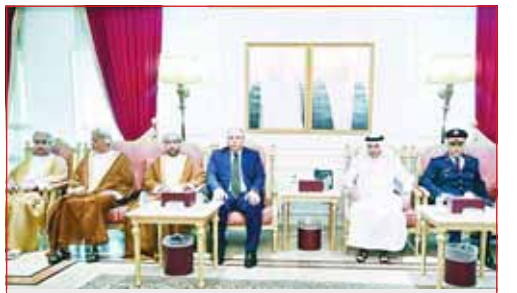




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Diplomats in Kuwait honor legacy of Qatar's Father Amir Page 5

Amir Representative conveys Kuwait's condolences in Qatar



Crown Prince Diwan photos

Representing His Highness the Amir, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah offers Kuwait's condolences to Qatar's leadership at Lusail Palace in Doha on Monday.

DOHA, July 13, (KUNA): Representative of His Highness the Amir, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, arrived in Doha on Monday at the head of an official delegation to offer condolences on the passing of Qatar's late Father Amir, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani.

Upon arrival, His Highness was received by Qatar's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Defense Affairs Sheikh Saud bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani, Minister of Transport Sheikh Mohammad bin Abdullah Al-Thani, Kuwait's Ambassador to Qatar Ahmad Abdulrah-

man Al-Shuraim, and members of the Kuwaiti Embassy.

At Lusail Palace, His Highness conveyed the condolences of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, as well as those of the Kuwaiti people, to Qatar's Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, Deputy Amir Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad Al-Thani, members of the Al-Thani family, senior Qatari officials, and the people of Qatar.

His Highness also extended condolences to Sheikh Jassim bin Hamad Al-Thani, Sheikh Abdulaziz bin Khalifa Al-Thani, Sheikh Abdullah bin Khalifa Al-

Thani, Sheikh Mohammad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, Sheikh Jassim bin Khalifa Al-Thani, Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammad bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al-Thani, and Shura Council Speaker Hassan bin Abdullah Al-Ghanim.

Following the condolence visit, His Highness and the accompanying official delegation departed Qatar and returned safely to Kuwait later the same day. He was seen off at Doha by Qatar's Minister of Transport Sheikh Mohammad bin Abdullah Al-Thani, Ambassador Al-Shuraim, and members of the Kuwaiti Embassy.

The accompanying delegation included Sheikh Mubarak Duaij Ibrahim Al-Sabah, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah, Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah, Sheikh Dr. Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah, Head of the Crown Prince Diwan Sheikh Thamer Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Minister of Defense Sheikh Abdullah Ali Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, Sheikh Abdullah Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

Kuwait blasts repeated Basra consulate attacks

KUWAIT CITY, July 13, (KUNA): Kuwait on Monday strongly condemned the continued attacks targeting its Consulate General in Basra, describing them as an unacceptable violation of the consulate's inviolability and Iraq's obligations under the 1963 Vienna Convention on Consular Relations.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs said the attacks undermine efforts by the Iraqi government

to fulfill its international commitments, particularly Article 31 of the convention, which requires host states to ensure the full protection of consular premises.

Despite Iraq's efforts to address the incidents, the ministry urged immediate and decisive action to hold those responsible accountable, prevent further attacks, and ensure the security and

Continued on Page 5

Align contracts by Sept 1

Kuwait issues new rules for e-delivery platforms

KUWAIT CITY, July 13: The official gazette "Kuwait Al-yum" published on Sunday Decision No. 109/2026 issued by the Minister of Commerce and Industry Osama Boodai regarding the issuance of regulations governing the sector of intermediary electronic platforms and applications for displaying, ordering, and delivering products to consumers, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The regulations introduce new controls aimed at regulating electronic platform activities and adjusting the status of existing companies and contracts.

The decision states the following:

Article 1 -

The provisions of the regulations governing the activities of intermediary electronic platforms and applications for displaying, ordering, and delivering products to consumers, attached to this decision, shall be implemented.

Article 2 -

Every company licensed to launch and operate an intermediary electronic platform for displaying, ordering, and delivering products to consumers must adjust its status in accordance

with the provisions of the regulations attached to this decision.

The licensed activity shall be amended to "Management of Delivery Services via Electronic Platforms" under the approved international classification No. 532013, no later than September 1, 2026.

Article 3 -

Every contract concluded between the service provider and the customer from the date of issuance of this decision shall be subject to the provisions of the regulations attached to this decision.

For existing contracts concluded before the date of this decision, the parties must amend and align their contracts with the provisions of the attached regulations before September 1, 2026. Existing contracts in which the agreed commission does not exceed the maximum limit stipulated in Article 7 of the attached regulations shall be exempt from the preceding requirement and shall continue to have full legal effect according to their contractual terms until the date of expiry.

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Boodai

KD 10 cash ceiling hits private clinics

KUWAIT CITY, July 13: The Ministry of Commerce and Industry issued Ministerial Resolution No. 110/2026 regarding the prohibition of cash payments by companies operating in certain activities, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Article 1 of the resolution requires all companies that own licensed private healthcare facilities, including hospitals, medical centers, clinics, home healthcare facilities, and other licensed private medical establishments, to refrain from accepting cash payments exceeding KD 10 for their services.

The companies concerned are required to process all payments exceeding KD 10 through banking channels and electronic payment services approved by the Central Bank of Kuwait.

Article 2 stipulates the application of the penalties stipulated in Law No. 10/1979. Any facility that violates the

Continued on Page 5



Kuwait Airways partners with Taly to launch interest-free installment payment service



Early bird registration opens for the 12th edition of Gulf Bank 642 marathon

Iran proxies test Kuwait's red line

Trump puts price tag on Hormuz passage

KUWAIT CITY, July 13, (Agencies): Kuwait's General Staff said the country's air defense systems intercepted hostile aerial objects after they entered Kuwaiti airspace on Monday morning.

In a statement, the General Staff said the explosions heard in parts of the country were caused by the mid-air interception of the incoming threats and urged the public to follow safety instructions issued by the competent authorities.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs strongly condemned the attacks carried out by Iran and Iran-backed factions and militias in Iraq, following strikes

on several northern border posts and a Kuwait Oil Company offshore drilling platform that left casualties and caused material damage.

The ministry described the continued attacks as a flagrant violation of Kuwait's sovereignty, a serious threat to the safety of citizens and residents, and a breach of international legitimacy and UN Security Council Resolution 2817 (2026). It stressed Kuwait's right, under international law and the UN Charter, to take all necessary measures to protect its sovereignty, security and stability.

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Municipal Council okays key projects, summer break

KNPC expansion in Subhan gets green light

By Inaas Awadh

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, July 13: Deputy Chairman of the Municipal Council Khaled Al-Mutairi on Monday presided over the 23rd regular session of the council for the fourth term.

During the session, the council approved several development and regulatory projects, such as the expansion of the Kuwait National Petroleum Company (KNPC) site in Subhan Industrial Area, a number of projects in the education, roads and urban planning sectors, and amendment of the regulations for classifying and licensing construction and demolition contractors.

It also approved its 38-day summer recess, starting from Aug 2 and ending on Sept 10. Therefore, the regular session scheduled for July 27 will be the last before the council takes a break.

It approved the request of KNPC to consolidate all previously allocated land in Subhan Industrial Area (Block 10) into a single site with the same designated uses.

Continued on Page 5



Photo by Samer Shiqer

The Municipal Council convenes during its 23rd regular session on Monday to discuss key development and regulatory proposals.

KGOC targets higher Wafra production within five years

By Najeh Bilal

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, July 13: Kuwait Gulf Oil Company (KGOC) aims to increase production capacity at the Wafra oil field, which is jointly operated by Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, in cooperation with Saudi Chevron, to between 300,000 and 350,000 barrels per day within the next five years.

According to informed sources, the Wafra joint operations have witnessed significant growth, with Kuwait's share of daily oil production reaching approximately 77,520 barrels per day, in addition to the shipping of around 22 million standard cubic feet of associated gas to the Kuwait Oil Company (KOC).

Drilling operations at the Wafra joint operations have completed three new wells as part of the development plan, while exploration activities in the northern Wafra area have produced promising results. New oil reserves were discovered in the Ibra and Ramthan reservoirs, with production from each well ranging between 260 and 380 barrels per day.

The Kuwaiti-Saudi efforts through the Wafra joint operations aim to discover new reservoirs and reach the targeted production levels through joint cooperation and coordination between Kuwait and Saudi Arabia.

Continued on Page 5

Kuwait, Saudi Arabia eye faster 'cross-border' goods movement

KUWAIT CITY, July 13, (KUNA): Kuwait's Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior Lt. Gen. Abdulwahab Al-Wuhaib discussed with Saudi transport and customs officials ways to strengthen cooperation in land transport and customs coordination.

In a press statement on Monday, the Ministry of Interior said Al-Wuhaib headed Kuwait's delegation in a virtual meeting with Saudi Deputy Minister of Transport and Logistics Services Dr. Rumaiah Al-Rumaiah and Governor of the Zakat, Tax and Customs Authority Eng. Suhail Abanmi.

At the outset of the meeting, Al-

Wuhaib conveyed the greetings of the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior, Sheikh Fahad Yusuf Saud Al-Sabah, and reaffirmed his commitment to enhancing cooperation with Saudi Arabia in the field of land transport.

Al-Wuhaib expressed Kuwait's appreciation to Saudi Arabia for the significant facilitations it has provided to ensure the smooth movement of goods through land border crossings, particularly considering the current regional circumstances, reflecting the deep-rooted fraternal ties between the two countries.

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Al-Wuhaib



Prayer Timings

Fajr	03:24	Asr	15:28
Sunrise ..	04:58	Maghrib ..	18:50
Zohr	11:54	Isha	20:20



HH the Amir



HH the Crown Prince



HH the Prime Minister

Amir congrats Montenegro Pres. on their National Day

KUWAIT CITY, July 13, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah has sent Monday a cable of congratulations to President of the Republic of Montenegro Jakov Milatovic on the occasion of his country's national Day.

In the cable, His Highness the Amir wished the president good health, wellness, further prosperity and progress for the friendly Republic of Montenegro and people.

Crown Prince congratulates

His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-

Sabah has sent Monday a cable of congratulations to President of the Republic of Montenegro Jakov Milatovic on the occasion of his country's national Day.

In the cable, His Highness the Crown Prince wished the president good health, and wellness.

Prime Minister congratulates

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah has sent Monday a cable of congratulations to President of the Republic of Montenegro Jakov Milatovic on the occasion of his country's national day.



KUNA photo
Assistant Foreign Minister for Human Rights Affairs Ambassador Sheikh Jawaher Ibrahim Al-Duaij Al-Sabah is pictured with the women contingent in the army.

Women role in military, security bodies lauded

KUWAIT CITY, July 13, (KUNA): Kuwaiti Assistant Foreign Minister for Human Rights Affairs Ambassador Sheikh Jawaher Ibrahim Al-Duaij Al-Sabah on Sunday lauded women's empowerment at military and security institutions in Kuwait.

Sheikha Jawaher made the remarks while giving an awareness-raising lecture titled "Women, Peace and Security," hosted by the Ali Al-Sabah Military College. She expounded UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace, Security and Kuwait's efforts to

implement the relevant national plan.

The Kuwaiti human rights official also highlighted significant national, regional, and international experiences regarding the promotion of women's involvement in the armed forces and peacekeeping operations.

'Family vital in anti-drugs war; keep an eye on kids'

Young smokers turn to drugs readily: expert



KUNA photos
Minister of Social, Family and Childhood Affairs Dr. Amthal Al-Huwailah affirmed that raising public awareness about drugs is a national responsibility, calling for continuous cooperation between government agencies, private sector, civil society.

By Fares Ghaleb

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, July 13: Minister of Social, Family and Childhood Affairs Dr. Amthal Al-Huwailah affirmed that raising public awareness about drugs is a national responsibility, calling for continuous cooperation between government agencies, private sector, civil society organizations and media to intensify the "A Nation That Protects You" campaign and to make it an annual initiative.

Al-Huwailah made the statement at a seminar titled, "An Aware Society... and a Secure Future," organized by the Ministry of Social Affairs as part of the comprehensive national campaign to combat drugs.

She stated that the campaign is a national model of cooperation and praised the efforts



of all partners. She urged families to support children suffering from drug addiction, emphasizing that treatment is available, and that the state provides safe and confidential support channels.

