qualify for the FIFA World Cup. Ironically, Italy lifted the 2006 World Cup by embracing the defensive principles for which it had become famous, conceding only two goals throughout the tournament.

Brazil, once synonymous with

flair, creativity, and technical excellence, has also experienced a noticeable shift. The football once associated with dazzling dribbling, improvisation, and unforgettable individual moments has increasingly been replaced by a structured, European-style approach. Many supporters believe the country's trademark creativity has diminished, to the point where even the prestige of wearing Brazil's iconic No. 10 shirt no longer carries the same aura it once did.

The Dutch philosophy of Total Football, later refined by Spain into the celebrated "tiki-taka" style, remains one of the few footballing identities that has largely survived the sport's tactical evolution. Spain has continued to preserve its possession-based philosophy despite the retirement of the generation that made it famous.

Argentina is another example of a nation that has largely maintained its footballing identity. Aggressive competitiveness, tactical discipline, and relentless determination continue to characterize Argentine football, even as the modern game increasingly emphasizes efficiency and system-based play over individual expression.

The modern footballer has become more physically powerful, faster, and better conditioned than ever before. Yet as athleticism has taken center stage, technical artistry and spontaneous creativity have become less prominent. Combined with football's growing commercialization, an increasingly crowded calendar, and the pursuit of ever-greater financial returns, the game's evolution has produced players who often resemble highly efficient machines rather than the entertainers who once captivated audiences around the world.

Liberty spoils Lynx history night

Vegas holds off Chicago in OT

LAS VEGAS, July 4, (AP): NaLyssa Smith had 29 points and eight rebounds, Chelsea Gray made two key jumpers in the final minute of overtime, and the short-handed Las Vegas Aces beat the Chicago Sky 98-90 on Friday night.

Las Vegas (15-5), which was without A'ja Wilson (right leg) for a second straight game, scored 10 straight points in overtime to secure the 500th win in franchise history.

Las Vegas had a successful challenge with 1:08 remaining in overtime to take away a Chicago basket that would have pulled the Sky within two points. Then, Gray made a step-back jumper from the free-throw line to extend the Aces' lead to 94-88 with 48 seconds left.

Gray added another jumper from near the same spot at 17.1 to make it 96-88.

Liberty 99, Lynx 86

In New York, Breanna Stewart scored 36 points and the New York Liberty beat Minnesota, spoiling Lynx coach Cheryl Reeve's first attempt to become the WNBA's career wins leader. Reeve is tied with Mike Thibault at 379 regular-season victories. Her next chance will be Monday night when the Lynx host Chicago. That game is on the 13-year anniversary of Thibault passing Van Chancellor to break the old mark.

New York (13-8), which won the WNBA's Commissioner's Cup on Tuesday, wasn't about to let history occur on Friday night.

Stewart got the team going early then Jonquel Jones and Sabrina Ionescu took over. Jones finished with 14 points and 15 rebounds and Ionescu had 17 points.

Minnesota (15-5) led 47-46 with 3:32 left in the half before the Liberty closed the second quarter on a 13-2 run. Jones got it started with a three-point play and Pauline Astier closed it with a running layup just before the entertaining first half ended with New York up 59-49. Stewart had 16 of her 18 points in the first half in the opening quarter.

The Liberty put the game away with an early 7-3 run in the fourth that was capped by Jones' 3-pointer which made it 85-68. The Lynx could only get within 12 the rest of the way.

Kayla McBride led Minnesota with 18 points and Courtney Williams added 16.

Mercury 90, Storm 67

In Phoenix, Kahleah Copper

scored 23 of her 30 points in the first half, Valerie Ayayi added 18 points and the Phoenix Mercury beat the Seattle Storm 90-67 on Thursday night for their third straight victory.

Copper was 9 of 12 from the field in the first half to help Phoenix (8-13) build a 55-36 lead. Copper scored her first points of the second half with 8:39 left for a 75-60 lead. She finished 12 of 21 from the field.

Lexi Held had 17 points and a career-high five 3-pointers for Phoenix. Alyssa Thomas had nine points, 13 rebounds and nine assists, and DeWanna Bonner was held to six points on 3-of-10 shooting.

Wings 86, Sun 83

Hartford, Conn., Paige Bueckers scored 11 of her 25 points in the fourth quarter. Jessica Shepard finished with 14 points and the Dallas Wings beat the Connecticut Sun 86-83 on Thursday night.