Meanwhile, Captain Ali Abdul Nasser from the Drug Control General Department (DCGD) at the Ministry of Interior pointed out that combating drugs necessitates the integration of security efforts and community prevention. He indicated that the ministry continues to monitor and apprehend drug dealers, along with raising public awareness on the issue.

He explained that drugs, especially synthetic substances such as chemicals, pose a grave threat to society due to the modern distribution methods. He warned about the health and psychological effects, which can lead to brain damage, depression and suicidal tendencies. He urged the parents to observe changes in their children's behavior.

Jaber Al-Ajmi, representative of Kuwait Lawyers Association, reiterated that combating drugs is a national responsibility requiring the concerted efforts of everyone. He said the

Kuwaiti law differentiates between drug users who need treatment, and drug traffickers who face severe penalties, including the death penalty.

Dr. Ahmad Al-Shatti, Secretary General of the Ghiras Association, stated that the family serves as the foundation for drug prevention. He underscored the importance of integrating the roles of families, educational institutions, government agencies, civil society and the media. He said combating drugs entails eliminating supply through intensified security efforts and limiting demand through public awareness campaigns.

He also confirmed the growing prevalence of synthetic drugs and the decreasing age of first use. He revealed that about 99 percent of drug users are smokers, hence, the anti-smoking campaign is one of the most important preventive measures.

He added that the drug trade generates enormous profits, prompting smugglers to devise new methods. He then commended the stipulation of tough penalties in the new Anti-Narcotics Law.

Kuwait-led committee recommends overhaul of Arab media award rules

CAIRO, July 13, (KUNA): The committee overseeing the Arab Media Excellence Award, chaired by Kuwait, concluded its 10th session on Monday by issuing recommendations aimed at updating the award's eligibility criteria and regulations.

The award is presented annually by the Arab League under the patronage of the State of Kuwait to outstanding media works.

Committee Chairman and Director of Kuwait Television's Al-Arabi Channel, Talal Al-Haifi, told KUNA that the panel recommended updating the award's internal regulations to keep pace with its development and strengthen its operational mechanisms.

He said the committee also urged member states to adhere to the approved technical criteria and conditions when nominating entries.

Al-Haifi added that the committee recommended limiting nominations from each country to three entries per category to enhance competition and improve the quality of submissions.

He noted that the committee proposed introducing a new category under the television and radio awards titled "Best Joint Arab Media Production" to encourage collaborative Arab media productions and strengthen cooperation among Arab media institutions.

The committee also exceptionally recommended increasing the number of honorees in the recognition category to 15 in appreciation of the contributions of Arab media institutions and personalities to advancing Arab media.

Al-Haifi said the recommendations will be sub-



KUNA photo
Committee Chairman and Director of Kuwait Television's Al-Arabi Channel, Talal Al-Haifi.

mitted to the relevant authorities for consideration and approval as part of the regulations governing future editions of the award, to enhance its development and strengthen its standing in the Arab media landscape.

The judging committee held its first meeting on Sunday under Al-Haifi's chairmanship, with the participation of representatives from Egypt, Yemen, Mauritania, Morocco, Syria and Libya to review the media works nominated for the award, which covers four categories: print, radio, television and digital media.

Bid to tackle patients rise

KUWAIT CITY, July 13: The Ministry of Health on Monday announced the opening of the new expansion at Farwaniya Center for Food Handlers and Other Categories Medical Examinations, with the aim of increasing the capacity of the center and improving service delivery efficiency, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

In a press statement, the ministry explained that the additional space is for female patients, with a capacity of 35,000 to 40,000 visits annually. It pointed out that this will improve patient flow at the center, provide larger operational spaces, and increase service delivery flexibility.

It added that the expansion will reduce the average time required to complete registration, medical examination, and issuance of health fitness certificates, which positively impacts service quality and speed.

The new expansion is equipped with integrated medical facilities according to the latest operational requirements, including registration, clinical examination, blood sampling and vaccination units.



KUNA photo
Kuwait's Ambassador Talal Al-Mutairi chairs the committee meeting.

Meeting to focus on Palestine cause, violations & prisoners

CAIRO, July 13, (KUNA): The 58th session of the Permanent Arab Committee for Human Rights opened on Monday under Kuwait's chairmanship, led by Committee Chairman Ambassador Talal Al-Mutairi, with the participation of member states and Arab League bodies.

The two-day meeting will focus on the Palestinian cause, Israeli occupation violations and discriminatory practices in the occupied Arab territories, Arab prisoners and detainees in occupation prisons, and the bodies of Palestinian and Arab martyrs

withheld by the occupation authorities.

Discussions will also cover the Arab Charter on Human Rights and preparations for Arab Human Rights Day, to be observed on March 16, 2027.

The committee's recommendations will be submitted to the 166th session of the Arab League Council at the ministerial level, scheduled for September.

Kuwait is represented at the meeting by Bashar Al-Muwaizri, a counselor at the Human Rights Department of the Kuwaiti Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Other Voices

Encroachments, violations

By Ahmad alsarraf

ON May 15, 2019, I wrote that Kuwait Municipality had uncovered several cases involving citizens who had seized or encroached upon state property and illegally exploited it. One such violation alone covered an area of 282,000 square meters, making it possibly the largest and most blatant real estate encroachment in Kuwait's history.

With what audacity, calculation, or rather stupidity did these individuals think they could benefit from such unlawful gains without being detected by any regulatory authority, given the enormous scale of the violation and its blatant presence along the waterfront?

In another case of encroachment, sand from Subiya worth millions of dinars was illegally extracted and sold to construction and contracting companies.

Recently, a trial balloon was floated in the form of a decision to remove carports or impose fees on them, a move that was met with strong public opposition. Carports are a necessity in Kuwait because its climate is vastly different from that of Lausanne, Switzerland. Kuwait is a desert country with extremely high summer temperatures, making it extremely difficult to leave vehicles exposed to the scorching sun for extended periods.

Therefore, the relevant authorities should consider developing better alternatives to the unattractive corrugated iron or fabric awnings that are prone to damage. One possible solu-



alsarraf

tion is to encourage the planting of trees to provide shade and protect vehicles from direct sunlight. There are organizations specializing in planting trees in parking areas that could be consulted for practical solutions.

Encroachments on state property are an ongoing issue involving both citizens and residents, requiring continuous monitoring throughout the year. Therefore, there is a need for a permanent committee dedicated to removing encroachments on state property, headed by a prominent national figure known for integrity and decisiveness.

I previously mentioned that the departure of retired Lieutenant General Mohammad Al-Bader had affected the committee's work, as decisive action was absent for nearly a decade.

It is now clear that firmness is being restored. Committees responsible for removing encroachments on state property have uncovered tunnels beneath streets, underground basements built entirely beneath gardens, and parking areas capable of accommodating dozens of vehicles, all constructed on state land.

Some citizens have created what resemble private parks, extending over tens of thousands of square meters in front of their homes, enclosed by iron fences erected on public property, in addition to constructing rooms for domestic workers. Therefore, it was necessary to apply the regulations equally to everyone, as was done in cases involving the revocation of citizenship.

Note: All claims and reports suggesting that municipal teams removed carports properly installed around homes or in parking areas at several state hospitals are completely false.

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email: a.alsarraf@alqabas.com.kw

Late Amir of Qatar ... The leader with future vision

“GREAT figures may pass away, but their legacy remains vivid in the memory of nations and reflected in the character of the homelands they helped build,” columnist Retd Major General **Faisal Musaed Al-Jazzaf** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

“With the passing of His Highness the Father Amir of Qatar, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, the State of Qatar has lost one of its most prominent leaders. His name is closely associated with a pivotal era that shaped the country’s modern renaissance and strengthened its regional and international standing through a confident vision, sincere determination, and tireless efforts.



Faisal Al-Jazzaf

Personal actions and positions often reveal the true measure of a person’s character.

“I still recall my first meeting with His Highness, when he was Crown Prince, as part of a delegation from the Association of Families of Prisoners of War and Missing Persons. The late Amir responded without hesitation and sincerely worked to seek effective solutions through the contacts he established with the Iraqi side.

“My second meeting with His Highness took place in London in 2001, when I happened to meet him at a café on Oxford Street. I shook his hand and walked with him for nearly an hour. During part of our conversation, he spoke with confidence about his vision for Qatar’s future.

“The late Amir of Qatar outlined an ambitious project that went beyond expectations. He expressed his deep appreciation for the State of Kuwait, its leadership, and its people, emphasizing the strong fraternal bonds that have united the two nations for decades.

“I met him again by chance at the Asian Games in 2012, where he recalled our earlier conversation in remarkable detail. I clearly remember him asking me, “How do you see my promise to you now?” At that moment, I realized that great leaders do not make promises for public display; they make commitments that they are determined to honor.

“The late Amir fulfilled his pledge, and his predictions proved accurate. He departed this world leaving behind a nation that is more prominent, confident, and respected, along with a development experience that has earned widespread appreciation.

“May God have mercy on the late Amir, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, and reward him abundantly for all that he gave to his country and people. I pray that God grants his family and the Qatari people patience and comfort during this time of loss.

“I also pray to Almighty God to protect the State of Qatar and grant continued success to His Highness the Amir, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, his brothers, and the people of Qatar as they continue the journey of development, nation-building, and prosperity.”

Also:

“In a world where events are unfolding at an accelerating pace and information flows through screens and phones every moment, awareness is no longer an intellectual luxury; it has become a national necessity and the first line of defense for the security and stability of society,” columnist **Muhammad Nasser Al-Alem** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

“Nations are not built on material resources alone, but on conscious minds, sincere hearts, and individuals who understand their responsibilities towards themselves, their families, and their country.

“Islam was a pioneer in establishing a culture of awareness, emphasizing the importance of verifying information and prohibiting the spread of rumors. It called upon its followers to reflect and contemplate, because words have the power to build societies or destroy them. Unverified information can sow discord and weaken trust among people.

“Therefore, Muslims are responsible for everything they transmit, write, share, and say. Today, with the widespread use of social media, every individual has become a media platform in their own right, carrying in their phone the ability to spread information or rumors, and to contribute either to building awareness or promoting misconceptions.

“This makes everyone’s responsibility greater - to seek the truth, respect the privacy of others, and refrain from sharing anything that fuels discord or harms individuals or institutions.

“Awareness is not limited to how we handle news but it also includes respecting order, preserving public property, striving for excellence in work, upholding rights and responsibilities, engaging in constructive dialogue, accepting different viewpoints, and making a positive contribution to society.

“These factors are all aspects of the civilized awareness that elevates

nations. The cultivation of awareness begins within the family, where parents teach their children critical thinking, responsibility, and the ability to distinguish between truth and rumor. This mission is further strengthened through the role of schools, universities, mosques, the media, and state institutions in nurturing a generation that combines knowledge with values, openness with principles, and ambition with a strong sense of belonging.

“True investment is not found solely in infrastructure, nor does it begin with technology before people.

“A conscious individual is one who effectively utilizes all available resources to serve their nation. The greatest asset any country possesses is its aware citizen who transforms values into knowledge, knowledge into action, and love for the homeland into responsibility and meaningful conduct.

“Awareness is not merely a slogan to be repeated but it is a culture to be practiced and a responsibility shared by all. It is the shortest path toward a safer society, a stronger nation, and a brighter future.”

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“In an article published by the British newspaper ‘The Daily Mail’ on October 24, 2025, titled ‘A Question That Has Puzzled Minds Throughout History - ‘What Happens When We Die’’, columnist William Hunter posed a question that has intrigued human minds throughout history,” columnist **Ahmad Al-Dawas** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

“The newspaper has repeatedly published articles exploring ideas that bear similarities to concepts found in divine faith. The article reported that scientists interviewed 48 people about their near-death experiences.

“The participants described seeing tunnels and lights, encountering beings from another world, and seeing an “angel” who appeared to them during their final moments. They described this being as having magnificent white wings, with exceptionally detailed feathers layered over one another. They also reported that the angel’s face resembled that of a Greek deity, with remarkable symmetry and hair as refined as that depicted in ancient Greek statues.

“Another person said, “I saw myself in the center of an enormous sphere of light. This light was the most beautiful thing I had ever seen.” Another individual described encounters with loved ones who had passed away long ago, saying, “I saw my aunts Elizabeth and Leni as they were when they were young.”

“In an article published on September 21, 2025, writer Taryn Cor Bedler recounts that while Brianna was lying in a hospital bed in Texas with her mother beside her, she stopped breathing and her heart stopped beating. Eight minutes later, however, her heart began beating again. She said she found herself traveling through a bright blue tunnel.



Ahmad Al-Dawas

“A n o t h e r woman whose heart stopped for two minutes said she saw blue-skinned beings with human-like faces who greeted her. Al- though she did not understand their language, she said they made her feel welcomed and conveyed a telepathic message that life is merely an illusion, and that true life begins only after death. She said she came to realize that God and the afterlife are real.

“Charlotte Holmes, who was 68 when she suffered a stroke for a few minutes, said, “I saw my mother, my father, and my sister. I saw members of my family. They did not appear old. God took me to the edge of hell. I looked down and smelled rotting flesh, and I screamed after seeing the beauty of heaven. The contrast between heaven and hell was unbearable. God wanted to show me the horrors of a life lived without morality.”

“Years ago, the newspaper published an image of a person lying in bed, and in front of him was a picture showing what appeared to be the figures of two people beside the bed, resembling an X-ray image, as if they had appeared at the moment of his death. The Daily Mail later returned on another occasion to discuss the concept of the seven heavens.

“Please allow me to mention something related. While I was working at the Kuwaiti embassy in Brazil, I experienced something like a flash of lightning passing through the apartment. A book from my bookshelf then moved from its place and fell in a strange manner. I was frightened, so I left the apartment and returned two hours later. I opened the door while remembering God, as I had to go to work a few hours later. What was that? There is no doubt that there is a hidden world beyond what our eyes can perceive.”

— Compiled by Simi K. Kutty

257 abandoned cars, 12 food trucks lifted

KUWAIT CITY, July 13: The acting Director of Ahmadi Municipality Saad Al-Khurainj confirmed that the Public Hygiene and Road Occupancy Department intensified its field campaigns throughout June 2026 to monitor improper practices, improve public hygiene standards, and take legal action against violators, reports **Al-Seyassah** daily.

Al-Khurainj explained that the campaigns focused on monitoring public hygiene operations, ensuring compliance with cleaning company contracts, combating street vending, and removing any obstructions affecting roads or the city’s appearance, including abandoned vehicles, boats, and scrap materials. The campaigns resulted in the removal of 257 abandoned vehicles and 12 mobile carts, in addition to placing 1,983 warning stickers on abandoned vehicles and boats in preparation for their removal after the expiration of the legal notice period.

The inspection teams also issued 211 citations for violations related to public hygiene, misuse of public property, and street vending.

In addition, they renewed 14 road occupancy permits and issued 19 new permits.



Municipality photo

An abandoned food delivery van is lifted by the Municipality.

Al-Khurainj emphasized that field campaigns would continue in various areas of the governorate, stressing that there would

be no leniency in enforcing regulations and that all necessary legal measures would be taken against violators.

2 Kuwaitis jailed 4 years in terrorism-linked case

KUWAIT CITY, July 13: The Court of Cassation Sunday upheld a four-year prison sentence issued by a lower court against two citizens, rejecting appeals submitted by both the defendants and the Public Prosecution, making the ruling final and not subject to further appeal, reports **Al-Anba** daily.

The Public Prosecution had previously charged the first defendant - a Ministry of Defense employee - with joining the ISIS terrorist organization, harming the country’s national interests, and misusing a means of communication.

The court charged the second defendant with publicly insulting the Amiri position via the TikTok application, inciting the first defendant to rebel and harm the state’s national interests, and misusing means of communication.

The second defendant had previously been convicted in cases related to terrorism and weapons training. He admitted to leaving Kuwait for Syria in 2014 with the intention of participating in “Jihad”. He was later handed over to Kuwait by the Syrian authorities.

Kuwait shop found selling old compressors for new

KUWAIT CITY, July 13: The Ministry of Commerce and Industry announced on Sunday that its emergency teams in Farwaniya and Jahra governorates discovered a shop engaged in refurbishing and repainting used air-conditioning compressors, while replacing the original country-of-origin labels with labels indicating different origins, reports **Al-Seyassah** daily.

The ministry stated that the shop was carrying out this practice to make illegal profits by exploiting price differences associated with the stated country of origin, thereby deceiving consumers.

The ministry’s teams confiscated 776 used compressors and took the necessary legal measures, including the immediate closure of the shop.

The case was referred to the relevant authorities to complete the required legal procedures.

Call to review MoCI order

Food sector at loss risk

KUWAIT CITY, July 13: More than 250 delivery companies in Kuwait, represented by the Committee of Delivery Companies Owners affiliated with the Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) sector, submitted a grievance to the Minister of Commerce and Industry requesting a review of Ministerial Decision No. 109/2026 and its temporary suspension pending an assessment of its economic and operational impacts, reports **Al-Jarida** daily.

The companies requested that the ministry schedule an urgent meeting with their representatives.

In their letter to the minister, the committee emphasized that delivery companies were surprised by the issuance of the decision without their involvement in discussing its provisions, despite being the main stakeholders in the delivery system and bearing the brunt of the sector’s operational and investment burdens.

The committee explained that the decision focused on regulating the relationship between electronic platforms, customers, and merchants, and set caps on commissions and delivery fees. However, it did not adequately consider the impact of these changes on delivery companies, nor did it establish a framework to regulate their role or balance their rights and obligations.

The delivery companies bear significant operational and investment costs, including drivers’ and employees’ salaries, accommodation and living expenses, vehicles and maintenance costs, fuel, rent, licenses and government fees, health insurance, IT systems, customer service, cybersecurity, as well as bank obligations, financing agreements, and vehicle leasing expenses. Many companies made their investments based on feasibility studies, contracts, and long-term loans.

The committee warned that any sudden decline in revenues without a comprehensive assessment of the economic impact could result in financial losses, the insolvency of some companies, the closure of others, and employee layoffs, ultimately affecting citizens who have invested in this sector.

It noted that the repercussions of the decision would not be limited to delivery companies but would also extend to restaurants, shops, cooperative societies, and consumers, potentially affecting service quality and the sustainability of the e-commerce sector in Kuwait.

The committee requested that the ministry take three main measures. First, it called for the temporary suspension of the decision until its impacts are thoroughly studied. Second, it proposed the formation of a joint committee comprising the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, relevant government entities, and representatives of delivery companies, platforms, and merchants to develop a balanced regulatory framework. Third, it called for an urgent meeting with the minister to present financial and economic studies, along with data on the potential impact of the decision.

The committee confirmed that it had authorized its chairman, Abdulaziz Abdul Latif Bandar Faleh, to represent delivery companies in any meetings or discussions with the relevant authorities.

In conclusion, the committee stressed that its objective was not to oppose regulation of the sector, but rather to establish a fair and sustainable regulatory framework that protects Kuwaiti investments, supports the digital economy, and ensures the continued delivery of services to consumers while balancing the interests of all parties.

Cop stabbed; suspect shot

Man loses life resisting arrest

By Munif Nayef

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, July 13: A security officer was stabbed twice -- in the neck and thigh -- while apprehending a man with an outstanding arrest warrant in Ali Sabah Al-Salem suburb (Umm Al-Hayman) on Monday.

Due to the situation, the officer had to shoot the assailant who later succumbed to his injuries.

In a press statement, the Ministry of Interior revealed that a security patrol on duty in the above-mentioned area stopped the man for routine check and discovered that he had earlier evaded arrest. However, while proceeding with the necessary arrest procedures, the man resisted and attacked one of the officers with a knife. The officers responded and took the necessary measures to repel the threat, which required shooting the assailant as per the law.

The ministry explained that both the assailant and the injured officer were rushed to the hospital. The assailant died, while the officer underwent surgery. The officer is currently undergoing treatment.

It also confirmed that the relevant authorities were notified about the incident, and that legal measures are being taken.

□ □ □

Smuggling bid foiled: The Nuwaiseb Border Customs Department at the Kuwait General Administration of Customs (KGAC) has thwarted an attempt to smuggle a large quantity of cigarettes.

Customs inspectors got suspicious of a vehicle that passed through the border. Upon searching the vehicle, the inspectors found 5,305 cartons of cigarettes, weighing around one ton, hidden inside various parts of the vehicle. The contraband was confiscated, the vehicle impounded and legal procedures were taken.

The suspect and the seized goods were referred to the relevant authorities to complete the investigations according to the law.

□ □ □

21,890 citations issued: The campaigns conducted by the General Traffic Department at the Interior Ministry on July 6-12 resulted in the issuance of 21,890 traffic violation citations, impounding of 420 vehicles, and referral of 37 individuals to the traffic police station, while 24 minors were apprehended for driving without a license.

The weekly statistics issued by the department also revealed the arrest of 44 individuals with expired residency permits, 39 individuals with outstanding arrest warrants, two individuals without identification and four individuals in an abnormal condition.

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Good governance and transparency targeted

Minister introduces new rules for organizing cooperative work

By Fares Ghaleb
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, July 13: Minister of Social, Family and Childhood Affairs Dr. Amthal Al-Huwailah announced the issuance of Ministerial Resolution No. 196/2026, stipulating the new regulations for organizing cooperative work.

Speaking at a press conference organized by the ministry, Al-Huwailah confirmed that these regulations are crucial to the development of the cooperative sector, thus, establishing a new phase of governance, transparency and protection of shareholders' funds. She said this replaces the previous regulations issued through Ministerial Resolution No. 46/2021.

She revealed that the new regulations are in compliance with the directives of the political leadership to improve government performance, enhance governance and transparency, and protect public funds. She pointed out that these regulations signal the end of a comprehensive review of practical experience, incorporating oversight observations and studying the challenges encountered during implementation in recent years. She explained that the aim is to provide a modern regulatory framework that keeps pace with changes and meets the requirements of the next phase.

She said her ministry remains committed to ensuring that the regulations are "for the future," not merely amendments to the previous provisions. She added that the new regulations focus on enhancing digital transformation, streamlining procedures, and solidifying the principles of transparency and accountability in order to provide cooperative societies with more efficient management tools, while intensifying oversight of all matters related to protecting the shareholders' funds, state funds, and subsidies provided to cooperative societies.

She disclosed that one of the significant developments is the establishment of a unified electronic platform to manage all cooperative procedures and transactions. "This platform standardizes procedures through electronic linking with government entities, disseminating guidelines and model contracts, and announcing tenders and price quotations. A transition period of six months has been granted to fully launch the platform," she elaborated.

She added that the regulations adopt a modern legislative approach based on simplifying legal provisions and transforming executive procedures into specialized and continuously updated guidelines to provide more flexibility in the development of procedures, without the need for frequent amendments to the regulations.

She said the amendments include fundamental reforms in the management of cooperative societies, such as regulating appointment procedures for non-supervisory positions, including part-time roles and subjecting them to ministerial approval. "According to the new regulations, all contracts will be reviewed, and procedures for tendering investment, facilities, cleaning, security and other contracts will be approved," she indicated.

She explained that the investment system for cooperative society branches, vacant land and affiliated sites was developed through clearer and more transparent procedures, thereby, allowing electronic appeals and



Dr. Amthal Al-Huwailah Dr. Khalid Al-Ajmi Dr. Sayed Issa

regulating the determination of investment value and support.

She went on to say that the new regulations include extending the duration of land investment contracts to 10 years, renewable for five years, with a fixed annual increase of percent in the investment value.

She affirmed that the relationship between the cooperative societies and suppliers has been reorganized through the introduction of an electronic system that allows suppliers to track their transactions and view sales activity and inventory for each product. "The new regulations prohibit dealing with any supplier unless an approved standard contract is signed. It is also prohibited to force suppliers to participate in festivals or offer discounts or benefits as a condition for accepting their goods," she clarified.

She indicated that the new regulations stress the importance of strictly following the purchasing and marketing policy, and linking purchases to inventory turnover rates in order to prevent stockpiling and improve market management efficiency.

She added that the cooperative societies are now required to prepare an annual social services plan, approved by the ministry, to ensure that their allocations are directed towards purposes with positive social impact.

She confirmed the inclusion of unprecedented measures to protect the shareholders' funds by regulating free goods and subsidies provided by suppliers. "Suppliers are now required to disclose and document the services provided, ensuring that actual receipts match financial statements, thus, enhancing oversight and preventing corruption," she asserted.