Bueckers made a step-back jumper while being fouled with 1:18 left in the fourth quarter to give Dallas an 80-78 lead, its first since it was 16-15. She added the free throw for a three-point lead, but Aaliyah Edwards answered with a three-point play at the other end to tie it at 81-81.

Trailing 84-83 with 25 seconds left, Connecticut guard Leila Laca dribbled down the clock before driving into the lane for a shot that rolled off the rim. Shepard secured the defensive rebound and made two free throws at the other end to give Dallas an 86-83 lead with 2.9 left. Connecticut was not able to get off a 3-point attempt before the buzzer.

Mystics 81, Dream76

In Washington, Shakira Austin had 21 points and nine rebounds, Kiki Iriafen added 14 points and 10 rebounds for her eighth double-double this season, and the Washington Mystics beat the Atlanta Dream 81-76 on Thursday night.

Iriafen made layups on back-to-back possessions to give Washington a 78-74 lead with 1:20 left. Georgia Amoore sealed it by making two free throws with 11.4 seconds remaining to make it 80-76.

Alicia Florez had 13 points and seven assists off the bench and Amoore finished with 11 points for Washington (10-9). Sonia Citron, who was coming off a 32-point performance in a four-overtime win over Portland on Sunday, did not play due to right knee soreness.



Las Vegas Aces guard Jackie Young (0) drives against Chicago Sky guard Sydney Taylor (12) during the first half of a WNBA basketball game in Las Vegas. (AP)

Last-gasp Ireland breaks Australia hearts in epic

Japan breaks Italy streak

SYDNEY, July 4, (AP): Flyhalf Sam Prendergast kicked a conversion with three minutes left, after replacement forward Thomas Clarkson scored a try, to give Ireland a 33-31 victory Saturday over Australia in their Nations Championship opener.

At a sold-out Sydney Football Stadium, the Wallabies led 24-19 at halftime after early tries by Dylan Pietsch and Jock Campbell. But the Irish stayed in touch through touchdowns from Cian Prendergast and Josh van der Flier, with Jamison Gibson-Park scoring a try on halftime to keep them in the match.

After the lead had changed seven times in the 10-try match, Ben Donaldson had the chance to give Australia the winning points, but he pushed a penalty attempt wide from more than 40 meters in the final seconds.

The match marked the start of the end of Joe Schmidt's coaching era at the Wallabies and close to the beginning of the Les Kiss era. Under Schmidt, Australia was winless in its tour to Britain late last year and was on a four-match losing streak.

Schmidt will stay on for two further Nations Championship tests against France in Brisbane next Saturday and vs. Italy in Perth on July 18. Kiss will officially take over on July 20 and is currently concluding his duties with the Queensland Reds Super Rugby side.

Kiss will make his debut as head coach in a two-test series against Japan next month.

In the Six Nations, the Irish had a 36-14 loss to France before a 20-13 win over Italy in Dublin.

The Irish then claimed their 15th Triple Crown, defeating England at Twickenham, Scotland and Wales and finished runner-up to France in the championship.

World Rugby bills the 12-team Nations Championship as North



Ireland's Dan Sheehan, holdst the Lansdowne Cup as the team celebrates after the end of the Nations Championship rugby international between Australia and Ireland in Sydney. (AP)

vs. South. The tournament has two conferences, the southern - in which northern teams are scheduled to travel south in July - and the northern - when southern teams will travel north in November.

Six rounds of matches will lead to a finals series in London in late November which World Rugby says will identify the best team in the world.

In earlier matches Saturday, New Zealand edged France 34-32 in Christchurch, New Zealand and Japan beat Italy 27-10 in Tokyo.

Goal-kicking fullback Takuro Matsunaga finished with 17 points for Japan. Home coach Eddie Jones did not guide the team - he was serving the last game of a four-match suspension for abusing match officials at an under-23 tournament in Australia in April.

Meanwhile, Japan muted Italy 27-10 in Nations Championship rugby on Saturday and won their matchup

for the first time since 2018.

Japan led 17-10 at halftime and kept Italy scoreless in the second half, the defense making 12 dominant tackles and giving the Italians little room to breathe.

The host scored three tries to one and fullback Takuro Matsunaga hauled in 17 points in a red-and-white blanketed Prince Chichibu Memorial Stadium.