Accredited

She continued saying that cooperative societies must sign a contract with auditing firms accredited by the Capital Markets Authority (CMA) and implement a more precise system for the inventory of their assets.

"A points system for non-shareholder consumers has been introduced, granting them non-cash benefits linked to their annual purchase volume," she indicated.

Moreover, Al-Huwailah announced as well the issuance of a decision amending the executive regulations of Cooperative Societies Law No. 24/1979, which includes raising the maximum return on shareholders' purchases from 12 percent to 15 percent.

On the other hand, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Head of the Committee for Drafting the Cooperative Work Regulations Dr. Khaled Al-Ajmi pointed out that the new regulations are considered a historic decision and an unprecedented leap forward.

He explained that the regulations, comprising 122 articles, constitute a comprehensive regulatory framework addressing various aspects of cooperative work. "Its primary objectives include safeguarding public funds, protecting investors, promoting governance and transparency principles, and establishing clear rules to ensure the integrity of procedures and the good management of cooperative societies. Cooperative society board meetings will be video-recorded to guarantee transparency," he explained.

He said the committee tasked with drafting the regulations ensured the participation of all relevant stakeholders, holding extensive meetings and workshops with the representatives of governmental, regulatory and legal bodies, as well as experts, cooperative society board members, suppliers, investors and citizens, to gather their opinions and feedback.

He clarified that the new regulations supersede 19 previous decisions, regulations and bylaws that resulted in overlapping jurisdictions and inconsistent procedures. He affirmed that the new regulations unify the legal and regulatory frameworks, hence, establishing clear rules that facilitate implementation and ensure legislative stability for the cooperative sector.

He said the new regulations put emphasis on organizing the work of cooperative society boards of directors, as well as the mechanisms for nomination, membership and governance.

He stressed that the new regulations mark the beginning of a new phase for the cooperative movement in Kuwait, reflecting the commitment of the state to develop this vital sector in a way that safeguards public funds, protects the rights of shareholders, consumers and investors, and enhances the sustainability of cooperative societies.

Dr. Sayed Issa, acting Assistant Undersecretary for Financial, Administrative Affairs and Cooperative Affairs, confirmed that cash purchases in cooperative societies will be capped at KD200, in coordination with the relevant authorities, to intensify oversight of sales and purchase transactions.

He said the new regulations require cooperative societies to renovate their buildings, both inside and outside, as per the requirements and standards, keeping pace with modern developments.

The regulations include four prohibitions for members of cooperative society boards of directors to enhance governance and prevent conflict of interests as follows:

- Personal spending prohibition: Cooperative funds should not be used for personal activities or purposes, including financing advertising or election campaigns for board members.
- Prohibition of travel at the cooperative's expense: Board members should not travel to participate in conferences, seminars or external events at the cooperative's expense without approval from the ministry.
- Prohibition of illegal benefits: Board members are prohibited from receiving bonuses, benefits or privileges that are not based on legal or regulatory provision. Board members and the chairman are prohibited from benefiting from discounts or special offers provided by suppliers to the cooperative.
- Prohibition of approving financial transactions: Board members are prohibited from signing disbursement or receipt vouchers and purchase orders for the cooperative.



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A young participant at the contest.

Huge turnout witnessed at game programming contest

KUWAIT CITY, July 13: The Department of Computer Science in the College of Science at Kuwait University concluded the Kuwait National Game Programming Competition, with the participation of 267 students from various educational institutions in the country, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The championship was held in collaboration with the Central Agency for Information Technology (CAIT), Kuwait E-Sports Club, and several other supporting organizations, with the aim of developing digital skills and fostering innovation in programming and electronic game development.

Acting Dean of the College of Science Prof. Haider Sayed Jawad Behbehani affirmed that the championship embodies the vision of the university to support applied education, aligning its outcomes with the needs of the digital economy, and strengthening partnerships with gov-



Behbehani

ernment institutions and the private sector.

He commended the efforts of the Department of Computer Science and the sponsoring and supporting entities in ensuring the success of the championship.

Meanwhile, Dr. Maha Al-Abduljalil, Academic and Executive Director of the championship and a faculty member in the Department of Computer Science, stated that the championship transformed the concept into a practical platform for discovering and developing talent. She added that strategic partnerships contributed to training and qualifying the participants of various ages in the field of electronic game programming.

The competition concluded with an awarding ceremony to honor the winning teams, participants, sponsors, supporters and organizers.

The 'Alientrix' project by participant Sulaiman Al-Mansouri won first place, the 'Dungeon the Escape' project by participant Mishari Al-Abd Al-Hadi took the second place, and the Kuwait University Team got the third place with their 'Trust Us' project.

CAPT nods re-floating tender for data collection upgrade

By Mohammad Ghanem
Al-Seyassah/Arso Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, July 13: The Central Agency for Public Tenders (CAPT) has approved the re-floating of a tender for the upgrade of data collection and analysis equipment for power generation plants and main substations, based on the comments of the State Audit Bureau (SAB).

The total cost of the tender is KD13.971 million, offered to companies that met the conditions and specifications.

CAPT requested an extension of the initial bid bond for all participating companies, in accordance with Article 46 of

Public Tenders Law No. 49/2016, which pertains to the provisions governing the validity of tenders.

This tender is part of the efforts of the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy to modernize the electricity network and its components, including generation and transmission stations. The upgraded equipment will enable decision-makers within the ministry to make the best decisions based on accurate data.

Earlier, several companies submitted complaints to CAPT regarding the tender. Consequently, CAPT notified the companies about its decision to re-float the tender.



European Union (EU) Ambassador to Kuwait Anne Koistinen signs the condolence book at the Qatar Embassy.



Sheikh Salem Al-Jaber offering his condolences.



Bahraini Ambassador Salah Al-Maliki signs the condolence book at the Qatar Embassy.

Diplomats in Kuwait honor legacy of Qatar’s Father Amir

By Fares Ghaleb
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, July 13: The Embassy of the State of Qatar in Kuwait received mourners who offered condolences on the passing of His Highness the Father Amir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, amidst expressions of sorrow and appreciation for his contributions to his country and the region.

European Union (EU) Ambassador to Kuwait Anne Koistinen expressed her deepest condolences to the government and people of Qatar on the passing of His Highness the Father Amir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani.

Koistinen stated that the relationship of the EU with Qatar is characterized by strength and closeness, emphasizing the great respect of EU for the deceased, who was known for his moderate voice in the region.

She added that Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani made significant contributions to the modernization and development of Qatar, pointing out his prominent role in enhancing his country’s regional and international standing.

Chargé d’Affaires at the US Embassy Steven Butler expressed his profound sadness over the passing of His Highness the Father Amir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, praising



Chargé d’Affaires at the US Embassy Steven Butler offering his condolences.

ing his role in building modern Qatar. He said Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani was a visionary leader who contributed to establishing the Qatar we know today. He emphasized that his passing is a great loss.

He added that his relationship with the deceased had a personal dimension, indicating that his first diplomatic posting was in the Qatari capital, Doha.

He also affirmed that the memory of Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani will remain alive, while expressing his condolences to the leadership and people of Qatar.

United Nations (UN) Resident Coordinator in Kuwait Ghada Al-Taher offered her sincere condolences to the government and people of Qatar on the passing of HH the late Father Amir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al

Thani.

Jordanian Ambassador Sinan Al-Majali stressed that HH the late Father Amir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani left an indelible mark on the development of Qatar and contributed to strengthening its regional and international standing. “He was also a staunch supporter of Arab cooperation and solidarity,” he added.

Al-Majali stated that the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, its leadership, government and people, extend their deepest condolences and sincere sympathies to His Highness Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, the Amir of the State of Qatar, and to the ruling family and the brotherly Qatari people.

Egyptian Ambassador Mohamed Abu Al-Wafa expressed his profound grief over the passing of HH



Omani Ambassador Dr. Saleh bin Amer Al-Kharousi with Egyptian Ambassador Mohamed Abu Al-Wafa offering their condolences.

the late Father Amir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, may Allah have mercy on him. He asserted that the deceased made a significant contribution to Qatar’s renaissance and the remarkable development and progress it witnessed.

Abu Al-Wafa said that HH the late Father Amir played a prominent role at the Gulf, Arab and international levels. He affirmed that Qatar, during his reign, experienced a distinguished development journey that made it a prominent model in the region.

He added that Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi will visit the State of Qatar to offer his condolences to HH the Amir of the State of Qatar Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, and to share the grief of the Qatari leadership and people in this painful loss.

Omani Ambassador Dr. Saleh bin

Amir Al-Kharousi indicated that His Highness the Father Amir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani was one of the well-known leaders who contributed to the renaissance of the State of Qatar. He cited his vital role in supporting the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and strengthening joint Gulf action.

Al-Kharousi stated that HH the late Father Amir left a significant legacy in supporting development and Gulf cooperation, and also contributed to consolidating the fraternal relations between Oman and Qatar.

Bahraini Ambassador Salah Al-Maliki stressed that the passing of HH the Father Amir is a great loss for the State of Qatar and the Arab and Islamic nations, given his rich legacy of achievements and contributions to serving his country and his people.

He said HH the Father Amir dedicated his life to serving his nation and achieving a comprehensive renaissance for the State of Qatar, while solidifying its regional and international standing.

Ambassador of the Republic of Türkiye Tuba Nur Sönmez affirmed that relations between Türkiye and the State of Qatar are considered a unique model of strategic partnership. She said His Highness the Father Amir played a vital role in establishing these relations and elevating them to unprecedented levels.

She stated that HH the Father Amir holds a special place in the hearts of the Turkish people and leadership, praising his insightful vision and contributions to building modern Qatar and enhancing its presence and standing on the regional and international stages.

Continued from Page 1

KD 10 cash

provisions of the preceding article will be subject to closure and referred to the competent investigative authorities to take the necessary legal measures.

Article 3 stipulates the repeal of any provision or decision that conflicts with the provisions of this resolution. The resolution further states that the competent authorities shall implement its provisions effective from the date of its issuance on July 13, 2026.

KNPC expansion

It approved the expansion of the petroleum fuel depot by 11,630 square meters, increasing the total area of the site to more than 241,000 square meters.

It emphasized the need to adhere to the technical opinion, coordinate with the State Property Department at the Ministry of Finance, and comply with the requirements of the Subcommittee for Public Utilities and Services before the implementation. The Kuwait Municipality is in charge of modifying or relocating the site within the approved area if it conflicts with infrastructure services or regulatory requirements.

It approved the request of the English Education Group to change the use of plot number 461 in Block One in Sabah Al-Salem from an investment activity to a private kindergarten and primary school, in accordance with the technical regulations.

It approved the request of the Ministry of Public Works to create a link between the interchange IC3 and Mutlaa City (Sector N1).

It approved the annexation and addition of a portion of state-owned land adjacent to plot number 81 in Sharq (Block One), and amended the distribution schedule for one of the plots within the development project in Block 45 in the former East Hawally and Block 11 in Salmiya.

It approved the proposal of member Farah Al-Roumi to amend Article 14 of Administrative Decision No. 161/2009 on the classification and licensing of construction and demolition contractors in the Municipality.

According to the proposed amendment, the contractor is obligated to submit a copy of the contract concluded with the owner to the Municipality before commencing work. The contract must include the project duration, type and phases of work, contract value and payment schedule.

The amendment also stipulates that the contract must include a clause obligating the owner to fully pay the contractor, while the contractor is required to issue receipts as proof of payment.

Kuwait blasts

safety of Kuwait’s diplomatic and consular missions in Iraq.

Meanwhile, Qatar on Monday condemned repeated attacks targeting Kuwait’s consulate in the southern Iraqi city of Basra, saying that such incidents “violate the sanctity” of diplomatic missions.

The targeting of diplomatic missions is a “grave violation,” of international laws and principles, particularly, the 1961 Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, according to a foreign ministry statement.

Doha stands in solidarity with Kuwait and emphasizes the need to implement the necessary measures that ensure the protection of diplomatic missions, it added.

Kuwait issues

Article 4 -

The service provider licensed by the ministry shall comply with the guidelines attached to this decision concerning the consumer order delivery services sector through smart platforms and applications, as approved by the Competition Protection Authority under Decision No. 1/2026 referred to above.

These guidelines shall be considered an integral part of this decision with regard to competition controls and prohibited practices, without prejudice to the service provider’s obligation to comply with the maximum commission and delivery fees stipulated in the regulations attached to this decision.

Article 5 -

Any person who violates the provisions of the articles contained in this decision shall be subject to the penalties and procedures stipulated in Article 15 of the regulations attached to this decision.

Article 6 -

Ministerial Decision No. 10/2026 concerning the issuance of regulations governing restaurant and ready-made food delivery orders is hereby repealed. Any decision or provision that conflicts with the provisions of this decision and its attached regulations shall also be repealed.

Article 7 -

The competent authorities, each within their respective jurisdictions, shall implement this decision, which shall be published in the official gazette and shall enter into force from the date of its issuance.

Kuwait, Saudi Arabia

The meeting reviewed the operation of land border crossings and the movement of goods between the two countries, including the handling capacity of border ports, the number of cargo trucks crossing daily according to customs statistics, and the procedures in place, as well as ways further to develop them in line with growing trade activity.

The two sides also discussed mechanisms to enhance joint coordination and address any obstacles that could affect the smooth flow of land transport without compromising customs and regulatory requirements.

They stressed the importance of maintaining coordination and holding regular meetings to improve the efficiency of operations at land border crossings and serve the interests of the two countries.

Iran proxies

The attacks drew widespread regional and international condemnation. The United Arab Emirates denounced the drone strike targeting Kuwait’s border posts and offshore drilling platform, calling it a blatant violation of Kuwait’s sovereignty and reaffirming its full solidarity with the country. In a separate statement, the UAE also condemned renewed Iranian missile and drone attacks against Bahrain, Kuwait and Jordan, pledging support for all measures aimed at safeguarding their security and stability.

Bahrain likewise condemned the continued Iranian attacks targeting its territory as well as Kuwait, the UAE, Qatar, Oman and Jordan, describing them as a dangerous escalation and a violation of international law, the UN Charter, the Charter of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and UN Security Council Resolution 2817 (2026).

The Bahraini Foreign Ministry reaffirmed the Kingdom’s solidarity with the affected countries, supported their right to defend their sovereignty under Article 51 of the UN Charter and the GCC Joint Defense Agreement, and urged the international community, particularly the UN Security Council, to take firm measures to deter further attacks and ensure accountability.

Egypt also condemned the repeated Iranian attacks on Kuwait, Bahrain, Oman and Jordan, calling them an unacceptable violation of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the four countries and warning that they risk further destabilizing the region.

The Egyptian Foreign Ministry reaffirmed Cairo’s full solidarity with the affected states, rejected any actions that threaten the security of Arab countries, and called for an immediate end to the attacks, respect for international law and renewed efforts to prevent further regional

escalation.

Meanwhile, the United Kingdom, Germany and France jointly condemned Iran’s attacks on commercial shipping in the Strait of Hormuz and on Gulf Cooperation Council member states and Jordan, describing them as reckless and reaffirming the principles of freedom of navigation and respect for territorial sovereignty.

The three countries expressed solidarity with their Gulf and regional partners and called for the swift restoration of international shipping through the Strait of Hormuz, as well as the resumption of the ceasefire and diplomatic negotiations.

In latest development, U.S. President Donald Trump said Monday that the United States is “reinstating” a blockade on Iran in the Strait of Hormuz and will charge ships for safe passage, after another heavy exchange of fire threatened negotiations aimed at ending the war.

He said on social media that Iranian ships will no longer be able to travel through the strait and America would charge a 20% toll on eligible cargo, as the conflict with Iran has intensified after peace talks failed to deliver meaningful progress.

“We are reinstating the THE IRANIAN BLOCKADE, so named because it is only stopping Iran’s ships or customers from entering or leaving,” Trump said online. “All other countries will have fair and open use of the Strait.”

The president said the toll would help cover “any and all costs necessary to do the job of providing safety and security to this very volatile section of the World.”

A fifth of the world’s oil and gas passed through the strait before Iran asserted control over it after the start of the war.

The latest exchange of fire was sparked by an Iranian attack on a container ship on Sunday in the Strait of Hormuz. Iran has asserted control over the critical waterway for international oil and gas since the United States and Israel started the war on Feb. 28.

Iran says it has the right to manage traffic through the strait and potentially charge fees in accordance with an interim peace deal reached last month. The U.S. and others dispute that, citing international law on freedom of navigation, and the American military has tried to establish an alternative route outside of Iranian control.

Iran and the U.S. are nearly halfway through the 60-day period in which they were supposed to negotiate a permanent end to the war and an agreement on Iran’s disputed nuclear program. Instead, a series of attacks over the strait have raised fears of a return to all-out war and further disruption to the global economy.

KGOC targets

These efforts succeeded last year in increasing the flow rate of the Wara reservoir in the northern Wafra field to more than 500 barrels per day.

The sources indicated that KGOC has prepared several potential initiatives to enhance operations and overcome key operational challenges, including field

development, operations, well workers, drilling, maintenance, process engineering, environment, health and safety, and operational excellence.

They concluded that amendments to the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) law would improve the performance of both local and international companies, support their continued development, and positively contribute to the profitability of its subsidiaries.

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McConnell reveals fall led to hospitalization after weeks of silence

US Senator Graham likely died after aorta tear, says medical examiner

WASHINGTON, July 13, (AP): US Senator Lindsey Graham, one of President Donald Trump’s closest allies in Congress who traveled the globe to advocate for a more aggressive US foreign policy, died after a tear in his aorta, according to a preliminary medical examiner finding shared by his office.

The tear in the inner wall of the aorta, called an aortic dissection, was related to the hardening of Graham’s arteries. An official cause of death will be disclosed after toxicological and microscopic testing.

Graham, a prominent South Carolina Republican and former Air Force lawyer who served in Congress for more than three decades, had turned 71 years old just two days before dying on Saturday night. His office had originally said he had suffered from a “brief and sudden illness.”

Trump, who talked to Graham frequently, said he was “like a member of the family. It’s very tough.” He said on NBC’s “Meet the Press” that Graham had called him on Saturday night after returning from a trip to Ukraine and “sounded a little bit tired, but perfect.” The president ordered that flags across the country be flown at half-staff until next Saturday evening.

A noted foreign policy hawk, Graham was one of the most influential figures in Washington on international affairs and he advised Trump on matters such as the Iran war and Russia. On Friday, Graham had announced an agreement with the Trump administration to move forward on a package of Russia sanctions.

As chairman of the Senate Budget Committee, Graham also had a central role during Trump’s second term as Republicans pushed major legislation on party-line votes while holding a narrow 53-47 majority in the chamber.

Under South Carolina law, Republican Gov Henry McMaster will appoint a temporary replacement for Graham, who was seeking a fifth term in November. A new nominee will be selected in a special primary, which is required to be held within weeks of a vacancy. The winner of November’s general election will start a full six-year term in January.

Graham, elected to the Senate in 2002 after serving in the House, long promoted a policy of robust US military interventionism and strong national defense that in later years would put him at odds with the growing isolationist wing of his party.

Over time, Graham became well-



US Sen Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., speaks during a Senate Committee on Appropriations subcommittee hearing on Capitol Hill in Washington on May 20, 2025. (AP)

known for his close ties with Trump, whom the senator briefly ran against for the presidential nomination in 2016.

Their relationship would begin on a rough note, with Graham calling the then-New York businessman “unfit for office.” Graham used a profanity to describe Trump after Trump made disparaging comments about Arizona Republican John McCain, Graham’s best friend in the Senate and a Vietnam War veteran. McCain and Graham, along with Sen. Joe Lieberman, I-Conn., were known as the “Three Amigos” and frequently traveled together to promote their foreign policy views around the globe.

During a campaign rally in South Carolina, Trump read out Graham’s personal cellphone number and continued to belittle him throughout the 2016 race as Graham made it clear he would not support Trump.

Graham, however, shifted significantly once Trump won the White House and emerged as one of Trump’s top allies - speaking with him frequently and becoming a regular presence on the golf course alongside the president - even as McCain remained a critic.

Graham was a prominent defender of Trump during the president’s two first-term impeachments - a reversal from Graham’s role as a House prosecutor during Democratic President Bill Clinton’s impeachment in 1998, when he urged senators not to make up their minds before listening to all of the arguments. Both Trump and Clinton were eventually acquitted.

Also:

WASHINGTON: US Sen Mitch McConnell on Sunday revealed for the first time that a fall led to his hospitalization, breaking the silence about his condition after weeks of mounting speculation about the Kentucky Republican’s health.

McConnell, 84, said in a statement that he was “briefly unconscious” around the time he was first taken to the hospital and has undergone a battery of tests to try and determine what led to his fall. He said he was also treated for mild pneumonia and has been moved to a rehabilitation facility.

Philadelphia area digs out from damage left by series of storms

PHILADELPHIA, July 13, (AP): Residents in some Philadelphia neighborhoods and surrounding counties were cleaning up Sunday from widespread damage caused by a line of severe, short thunderstorms that passed through.

The storms, called microbursts, passed through Saturday afternoon, downing trees and power lines, flooding a handful of streets and causing structural damage. A building that collapsed in a West Philadelphia neighborhood threw bricks into the street, crushing cars and blocking trolley tracks.

The National Weather Service said at least four of the microbursts brought straight-line wind gusts of 60 to 70 mph (97 to 113 kph) to Montgomery and Philadelphia counties between about 2:30 and 3:15 p.m. Saturday. Despite speculation that the damage - including part of a roof torn off a Philadelphia Housing Authority apartment building - had been caused by a tornado, NWS officials confirmed the straight-line winds were to blame.

The microbursts in Philadelphia were among a range of severe weather across the US this weekend that included heatwaves, flooding and wildfires.

In a news release early Sunday from Philadelphia officials, Mayor **Cherelle Parker** said she had toured the damage in multiple neighborhoods in her city throughout Saturday afternoon and evening. The city issued a Declaration of Disaster Emergency related to the storms.

“Every level of government is working together today, tonight, and for as long as it takes to respond to this storm, restore services, and help our residents recover. That is our commitment,” she said.

Philadelphia Housing Authority officials said 11 residential units were affected by the roof and water damage at its apartment building. All residents were safely evacuated to temporary shelter before being relocated to a nearby hotel.



Parker

Trump to let bipartisan housing bill become law without signing in protest over GOP voter ID law

WASHINGTON, July 13, (AP): US President Donald Trump will let the bipartisan housing bill approved by Congress become law without his signature, saying Friday that he was refusing to put his name on it because of the little progress made in passing a strict voter ID bill that he has been pushing.

“I will not sign the Housing Bill, which has been fully approved by Congress and sent to the White House, in PROTEST over the fact that the United States Senate is not capable of passing THE SAVE AMERICA ACT,” Trump posted on social media.

Trump had 10 days until the Friday deadline to sign the bill, issue a veto, or allow the measure to take effect without his signature. He has chosen to let the measure become law without his express approval, undercutting his administration’s claims that he considers it a priority to combat inflation.

Trump’s rejection of the bipartisan housing legislation exacerbates tensions with his own party in a mid-term election year and cuts short



President Donald Trump, (second right), walks at the North Portico of the White House on July 11 in Washington. (AP)

their efforts to address a key voter concern about rising costs. His post comes more than a week after he canceled plans to sign the bipartisan legislation, announcing he was using it as leverage in his push for a strict voter ID bill.

The 21st Century ROAD to Housing Act aims to lower the cost of housing and spur more home construction. It’s the broadest federal effort in decades to address America’s housing affordability problems, as state and local regulations have made it difficult

to build in many of the communities that are also sources of job growth and economic opportunity. White House economists estimated earlier this year a national shortage of 10 million homes and the bill could help to close a portion of that gap.

But Trump called the bill “a yawn” and “so unimportant” compared to legislation that would require proof of citizenship for all voters.

He surprised Republican lawmakers on June 24, when, shortly before a planned signing ceremony at the Capitol, he announced he would not approve the bill until lawmakers first passed the voting legislation.

That bill, the SAVE America Act, doesn’t have enough Republican support to pass.

House Speaker Mike Johnson, R-La., said after submitting the housing bill to the White House that he told Trump he should get the “fat-test black marker you have, and sign your name really big on that.”

“I hope he does sign it,” Johnson told reporters at the time. “If he doesn’t, it’s still law. We’ll still celebrate it.”