Most of the talk in the buildup was how Japan would fare without fly-half Seungsin Lee, who needs hand surgery. Lee started every game last year, was an 88% goalkicker and scored the most points in world test rugby. But he wasn't missed. Replacement Ryunosuke Ito, plucked from Meiji University, had a composed debut, including laying on a try for Matsunaga, who was five for five off the tee.

Italy drew first blood when Paolo Garbisi fed midfielder Juan Ignacio Brex in a gap and converted the try.

But within 10 minutes Japan was in front.

With scrumhalf Naoto Saito giving Japan quick ruck ball, captain Warner Dearn powered over and tied the score. Moments later Matsunaga finished a Yuya Hirose break, converted his try, and added a penalty for 17-7.

Italy finished the half strong but Garbisi's grubber kicks in behind were contained by Japan and they had to settle for points from a scrum penalty to trail 17-10 at the break.

Japan extended the lead to 24-10 straight after when, after 16 phases, player of the match Ben Gunter busted through four Italians to touch down.

Five substitutes poured on, including the evergreen Michael Leitch, and Italy's rate of unforced errors increased in the face of determined defense. A scrum penalty was slotted by Matsunaga just after the hour to cap a dominant Japan win.

Serena return hits 1.8m viewers

Mertens shocks Rybakina at Wimbledon

LONDON, July 4, (AP): Elena Rybakina, the 2022 Wimbledon champion, was upset in the third round by Elise Mertens 7-6 (4), 6-1 at the grass-court Grand Slam on Saturday.

At No. 2, Rybakina is the highest seed on the women's side to be eliminated and her loss ensures that Aryna Sabalenka will keep her No. 1 ranking after the tournament.

Rybakina faces Naomi Osaka in the fourth round on Sunday.

Belgium's Mertens is the No. 25 seed at Wimbledon, where she's won two doubles titles.

Serena Williams' singles return at Wimbledon was watched by an average of 1.8 million viewers on ESPN, helping make it the network's biggest audience for a Day 2 at the grass-court Grand Slam.

The match, which was the 44-year-old Williams' first singles contest in nearly four years, had a peak of 2.1 million viewers despite being played on a Tuesday afternoon in the U.S., the network said.

Williams was beaten 6-3, 6-7 (6), 6-3 by 20-year-old Maya Joint of Australia but showed she could be competitive with an opponent less than half her age after being away for so long.

The viewing figures were higher than for last year's men's semifinals, which averaged 1.3 million viewers



Elise Mertens of Belgium returns the ball to Elena Rybakina of Kazakhstan in their third round women's singles match at the Wimbledon Tennis Championships in London. (AP)

on ESPN. Last year's men's final between Jannik Sinner and Carlos Alcaraz averaged nearly 2.9 million viewers.

Williams was given wild card invitations to play both singles and doubles at Wimbledon and it remains to be seen whether she will still play doubles with older sister Venus.

Serena announced on Wednesday that she tweaked her right knee toward the end of the first set against Joint.

For the entire day on Tuesday,

ESPN's Wimbledon coverage averaged 937,000 which was an increase of 55% compared to last year and the highest ever for a Day 2.

Overall, for Monday and Tuesday, it marked ESPN's most-viewed first round for Wimbledon with an average of 734,000 viewers. Monday featured a five-set victory for defending champion Sinner and a four-set victory for seven-time champion Novak Djokovic.

Doubles players fear for their tennis future after being told by the ATP

Tour that prize money and tournament sizes will decrease significantly starting in 2028.

A group of leading doubles players issued a statement saying they are not "a carnival sideshow", and that it will be impossible for anyone outside the top 30 in the ATP doubles rankings to make a living if the new proposals are adopted.

The statement comes after doubles players met with ATP officials at Wimbledon this week to discuss the future of a format that is struggling to draw an audience.

"The ATP is proposing to slash doubles draws, gut doubles prize money, and hand Challenger entry to singles players ahead of specialists who have built their careers in this discipline," the players' statement said.

They said the proposal would give doubles players just 10 percent of the prize money at ATP tournaments - down from 20 percent - while halving the size of the doubles fields.

At the premier Masters tournaments, that would cut the doubles draw to 16 teams, while at the smaller ATP 500 and 250 events it would consist of just eight teams.