Zelenskyy seeks European air defense support for Ukraine at Paris meeting

PARIS, July 13, (AP): Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy went to Paris on Monday to ask two dozen European leaders for help developing measures against Russia’s ballistic missiles, which have pummeled his country’s power grid in the more than four years since Moscow launched a full-scale invasion.

European foreign ministers were also meeting separately in Brussels where they were expected to discuss Ukraine’s needs and Russia’s threats to the continent.

“Our top priority is anti-ballistic defense,” Zelenskyy said on social media after arriving in Paris.

Zelenskyy is keen to accelerate plans for jointly developing with European countries anti-ballistic air defenses ahead of the winter, when Russia usually intensifies its attacks to deny Ukrainians electricity, heat and water.

Ukrainian officials will present a proposed Anti-Ballistic Program and meet with government leaders, national security advisers and defense companies who might take part, Zelenskyy said.

US President Donald Trump’s pledge last week to give Ukraine a license to produce Patriot air defense systems could mark a major breakthrough for Kyiv. However, experts and Ukrainian officials warn that turning the idea into real weapons would probably take years. It was not clear how quickly a new European system could be built.

Zelenskyy said he would also meet with French President Emmanuel Macron, while the Ukrainian military will take part in the annual parade marking Bastille Day, France’s national holiday.

Both Kyiv and its European backers want to press home Ukraine’s recent successes and compel Russian President Vladimir Putin to negotiate an end to the fighting, although Moscow has shown no willingness to compromise despite a peace effort by the Trump administration.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Moscow will closely follow the Paris meeting but dismissed its aspirations.

“This is a coalition of warmongers,” Peskov said. “They are driven by the profound delusion that it’s possible to inflict a strategic defeat on our country, so this is a coalition of the deluded, a coalition of those who incite the war.”

Ukraine’s advances in drone technology have given it an edge in recent months, analysts and Western officials say. Its strikes on supply routes



Rescue workers try to put out a fire of a residential building burning after a Russian drone attack on Zaporizhzhia, Ukraine on July 12. (AP)

behind the front line have robbed the Russian army of momentum on the battlefield and made its progress slow and costly, they say.

Ukrainian forces struck 105 Russian vessels in the Sea of Azov next to the Crimean Peninsula between July 6-13, said Robert Brovi, commander of Ukraine’s Unmanned Sys-

tems Forces.

The vessels included tankers, dry cargo ships, a ferry and tugboats, Brovi said on the Telegram messaging app.

The campaign is part of a broader Ukrainian effort to isolate the Crimean Peninsula, which is enduring its worst fuel crisis since it was illegally annexed by Moscow in 2014, and disrupt Russian logistics. Crimea is a key rear base for Russian forces occupying parts of southern Ukraine.

It was not possible to independently verify the claims, and Russian officials made no immediate comment.

The Paris meeting of the so-called Coalition of the Willing, which brings together more than 30 countries supporting Ukraine, was expected to include about 25 heads of state and government.

The notably high number of leaders appeared to be a demonstration of long-term commitment to Ukraine and a warning to Russia, as Moscow tests Europe’s resilience. French Foreign Minister Jean-Noël Barrot said he would summon the Russian ambassador to France and impose sanctions against Russian hackers.

Ukraine’s PM steps down as prez announces govt reshuffle

KYIV, Ukraine, July 13, (AP): Ukrainian Prime Minister **Yulia Svyrydenko** stepped down on Sunday as President Volodymyr Zelenskyy announced fresh changes to Ukraine’s government, saying he had offered a new and important position to the former premier.

Zelenskyy, who has remained in office under martial law because wartime elections are prohibited, has periodically reshuffled his government in an effort to bring fresh momentum to his administration.

Svyrydenko, who has served as Ukraine’s economy minister, was named prime minister in July 2025 at the age of 39 after playing a lead role in securing a mineral agreement between Ukraine and the United States, seen as an important way of tying US interests to Ukraine’s security.

In a statement on social media, Svyrydenko said she was “proud to have had the honor of leading the government during one of the most difficult periods in Ukraine’s modern history.” She also said she had discussed “next steps” with Zelenskyy, but did not provide further details.

“I remain ready to serve the Ukrainian state and carry out every task aimed at strengthening Ukraine’s position, defending our national interests and bringing a just peace closer,” she said.

Zelenskyy announced her resignation in a post saying that Ukraine was “changing its political strategy.” He also said he had offered Svyrydenko the opportunity to lead “a new, important area” in Ukraine’s relations with a key international partner.

“Each priority area of foreign policy will be assigned to a specific person with substantial experience who is capable of implementing what we agree on at the leaders’ level and what the Ukrainian people expect,” Zelenskyy said, describing the impending reshuffle.



Svyrydenko



Fire trucks are parked near the scene of a wildfire in the region of the historic Fontainebleau forest, about 60 km (37 miles) south of Paris, France on July 13. (AP)

Fire in Fontainebleau forest near Paris triggers evacuations

A fire raging in the historic and much-visited Fontainebleau forest south of Paris on Monday prompted evacuations of some residential neighborhoods and disrupted train and highway traffic.

It was among several wildfires in western Europe as the region bakes under its third red-alert heat wave this year.

In Spain, 10 people were still unaccounted for Monday from a fire that ripped through a remote southern expat community last week, killing 13 people in one of the country’s deadliest blazes.

The Fontainebleau forest fire is unusual for its proximity to the French capital - about 70 kilometers (42 miles). The region

hosts the Fontainebleau Chateau favored by Napoleon and is popular with visitors from Paris and beyond.

Two water-dumping planes were deployed over the area along with hundreds of firefighters, regional fire service spokesperson Paul Laurain told public broadcaster France-Info. (AP)

UK and EU hit 24 Russian individuals, entities with joint cyber sanctions

LONDON, July 13, (Agencies): The UK and the EU said on Monday that they issued joint sanctions against 24 Russian individuals and entities for “orchestrating cyber-attacks, interfering in elections and spreading malicious anti-Ukraine narratives across Europe.”

A statement by the Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Office (FCDO) said that the sanctioned individuals and entities were also behind “destructive cyber and hybrid operations including cyber criminals involved in proxy networks linked to the Russian Intelligence Services (RIS).”

The FCDO affirmed that the UK and EU member states have attributed “the attack on Poland’s energy grid to Russia’s FSB Centre 16,” adding, “This reckless attack failed but could have caused 500,000 citizens to lose electricity in the depths of winter.”

The move targeted nine people and four entities accused of links to an online spying network that the



European Union foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas, (left), speaks with Cypriot Foreign Minister Constantinos Kombos, (center), during a round table meeting of EU foreign ministers in Brussels on July 13. (AP)

EU said has targeted governments and carried out sabotage operations against critical infrastructure like heating and power plants since 2010.

The European Council said in a

statement that those targeted “contribute to Russia’s efforts to destabilize the EU, its member states and international partners.” The espionage and attacks have taken place in at least nine countries.

Asia

S.Korea court sentences Yoon to 2 yrs over political funding: A South Korean court on Monday sentenced ousted President Yoon Suk Yeol to two years in prison for illegally receiving manipulated opinion polls for free from a political broker, potentially helping him secure his party’s 2022 presidential bid, in return for political favors.

The case is one of seven trials facing the former conservative president, who was impeached last year following a brief imposition of martial law in December 2024 that triggered South Korea’s biggest political crisis in decades.

Last week, the country’s Supreme Court upheld a seven-year prison sentence against Yoon, his first case to reach the country’s highest court since the ouster.

Yoon has appealed some convictions, including a February life sentence for the most serious rebellion charge stemming from his botched power grab. His lawyers said they would also appeal Monday’s ruling, calling it based on insufficient evidence.

The Seoul Central District Court said Monday Yoon violated the country’s political funding law. The political broker Myung Tae-kyun was handed 1 1/2 years in prison for the same charge.

Myung was accused of conducting 14 free opinion polls for Yoon between June and October 2021 using manipulated data, potentially helping Yoon win his party’s presidential nomination before his election win in March 2022. (AP)

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13 killed in Indonesia vehicle collision: A pickup truck carrying wedding guests was crushed between two trucks on a busy highway on Indonesia’s main island of Java, killing 13 people and injuring five others, police said Monday.

The crash occurred Sunday afternoon on the northern coastal highway near Kiajaran Kulon village of Indramayu regency, as the group was returning home after attending a wedding in neighboring Parean village, local traffic police chief Undang Syarif Hidayat said.

He said the victims were traveling in an open-bed pickup truck when the vehicle slowed and stopped near a median opening to make a U-turn on the highway when it was struck from behind by a wing-box truck traveling in the same direction.



The wreckage of vehicles involved in a crash are parked on the side of a road in Indramayu, Indonesia on July 13. (AP)

“The impact pushed the pickup into the opposite lane where it was hit again by another truck,” Hidayat said, “The powerful collision hurled more than a dozen people from the pickup truck onto the highway.”

Five survivors remained hospitalized with injuries ranging from minor to serious, police said. Authorities are investigating the cause of the crash.

Deadly traffic accidents are common in Indonesia, where overloaded vehicles, inadequate road safety measures and poor compliance with traffic regulations frequently contribute to fatal crashes. (AP)

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Singapore court postpones teen’s straw-licking case to July 30: A court case involving a French teen charged for filming himself licking a straw from a vending machine and then putting it back was postponed Monday as prosecutors sought to clarify if he could continue his studies if convicted.

Didier Gaspard Owen Maximilien, 19, was widely expected to plead guilty to charges of mischief and public nuisance. Proceedings were halted

after prosecutors sought more time to check if the teen’s student pass will be revoked in the event of a conviction.

The court adjourned the case until July 30.

Maximilien allegedly committed the offense at a shopping mall on March 12 and was charged April 24 after the video he posted on social media spread rapidly. He continued to study at a business school in Singapore while out on bail.

Mischief carries a penalty of up to two years in prison or a fine, or both, while public nuisance is less severe with up to three months in prison or a fine, or both.

Ilooz, the company operating the juice vending machine, had filed a police report over the prank. It had sanitized the dispenser while replacing all 500 straws in the machine. It has said it would upgrade its machines to include measures such as individually packaged straws and straw compartments that unlock only after the transaction is completed.

Singapore, a small, densely populated city-state, tightly regulates public behavior and cleanliness. This includes restrictions like limits on chewing gum and strong penalties for littering and vandalism. (AP)

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Bodies of Vietnam boat victims being flown to India: The bodies of 15 Indian tourists who were killed when a speedboat capsized off southern Vietnam last week were being returned home Monday.

The speedboat was carrying 32 Indian tourists and four Vietnamese crew members when it overturned near the shore Saturday afternoon, shortly after leaving Hon May Rut Ngoai island near Phu Quoc, Vietnam’s largest island, authorities said.

The boat’s captain, Nguyen Hong Hai, 57, is under investigation for alleged violations of waterway transport safety regulations, state media reported.

The flight carrying the remains from Ho Chi Minh City would arrive in Mumbai late Monday, the Indian Embassy in Hanoi said on social media. It said the home states were asked to coordinate further travel. Ten of the dead were from Tamil Nadu state, three from Andhra Pradesh and two from Kerala.

Lava International, a smartphone and consumer electronics manufacturer, based in Noida city in Uttar Pradesh, said the group was on a company trip for its employees, distributors and retail partners. (AP)

Most of deaths were caused by smoke inhalation: Gov Chadchart

Bangkok music bar inferno kills 27, leaves 25 critical

BANGKOK, July 13, (AP): A huge fire tore through a music bar in Bangkok overnight, killing at least 27 people and leaving 25 hospitalized in critical condition on Monday as investigations began into the Thai capital’s deadliest blaze in 17 years.

Bangkok city officials said the fire at the bar in a northern part of the Thai capital broke out shortly before midnight Sunday, and it took about half an hour for firefighters to bring it under control.

The bar featured live music and claimed to accommodate as many as 600 customers. It was not clear how many were there on Sunday night.

According to Bangkok’s Erawan emergency services center, the number of injured was 73, with 25 in critical condition. The Bangkok city government Monday evening said there were 28 dead, one more than Erawan’s tally.

Bangkok Gov. Chadchart Sittipunt said most of the deaths were caused by smoke inhalation.

The site had been cordoned off by daybreak Monday as dozens of Thai forensic officers combed for clues about what caused the fire. Associated Press journalists could see the bar’s street-facing windows had been blown out and debris littering the sidewalk, including charred television sets, speakers and an electric guitar.

The scale of the devastation inside was visible through the shattered windows, with burned-out tables still holding empty beer bottles.

Thai national police chief Kittharath Punpetch said most of the dead were found trapped in windowless bathrooms near one of the rear exits of the bar, where they may have sheltered to escape the flames in the hall.

He said the exit had not been used, and people may have been obstructed from reaching it by a table set up in the hall to sell candy, or because it was too dark to find it.

Access to another exit near the kitchen might also have been narrowed by shelving units and lockers, said Kittharath, who visited the scene Monday morning. There were signs that at least some of the exit doors might have been



In this handout photo released by Bangkok Metropolitan Administration, forensic police officers inspect the site of a fire in Bangkok, Thailand on July 13. (AP)

locked shut, he added.

Investigators are focusing on the ceiling above the performance stage, where they found materials that may have been used as decorative elements, he said. Police will examine whether flammable materials were used in the interior and how electrical wiring was installed across the ceiling.

Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul told reporters that a musician who was performing at the bar told him that he saw smoke coming out of a circuit

breaker near the stage before the power went out, then an explosion was heard and thick smoke quickly filled the place.

Video posted on social media had shown people fleeing as flames shot out the single-story building and black smoke billowed into the sky.

Several Buddhist monks visited the site Monday morning to pray for the victims, while nurses handed out face masks to people nearby to help protect them from smoke and lingering fumes from the burned-out building.

A registration spot was set up to gather information from relatives coming to the scene looking for their loved ones.

Singer Sukanya Wongwongwai said she was performing nearby when she heard news of the fire and rushed to the scene because several of her band-mates were performing at the bar. She said one of them died, three were hospitalized and one hadn’t been located. Her band later announced on Facebook that the missing member was also found hospitalized.

“From what I heard from people who were inside, when the fire started everything went dark. The power was out and there was smoke everywhere, so they couldn’t locate other people,” she said.

A statement from the bar posted on Facebook expressed apologies and condolences and said it was fully cooperating with investigators. It said the bar’s owner sustained serious injuries in the fire and was in a hospital intensive care unit.

Distressed family members gathered at Bangkok’s Institute of Forensic Medicine in the afternoon to identify the bodies of the fire’s victims .

Through tears, a woman who asked to be identified only by her nickname, Nid, said she had just identified the bodies of her daughter and son-in-law.

She described her son-in-law as “a very good person, he worked very hard to earn money,” and said her daughter had just graduated.

“She recently started working as a computer teacher. And now they’re dead,” she said.



Malawian migrants stand in queue for deportation at a temporary center in Durban, South Africa on June 18. (AP)

South Africa processes over 53,000 foreigners for deportation, repatriation

JOHANNESBURG, July 13, (Xinhua): South Africa has processed more than 53,000 foreign nationals for deportation or government-facilitated repatriation as it steps up efforts to manage irregular migration, a senior official said Sunday.

Speaking at a media briefing of the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Migration in Pretoria, Minister of Justice and Constitutional Development Mmamoloko Kubayi said that as of Saturday, 53,449 foreign nationals had been processed for deportation or repatriation.

Malawians accounted for more than 80 percent of the total, followed by Zimbabweans and Mozambicans, said Kubayi, who chairs the committee.

Repatriations to countries outside the Southern African Development Community totaled 2,615, comprising 1,159 Nigerians, 939 Ugandans, 431 Kenyans and 86 nationals of the Republic of the Congo, she said.

Kubayi said the South African government, through various departments, municipalities and public entities, funded most of the repatriation and deportation operations, including transport, security and accommodation costs.

She said the temporary measures introduced to accelerate repatriations were costly and were never intended to be permanent.

More than 20,000 Malawian, Zimbabwean and Mozambican nationals have been repatriated through the Temporary Repatriation Processing Center in Musina, Limpopo Province, according to the committee.

The center was established to speed up the verification and processing of undocumented foreign nationals, facilitate their clearance through the Beitbridge border post and reduce pressure on the Lindela Repatriation Center in

Gauteng Province.

Kubayi said the number of people repatriated declined from 4,805 on July 5 to 1,139 on Saturday, prompting discussions on gradually scaling down temporary resources.

She stressed that the reduction would not disrupt ongoing deportation and repatriation operations, as the government remained legally obliged to deport foreign nationals found to have violated the Immigration Act.

Kubayi also warned members of the public against conducting door-to-door searches, checking immigration documents or attempting to remove foreign nationals from communities.

“The management of immigration, border management, deportation and facilitated repatriation is the exclusive responsibility of the state,” she said.

Also:

YAOUNDE: All 15 crew members aboard a cargo ship were rescued early Sunday after it collided with another vessel near **Douala, Cameroon’s** main port city, authorities said.

According to the Port Authority of Douala, the collision involved the outbound MV Sea Honor and the inbound MV Black Rhino.

Rescue teams responded swiftly, evacuating all crew members from the MV Black Rhino before launching operations to clear the shipping channel.

The MV Sea Honor was escorted to the anchorage area, while the MV Black Rhino was intentionally run aground to ensure the safety of the navigation channel. Authorities confirmed later on Sunday that the channel was fully reopened.

6 dead, 7 injured after car overturns into open-air market in Chile

SANTIAGO, July 13, (Agencies): At least six people were killed and seven others injured Sunday morning after a car overturned into an open-air market in the coastal city of Vina del Mar in central Chile, local authorities said.

The incident occurred in the popular Gomez Carreno area. Manuel Millones, presidential delegate for the Valparaiso region, told reporters that the driver had been arrested while an investigation was under way.

Authorities are seeking to determine “whether the driver was under the influence of alcohol or whether it was due to negligence or a driving error,” he added. Enditem

An off-duty member of the Chilean navy driving a private vehicle crashed into an open-air market in the coastal city of Vina del Mar Sunday.

Footage circulating on social media from a residential security camera appears to capture the moment the car plunges into the stalls, while other videos show the driver being rushed to a nearby police car, as angry bystanders run after him shouting.

Officials at Gustavo Fricke Hospital said five injured people - including two babies - were admitted with various traumatic injuries that were not in life-threatening. Police, firefighters and paramedics treated numerous people at the scene. Two other injured people



Police inspect a car after it struck a crowd at an open-air market in Vina del Mar, Chile on July 12. (AP)

were discharged.

“At this stage of the evaluation, they are stable and out of life-threatening danger, but of course they are still awaiting the completion of all the examinations required in these cases,” Denise Cataldo, the hospital’s deputy director, said.

The off-duty member of the navy - the only person detained in connection with the incident - tested negative in a breathalyzer test, Interior Undersecretary Máximo Pavez said.

Col. Jorge Guaita, police prefect for Vina del Mar, told reporters the driver says he doesn’t remember anything and that the cause for the incident is yet to be determined.

“Witness statements from people who saw the crash indicate that the vehicle was traveling in the correct direction of traffic, at high speed,” Guaita said, adding that when the vehicle mounted the sidewalk, it spun around.

Lat/Am

Barbados PM rejects claim by ex-minister: Barbados Prime Minister Mia Mottley has described as “asinine” a suggestion by a UK lawmaker that Britain’s former colonies should repay it for its historic investment in them.

“I cannot believe we are being asked to respond to the suggestion that the descendants of the enslaved should pay for the machinery that oppressed them,” Mottley wrote. “The Caribbean does not owe Britain for slavery, for colonial extraction, or for laws that treated African people as chattel. We are not asking for charity. We are asking for justice, and history itself has already told the truth.”

She was speaking after Suella Braverman - a former British Home Secretary who is now a member of the anti-immigration Reform UK party - wrote in a post on X on July 3 that the British Empire “did so much good for the world.” Braverman was writing in response to another parliamentarian who noted that Jamaica planned to lodge a formal petition for reparations later this year. (AP)

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Court on conflict with FARC in limbo: A decade after the Colombian government signed a historic peace accord with a now-defunct rebel group, the tribunal handling crimes related to the conflict faces



Special Jurisdiction for Peace (SJP) President Judge Alejandro Ramelli Arteaga gives an interview in Bogota, Colombia on July 1, 2025. (AP)

an uncertain future after the country’s president-elect vowed to dismantle it.

Known as the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, or SJP, the court - much like the peace deal with the rebels of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or FARC - has long divided the country.

Colombia’s President-elect Abelardo de la Espriella, who has been endorsed by US President Donald Trump, has described the tribunal as a “failed” court. But analysts and legal experts say dismantling it will not be easy because of constitutional and international safeguards. (AP)

What supports GCC banks’ resilience to geopolitical instability?

By S&P Global Ratings

The Middle East war has affected the operating environment for financial institutions across the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, disrupting their positive performance trajectory from the past few years. Despite the memorandum of understanding that the U.S. and Iran have signed, we think significant uncertainty will linger until the end of 2026, with potential disruptions to energy and shipping flows through the Strait of Hormuz and persistent downside risks.

We expect that the war will translate into slower growth, weaker profitability, and deteriorating asset quality indicators for GCC banks. At the same time, we think the banks will be able to absorb that; their strong capital buffers, cyclically low problem loans, and existing provisioning buffers (as well as limited exposure to directly affected sectors and regulatory forbearance measures) will help.

However, in a scenario where there’s a significant reescalation of the war, there could be a substantial drag on economic activity and investor sentiment, resulting in more severe implications for GCC banks. Still, even in that scenario, we expect that the banks would be able to withstand the significant level of stress that could materialize through capital outflows or severe asset quality deterioration (though banks in Bahrain and Qatar may require support).

That’s part of the reason why nearly all of the outlooks on our GCC bank ratings are stable; the only bank with a negative rating outlook has had that outlook since before the war.

Here, S&P Global Ratings presents frequently asked questions from investors about GCC banks and the Middle East war.

Frequently Asked Questions

How has the war in the Middle East affected growth prospects for GCC banks?

Our updated 2026 forecast for GCC banks sees 5%-6% average credit growth, with stronger, high-single-digit credit growth rates in the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia. We also expect real GDP in the GCC region to fall 2%, on average, in 2026—but in Saudi Arabia, Oman, and the UAE, we expect growth to remain positive (see chart 1).

Domestic private-sector credit growth across the region remained strong in the first quarter—the annualized growth rate was 8% at the end of March, since it accounted for the impact from just one month of the war. Some countries, though, including Qatar and Saudi Arabia, saw more significant slowdowns than the others from their 2025 growth rates.

Saudi Arabia: The conflict is arguably affecting Saudi Arabia less than it is other GCC countries, thanks to Saudi Arabia’s East-West pipeline for oil exports (which permits exports from the port of Yanbu), as well as a large domestic market. The Saudi economy, at the same time, is dealing with the recalibration of its megaprojects, with investments shifting toward finding new oil and petrochemical export routes as well as investments in security. Mortgage growth will likely remain muted because of still high rates and weaker economic sentiment.

United Arab Emirates: The war is affecting the tourism, manufacturing, trade, construction, and real estate sectors, which together account for about 45% of the UAE’s real GDP. However, several government projects remain on track, and the likely expansion in oil production will help. This means that lending growth will also remain relatively strong in the current context.