"Do the math on what that means for anyone outside the top 30: it will be impossible to make a living," the statement added.



Fan Zone



Fans celebrate and cheer during a FIFA World Cup Round of 32 match in Miami Gardens, Florida, creating a vibrant atmosphere in the stands as the knockout stage action unfolds. (AP)

US striker Balogun says yellow card, not red card, would have been 'fair'

SEATTLE, July 4, (AP) — United States forward Folarin Balogun says he respectfully disagrees with his red card in the 2-0 win over Bosnia-Herzegovina in the World Cup.

Balogun was sent off Wednesday for stepping on the right ankle of Tarik Muharemovic.

Before Friday's practice at Husky Soccer Stadium in Seattle, Balogun said a yellow card for the illegal tackle would have been fairer.

"There's nowhere else to put your leg. It's going to be unavoidable," Balogun said. "So, I've seen many different opinions and takes. But, for me personally, I think a yellow card would have been fair. It's something that's happened, so we have to move forward and I have to accept it."

Balogun has to serve an automatic one-game suspension and will miss Monday's round of 16 game against Belgium. There is no appeal process for a red card suspension unless FIFA assesses a penalty of more than one game, which was not the case with Balogun. He will be eligible to return for the quarterfinals should the Americans advance.

Balogun has three goals in the tournament, including one to put the U.S. in the lead against Bosnia. He has matched Landon Donovan in 2010 for the second-most goals by an American in a World Cup, behind only Bert Patenaude's four in the initial tournament in 1930.

The 25-year-old striker celebrated his most recent goal against Bosnia with the Silencer move used by the NBA's LeBron James, which the league's career scoring leader also celebrated on social media. Balogun, who became the first U.S. player to score a brace in a World Cup match since 1930, said he has experienced a "roller coaster" of emotions as of late.

"Been upset, I've been happy. It's

been surreal, to be honest," Balogun said. "But for me, I think it was just important to stay calm. I never want to react out of anger and out of emotion. There's still lots of people who are inspiring little kids, boys and girls who are watching. We have to show them the correct way to handle things, even when you think it's unjust."

It is unclear yet who U.S. coach Mauricio Pochettino will select to replace Balogun in the starting lineup. Ricardo Pepi and Haji Wright are the most likely candidates for the game against Belgium.

When Christian Pulisic sat out the 2-0 win against Australia in group play because of a calf injury, Pepi started in his place.

"When you miss a player like Balo, things change a little bit, but we've been flexible," teammate Tyler Adams said. "Guys have shown that they're ready to play. If it's Pepi, if it's Haji, we go a different direction. It should be an exciting opportunity for whoever has to step up."

To be without Balogun for one of the most significant matches in U.S. history is still a significant blow. A victory on home soil over Belgium would clinch a spot in the quarterfinals of the World Cup for only the second time for the Americans. The first time was in 2002.

"I love seeing how engaged the country is in our journey and what they're doing," Balogun said. "So, my role is just to continue supporting everybody, to keep morale high. And, I'm sure for the game against Belgium we can really create a great atmosphere to win."

Midfielder Cristian Roldan trained on his own once again as he continues to rehab a quad injury. Defender Mark McKenzie trained in full after dealing with a foot injury that kept him off the U.S. roster for the Bosnia match.

Klopp confirms Germany talks and says he's 'recharged' since leaving Liverpool

MUNICH, July 4, (AP) — Jürgen Klopp has confirmed he's in negotiations to take over as Germany coach and says he's "recharged" the energy he was missing when he left Liverpool.

Klopp is the German soccer federation's preferred candidate after Julian Nagelsmann resigned Friday, four days after Germany lost on penalties to Paraguay in the World Cup round of 32.

"Julian has stepped down and the (federation) is working on the succession and has approached me in the course of those considerations," said Klopp, speaking from New York on German broadcaster Magenta TV in his role as a World Cup commentator late Friday.

Klopp was the only coach named in a federation statement on the team's future, which said Klopp had "signaled his willingness" to take over.

Klopp said talks would take time because of his current contract as head of global soccer for Red Bull's network of clubs.

Klopp hasn't coached since he left Liverpool in 2024, saying at the time he was "running out of energy" after eight years with the club where he won the Premier League and Champions League.

"About two years ago I stopped at Liverpool and said that I lacked the energy for another job or for another year with Liverpool. Since then I'm more than recharged, I'm ready," he said.

Germany's next coach will need to make sweeping changes and he said he would need "intensive talks" with the federation to agree on the key points of how to transform the team's fortunes.

It was the third men's World Cup in



Germany head coach Julian Nagelsmann arrives for interviews in the pitch before the World Cup round of 32 soccer match between Germany and Paraguay in Foxborough, Mass., near Boston. (AP)

a row that Germany has not reached the round of 16. Germany hasn't won a knockout game since beating Argentina in the 2014 final.

Klopp said Nagelsmann was an "excellent coach" and not to blame for the team's deeper problems.

"German soccer is obviously at a turning point now," Klopp said. "Now we need to change things fundamentally. Whether that's me in the end or whoever it may be, that doesn't change the fact that changes are necessary."

Kane feeling better than ever as England prepares for Mexico clash

Start time for game unchanged despite concerns; Mexico City tightens security

NEW YORK, July 4, (Agencies) — Harry Kane says he is in the best overall form of his career as England prepares for a key World Cup showdown at Mexico City's legendary Azteca Stadium on Sunday night.

Kane has scored five goals so far in the tournament, with his brace against the Democratic Republic of the Congo on Wednesday night helping England into the last 16 after they had fallen behind to their rivals in the first half.

The goals mean Kane has now netted 72 times for England and Bayern Munich this season — only 10 fewer than Lionel Messi's record of 82 goals in the 2011-2012 campaign. Speaking on the Lions' Den podcast, he said: "Hopefully a few more to go."

"I think it is almost 20 more than I've ever reached in my career to date, and I've had some pretty good seasons up until now," said the striker.

Kane said he has never felt better on a football pitch. "I think just from an overall package, I feel as good as I've ever felt."

"No matter the situation, no matter what kind of chance I get, I feel like I can score goals. I just think there's a mixture of everything coming together at the right time," he explained.

The 32-year-old added that after a long season "you need to have a little bit of luck to go your way, to physically be in the shape that you want to be, and it's not always easy when you come off the back of tough seasons and stuff."

"This year has been pleasing from that point of view. For me, it's just about the next one. I'm in a good space," commented Kane, who was



England's Harry Kane (9) and Congo's Axel Tuanzebe battle for the ball during the World Cup round of 32 soccer match in Atlanta. (AP)

also happy with the physical demands of a tournament where the two finalists will have to play eight matches.

"I just want the next game to be there, and it's kind of a good thing the games are coming thick and fast now," he said.

The World Cup match between Mexico and England on Sunday will remain at the original scheduled time despite concerns about a potential afternoon thunderstorm.

FIFA had been looking at the possibility of starting the round of 16 game at the Azteca Stadium earlier than the scheduled 6 p.m. local time (8 p.m. EDT), a person with knowledge of the situation told The Associated Press.

The person spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak publicly.

But a Mexican federation official told the AP that after deliberation FIFA decided the match would remain unchanged.

That person also spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to comment publicly.

Among the reasons for exploring the change was because of possible disruption caused by flooding.

Mexico coach Javier Aguirre criticized the proposed change earlier Friday.

Rescheduling the match also could have affected England's preparations. The Three Lions are scheduled to arrive late Friday and will

hold their Saturday training session at the grounds of UNAM Pumas in the southern part of the capital, leaving them with significantly less time to acclimate to Mexico City's high elevation.

The Azteca Stadium sits at more than 7,300 feet (2,200 meters) above sea level. For elite athletes to perform at their peak at high altitude, a period of adaptation is required to reduce fatigue caused by lower atmospheric pressure and reduced oxygen availability, experts say. Sports scientists generally recommend an extended acclimation period of at least two weeks, or the "fly-in, fly-out" method of arriving as close to game time as possible before acute symptoms set in.

'This is not how football is supposed to be'

High-tech ball behind one of World Cup's most controversial moments

ATLANTA, July 4, (AP) — It is called connected ball technology. And it was responsible for one of the most dramatic climaxes to a World Cup match ever. It canceled Croatia's late equalizer deep in added time against Portugal by detecting a touch that was undetectable to the naked eye and even video replays late.

Portugal won 2-1 in Toronto and advanced to the round of 16, leaving Croatia players and fans devastated in the belief Josko Gvardiol's goal was wrongly called offside by the VAR and referee Espen Eskås.

FIFA is relying on a high-tech soccer ball fitted with "advanced sensors" and insisted it got it right when determining Croatia's Igor Mantanovic got the slightest of glances with his head, meaning Mario Palasic was in an offside position during the buildup to the goal.

The in-ball sensors were so finely tuned, FIFA said, they were "capable of determining any slight contact ... allowing officials an unprecedented level of data to make fast, accurate decisions."

The official "Trionda" World Cup ball, manufactured by Adidas, is fitted with a "small inertial mea-

surement unit (IMU) sensor," which FIFA says operates at around 500Hz and captures data 500 times per second.

FIFA says it can track ball acceleration and granular movements in three dimensions and can detect the exact moment a player makes contact.

The ball technology is combined with in-stadium cameras for tracking data that is transmitted in real time to video assistants.

As well as helping to determine offsides, the touch data can also be used for incidents such as handballs and penalties.

The reason the call was so contentious was because even slow motion replays from numerous angles were visually inconclusive that Mantanovic made contact with Ivan Perisic's in-swinging cross.

That is where reliance on the technology came in. Referee Eskås was instructed by the VAR to review the sideline monitor. Replays showed what FIFA calls a "heartbeat graphic" to indicate the moment the ball was touched and there was a clear spike as it apparently grazed Mantanovic's head.

"No matter how fast the ball is moving or the spin of the ball, you can track it really effectively," The AP

was told by professor Manos Tentzeris from Georgia Tech's school of electrical and computer engineering. "The position of the ball is 99.99% accurate ... you know exactly where the players are, even the tip of a shoe, which sometimes determines if someone is offside or inside."

FIFA also used connected ball technology at the 2022 World Cup, and it was deployed at the most recent men's European Championship in 2024.

Tests were carried out from 2020-22 and the technology trialed at tournaments such as the Arab Cup and the Club World Cup.

The ball sensors also had a decisive impact at Euro 2024 by detecting Denmark's Joachim Andersen handled in the box against host Germany. After a VAR review a penalty was awarded and Kai Havertz scored and Germany won 2-0.

"In my opinion this is not how football is supposed to be," Denmark coach Kasper Hjulmand said after his team also had a goal ruled out by VAR.

Those sentiments were echoed by Croatia coach Zlatko Dalić after his team's painful exit.

"All these decisions take the joy out of football," he said.



Egypt's Hossam Abdelmaguid (4) scores the winning penalty in a shootout in the World Cup round of 32 soccer match against Egypt in Arlington, Texas, near Dallas. (AP)

Sports

Egypt takes World Cup dream into last 16

Australia loses in shootout

ARLINGTON, Texas, July 4, (AP): No matter what Mohamed Salah decides about his future with Egyptian soccer - more World Cups or not - the star striker can say he was the captain for the country's first victory in the knockout round.

Hossam Abdelmaguid scored the deciding goal in a shootout, and Egypt won its debut in the elimination round of the World Cup by beating Australia 4-2 on penalty kicks after a 1-1 draw in the round of 32.

Australia goalkeeper Mathew Ryan didn't stop any of Egypt's four shots after replacing starter Patrick Beach late in extra time.



Egypt's Mohamed Salah celebrates after winning a penalty shootout against Australia following a World Cup round of 32 soccer match in Arlington, Texas, near Dallas. (AP)

The victory comes in Egypt's fourth World Cup, the first one with an expanded field of 48. Australia is now 0-3 in the knockout round.

Egypt will next face defending champion Argentina, which beat Cape Verde 3-2 in extra time Friday night, in the round of 16 on Tuesday in Atlanta.

"Me feeling today is that it's incredible," said Salah, the 34-year-old former Liverpool player who is one behind national team coach Hossam Hassan's Egyptian record of 69 international goals. "I always like seeing the boys happy and enjoying the moment. Nothing can match that. So today was one of the best days of my life."

Harry Souttar opened the shootout by missing high for Australia, and 18-year-old Lucas Herrington hit the crossbar with the fourth attempt to set up Abdelmaguid's clincher for the Pharaohs.

The 25-year-old Abdelmaguid, who doesn't have an international goal in 15 appearances, went low left as Ryan dived to the defender's right, setting off a raucous celebration among 70,244 fans at the sold-out home of the Dallas Cowboys, plenty of them wearing Egyptian red.

Egypt didn't even have a victory in the World Cup before beating New Zealand 3-1 in the group stage less than two weeks ago.

"I was only thinking about the Egyptian fans," Hassan said through an interpreter. "During the entire time and during the penalty shootout, I was just praying, 'God, please make the Egyptian people happy.' Even before the penalty shootout, to be honest."

Egypt's other shootout scorers were Mahmoud Saber, Ramy Rabia and Salah, who played every minute



Egypt's players celebrate after their teammate Hossam Abdelmaguid (4) scored the winning penalty during World Cup round of 32 soccer match between Australia and Egypt in Arlington, Texas, near Dallas. (AP)

of regulation and extra time despite a hamstring injury sustained in the team's group finale.

Jackson Irvine and Awer Mabil scored in the shootout for Australia.

"When I went to the players and talked to them, I wanted to take some pressure off," Hassan said. "Do not look at the pressure. Just let everything out, don't think

about anything. Think about your penalty kick. Don't even think about the goalkeeper. Just think about your kick."

Emam Ashour gave Egypt the lead in regulation by scoring in the 13th minute with a header that beat Beach just inside the near post. Australia evened the match in the 55th when Egypt defender

Mohamed Hany became the first player to score two own-goals in the same World Cup.

The own-goal came when Aiden O'Neill took a free kick from left of the penalty area and Hany headed the ball past goalkeeper Mostafa Shoubir for a spot in World Cup infamy. His other own-goal came in a 1-1 draw with Belgium in the

group stage.

Less than 10 minutes earlier, Hany was down near the same spot after colliding with Connor Metcalfe on the Australia midfielder's header attempt. Medical personnel tended to Hany with a stretcher waiting nearby, but he was helped up and stayed on after what appeared to be a concussion check.

Switzerland looms in last 16

Arias stars as Colombia edges Ghana to advance



Ghana's Antoine Semenyo, right, tries to pass the ball challenged by Colombia's Daniel Muñoz during the World Cup round of 32 soccer match between Colombia and Ghana in Kansas City, Mo. (AP)

KANSAS CITY, Mo., July 4, (AP): The plan for Colombia against Ghana probably did not involve making a substitution just minutes into the match.

That plan also went by the wayside when Jhon Córdoba appeared to hurt his groin.

Forced into making a rare early move, Colombia coach Néstor Lorenzo sent Luis Suárez onto the field, and he promptly delivered a sharp cross that Jhon Arias flicked into the net, resulting in the only goal on a sweltering night at Arrowhead Stadium and sending Los Cafeteros into the Round of 16 at the World Cup with a 1-0 victory over the Black Stars.

"I think football is a team sport," Lorenzo said. "Ultimately you do have little groups in certain areas, but you have to have a unit - a whole - and I think our squad has been working on that from the very onset. That was the goal from the very beginning."

The early goal was a good omen: Colombia has won 11 consecutive World Cup matches when scoring first. Now, it will play Switzerland on Tuesday in Vancouver, British Columbia, for a spot in the quarterfinals.

"We have won absolutely nothing," Colombia star Luis Díaz said. "These games are very difficult. Every game we've seen has been tight. The good thing and the positive thing is that we're playing very well, we feel comfortable, we are being a family, we are working as a team, and that will work for what is coming."

Los Cafeteros thought they had

doubled their lead in the 56th minute, when Díaz found the back of the net only to see the offside flag raised, and the fleet-footed Colombia forward had a point-blank shot saved by Lawrence Ati Zigi a few minutes later.

Zigi wound up making seven saves to keep Ghana in the game.

"Sometimes it happens in football," Ghana defender Jerome Opoku said, "that it doesn't go your way."

It was 88 degrees Fahrenheit (31.1 Celsius) with a heat index of 96 when the game kicked off at 8:30 p.m. local time, the late start intentional due to the expected heat of Midwestern summers. The hydration breaks that have been controversial in so many matches suddenly became a blessing as players from both sides fought through dehydration and cramps.

Ghana was one of a record nine teams from Africa to escape the group stage of the World Cup. And while many gave fits to some of the tournament favorites - hello, Cape Verde against Argentina - only Morocco and Egypt were able to reach the Round of 16.

"It's always great to get out of your group," Opoku said. "Obviously we wanted to go further."

Colombia had breezed through the group stage, conceding only a single goal in wins over Uzbekistan and Congo and a draw with Portugal. In fact, Los Cafeteros had been so impressive that Spain coach Luis de la Fuente - whose own team is considered among the tournament favorites - tapped them as "a candidate to win the World Cup."

Messi scores 20th World Cup goal, extends streak to 8 games

Vozinha and Cape Verde push Argentina to the brink

MIAMI GARDENS, Fla., July 4, (AP): Lionel Messi wiped the sweat from his forehead and breathed a sigh of relief. His Argentina teammates did the same.

A thrilling, unforgettable World Cup match with underdog Cape Verde was over - and the defending champions survived after being pushed to the brink.

Cape Verde equalized in regulation and again in extra time, but the Blue Sharks could not respond to Argentina's third goal, and La Albiceleste advanced to the Round of 16 with a 3-2 victory.

Even in defeat, the performance by Cape Verde - a tiny island nation off the western coast of Africa - will stand as one of the most remarkable stories of this, or any, World Cup.

The go-ahead score for Argentina was credited as an own-goal after Cristian Romero's header deflected off Cape Verde's Diney Borges in the 11th minute. Messi scored early in regulation, his record-extending 20th career World Cup goal. Lisandro Martínez scored in the 92nd to put Argentina ahead 2-1.

Sidny Lopes Cabral and Dery Duarte scored for Cape Verde - both equalizers that stunned the pro-Argentina crowd in South Florida. Cabral's goal - a curling, right-footed strike past goalkeeper Emiliano Martínez in the 103rd minute - made an already wild game even more



Argentina's Lionel Messi (10) controls the ball while defended by Cape Verde's Dery Duarte (14) during the World Cup round of 32 soccer match between Argentina and Cape Verde in Miami Gardens, Fla. (AP)

incredible, tying it at 2-all and raising the possibility of Messi facing standout Cape Verde goalkeeper Vozinha in a penalty shootout.

Argentina pushed back in front eight minutes later, held on from there and advanced to face Egypt -

which beat Australia in a shootout earlier Friday - in Atlanta on Tuesday.

"As this team has demonstrated many times, and as I've said many times, it competes," Messi said in Spanish. "And we competed to the end."

Cape Verde's memorable World Cup debut had been a stunning run that few outside the country of 525,000 could have predicted. Behind the stellar play of the 40-year-old Vozinha, Cape Verde became the smallest country to reach the knockout round, securing surprising draws against Spain and Uruguay and another against Saudi Arabia.

Vozinha had 10 saves against Argentina, including five against Messi.

"We dignify what our country is. We drew twice against the world champions, we took it to extra time," Cape Verde coach Bubista said. "More than anything, it's being proud of our players who were dignified in the World Cup. We showed our identity."

Messi added another brilliant goal to his resume, sneaking behind the Cape Verde defense on a well-timed run as Martínez lofted a pass toward him, taking a quick touch and hammering a finish into the roof of the net for a 1-0 lead in the 29th minute.

World Cup Fixtures

Brazil vs Norway 23:00
Monday
Mexico vs England 03:00

Antonelli wins sprint race and takes pole at British Grand Prix

SILVERSTONE, England, July 4, (AP): Kimi Antonelli returned to winning ways in Formula 1 with a sprint race victory and pole position for the British Grand Prix on a day of struggles for his title rival George Russell.

After overtaking Lewis Hamilton to deny the British star a crowd-pleasing victory in the sprint, Antonelli doubled up with pole position for Sunday's

race. He went fastest on his last lap by 0.175 of a second from Ferrari's Charles Leclerc, with Hamilton third.

Russell was fourth in the sprint and then again in qualifying, after contact with the wall early on, and will start Sunday's race behind the two Ferraris.

Hamilton started on pole and held off Antonelli until lap eight of 17,

when the Italian swept past with the help of electrical power.

"Let's go! Let's go!" Antonelli told the team over the radio after taking the win.

"It was a very fun first 10 laps with Lewis, we were both pushing very hard," Antonelli added later. "Obviously the momentum is there and we are doing a great job together

with the team."

The race was a prime example of F1 in 2026, with the strategy of charging and deploying electrical power central to the battles on track.

It allowed drivers like Lando Norris to swap places with rivals lap after lap but also meant drivers lifting off through Silverstone's best-known fast corners to recharge power.