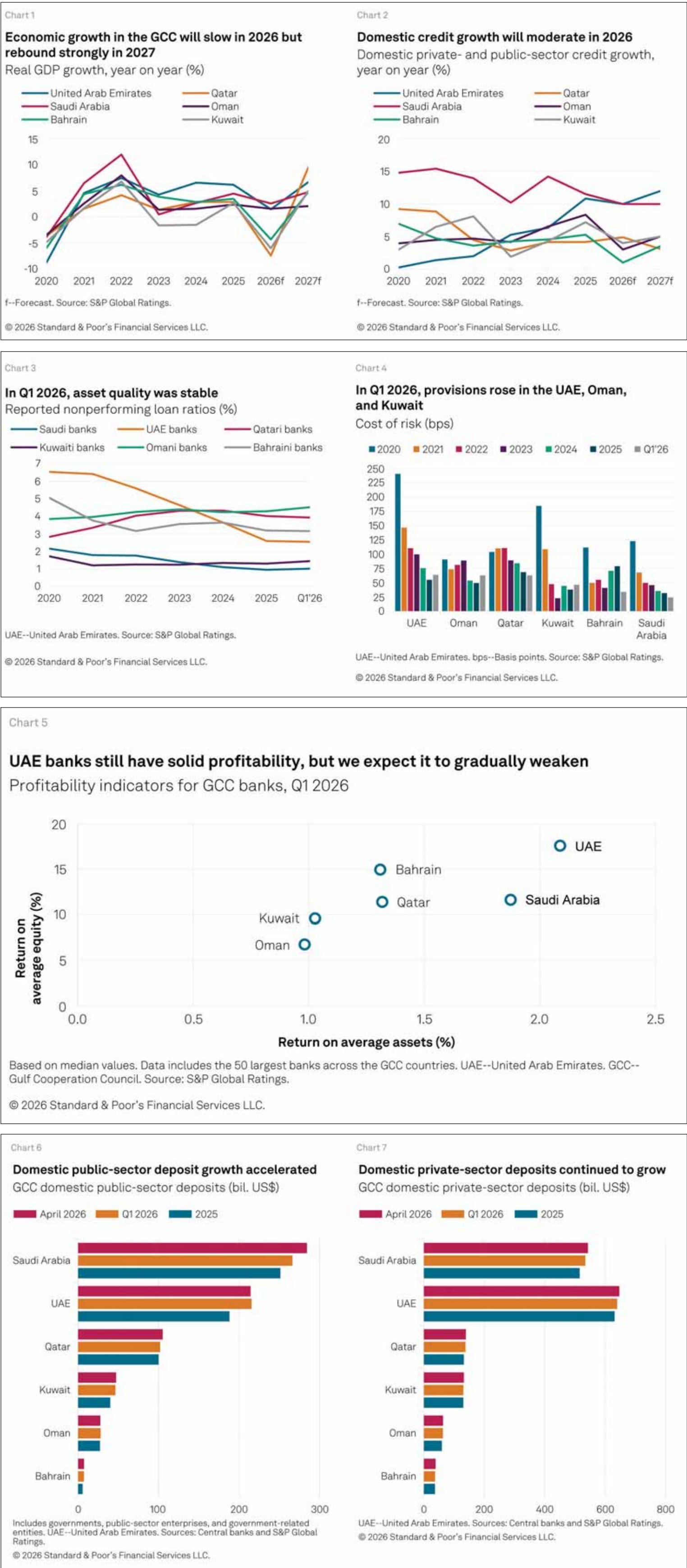
Oman: The war is having less of an effect on the Omani economy relative to GCC neighbors, although growth in the tourism and hospitality sectors has been dampened. A slowdown in the non-oil economy will curb lending opportunities, and higher inflation is likely to weigh on household spending capacity.

Kuwait, Qatar, and Bahrain: We expect economic contraction in Kuwait, Qatar, and Bahrain because of the major disruption in oil and gas exports since March—which will temper credit demand. In addition, the slowdown in hospitality and real estate demand in Qatar will weigh on private-sector credit, which continues to suffer from overcapacity from previous investment cycles.

Is asset quality at GCC banks showing signs of weakening?

GCC banks’ average nonperforming loans (NPL) ratio has remained broadly stable, at 2.6% as of March 31, 2026 (see chart 3). At the same time, over half of the top 50 banks reported an increase in the cost of risk—particularly UAE banks, which have stepped up provisioning to strengthen credit buffers. We anticipate that the cost of risk will increase by about 20 basis points (bps), on average, in 2026. That’s because GCC exposures to sectors directly affected by the conflict—tourism, hospitality, and shipping, among others—are limited.

Banks’ exposure to the real estate and construction sectors is a source of risk, particularly in the context of pro-



the past few years supported their net interest margin, the highest in the region, at about 2.7%-2.8% at the end of March.

We don’t think the decline in profitability is likely to weaken GCC banks’ financial resilience, given their robust capital buffers. The average Tier 1 capital ratio for the top 50 banks in the region was about 17% at the end of March 2026.

Are funding pressures building for GCC banks?

Funding has remained resilient, but risks persist. Domestic deposit growth in the GCC outpaced credit growth in the first quarter, particularly in Saudi Arabia. Total domestic deposits rose by about 4.2% in the GCC region (16.9%, annualized), slightly accelerating to 6.2% year to date through the end of April. Private-sector deposit growth remained robust at 11.6% (annualized) through April 2026, while public-sector deposits accelerated to 36% (annualized), led by the UAE, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia. Deposit inflows from governments and public entities in GCC countries added about US\$53 billion in the first three months of 2026 and another US\$21 billion in April. At the same time, most of the region’s 50 largest banks reduced their reliance on interbank funding to reduce their funding costs.

Banks have also maintained an adequate buffer of liquidity, with liquid assets—typically placements with the central bank and highly rated fixed-income investments—accounting for about 20% of their balance sheets.

The risk of external funding outflows remains key in a downside scenario—particularly for Bahraini and Qatari banks, given their high reliance on external debt.

What does our downside scenario look like for GCC banks?

Our downside scenario for GCC banks focuses on two key risk channels:

- The potential for sovereign downgrades across the region, and
 - A prolonged disruption in the movement of exports through the Strait of Hormuz (which would affect investor sentiment and the operating environment), posing increased risks to external and domestic funding, as well as asset quality.
- In a hypothetical downside scenario involving one-notch downgrades of GCC sovereigns, we could lower 43% of our ratings on GCC banks. That’s because our bank ratings include, on average, two or three notches for government support—either because of the banks’ systemic importance or because we consider them to be government-related entities. In this scenario, we could downgrade a third of these banks because we assume there would be reduced government capacity to support banking systems. We could downgrade another 10% of these banks because of the sovereign rating cap on banks (even though these banks could still have higher intrinsic credit quality).

The outlooks on our GCC sovereign ratings are stable (except for the outlook on our rating on the Emirate of Sharjah, which is negative for idiosyncratic reasons). We factor in the strong fiscal and external positions of the region’s wealthy governments and, for Bahrain, the continued support from other GCC countries.

In a downside scenario marked by a reescalation of the war, we expect investor anxiety to increase, and we foresee some capital outflows. Assuming a withdrawal of 50% of bank external funding and 30% of nonbank external funding, we estimate support needs of about US\$1.2 billion in Bahrain and US\$5.8 billion in Qatar. GCC support for Bahrain remains one of our core assumptions, while the funding gap for Qatari banks appears to be manageable given their history of backing by a wealthy sovereign.

The banking systems in Kuwait and the UAE have ample external liquidity to withstand such levels of stress, while Omani banks also remain in a moderate net-external-asset position. Saudi banks are also able to withstand the shock thanks to their external liquid assets and despite the continued buildup of external debt.

On the domestic side, existing liquidity buffers would largely absorb a 20% deposit outflow (equal to US\$313 billion as of March 31, 2026); those buffers include US\$317 billion in central bank reserves. Combined with other liquid domestic assets, total liquidity buffers would amount to US\$650 billion, by our estimation, after haircuts.

Asset quality deterioration, in our stress scenario, would be the main source of pressure. Additional provisions would exceed earnings capacity, turning approximately US\$69 billion in annualized profits at the end of March into losses of over US\$40 billion and reducing Tier 1 ratios by 200-250 bps. This assumes severe stress with respect to nonperforming loans—we use the higher of a 50% increase in the NPL ratio or an NPL ratio of 7%.

However, in this scenario, we expect banks to use the regulatory forbearance measures implemented after the start of the war more actively.

longed geopolitical instability. This exposure is the highest in Qatar (31% of total credit at the end of March), with the exposure in Kuwait at 25%, Saudi Arabia at 16%, and Bahrain at 12%. UAE banks have been consistently reducing their exposure—it was 13% on March 31, 2026, compared with 21% at year-end 2020. Regulatory forbearance measures could help—although for now, their use appears to

be limited.

We don’t expect banks’ retail exposure to contribute significantly to NPLs. These are primarily geared toward nationals of the GCC countries with relatively safe employment situations. In some countries where the population is dominated by expats, job losses could mean additional NPL flows, but we think they would be small.

How is regional instability shaping prospects for GCC banks’ profitability?

We expect a slight decline in GCC banks’ profitability in 2026-2027. A higher cost of risk and slower credit expansion will be the key contributors, though stable interest rates and improving efficiency will help. Despite rate declines over the past couple of years, time deposits still

represent a little over 50% of customer deposits, with the exception of the UAE and Oman.

Furthermore, larger domestic economies and faster growth have supported the profitability of banks in the UAE and Saudi Arabia, resulting in better operating efficiency in the regional context. A relatively lower cost of funding and consistent reductions in the cost of risk over

‘Fly now, pay later’

Kuwait Airways partners with Taly to launch interest-free installment payment service



KUNA photos

Kuwait Airways Acting CEO Abdulwahab Al-Shatti and Tally CEO and co-founder Bader Al-Bader during the partnership agreement signing.

KUWAIT CITY, July 13, (KUNA): Kuwait Airways signed a strategic partnership agreement with Taly, a buy-now-pay-later (BNPL) service provider, to offer passengers a flexible payment solution allowing them to pay for airline tickets in four equal interest-free installments starting August 1.

Acting Chief Executive Officer of Kuwait Airways Abdulwahab Al-Shatti told KUNA that the agreement will enable customers to use the deferred payment service when purchasing airline tickets, buying Oasis Club miles, and booking Kuwait Airways Holidays and other related services.

Al-Shatti said the service will initially be available

through Kuwait Airways’ sales offices and its call center (171), adding that it will later be introduced through the airline’s official website and mobile application during the second phase of implementation.

He noted that the partnership, the first of its kind between Kuwait Airways and Taly, reflects the national carrier’s commitment to enhancing its digital services and providing innovative payment solutions that meet customers’ expectations while improving the travel experience from the moment of booking.

Al-Shatti added that the agreement forms part of the airline’s strategy to advance digital transformation and introduce innovative solutions that enhance customer ex-

perience, stressing that Kuwait Airways continues to roll out new electronic services in line with the latest developments in the aviation sector.

He said the airline remains committed to offering flexible and secure payment options throughout the customer journey, from booking to arrival, noting that the deferred payment service represents a valuable addition to its digital services by simplifying booking procedures and providing more diverse payment options in line with international best practices.

In turn, Taly Chief Executive Officer and Co-founder Bader Al-Bader said the partnership marks an important milestone in the company’s expansion strategy and its

efforts to provide flexible digital financial solutions that meet customers’ needs.

He noted that Taly became the first Kuwaiti buy-now-pay-later company to join the Central Bank of Kuwait’s regulatory sandbox in 2022 before obtaining its official license from the central bank in 2025, reflecting the company’s commitment to the highest standards of compliance and governance.

Al-Bader added that the partnership underscores Kuwait Airways’ commitment to adopting the latest digital solutions and collaborating with leading national companies to enhance service quality and customer experience in line with its strategy of innovation and value creation for travelers.

Warba, KES sign MoU to strengthen economic awareness

KUWAIT CITY, July 13: Warba Bank and the Kuwait Economic Society (KES) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to establish a one-year strategic partnership. The collaboration aims to support economic awareness and knowledge development through joint initiatives that combine banking expertise with academic research to serve the community.

The agreement aligns with Warba Bank’s corporate social responsibility (CSR) strategy to expand its partnerships with civil society organizations and support national talent development.

Support for Economic Research and Activities:

Under the MoU, Warba Bank will provide annual sponsorship for a range of KES activities, including seminars, conferences, training courses, and economic reports. The partnership focuses on promoting economic dialogue and exchanging expertise across various sectors.

The collaboration also includes the joint publication of periodic economic studies and reports, providing analytical insights to support researchers, decision-makers, and stakeholders in the economic sector.

National Talent Development:

The agreement outlines co-operation in organizing training



Hamad Mosaed Al-Sayer, Chairman of Warba Bank, and Abdulaziz Abdullah Al-Humaidhi, Chairman of Kuwait Economic Society.

- **Hamad Al-Sayer:** Investing in economic knowledge is a core pillar for achieving sustainable development
- **Abdulaziz Al-Humaidhi:** The partnership combines academic and practical expertise to support the national economy

programs and workshops, offering Warba Bank employees opportunities to participate in academic and economic activities organized by the society. This initiative aims to enhance professional development and expand employees’ knowledge

of the latest economic and investment trends.

Additionally, the partnership will utilize KES facilities to host joint events and educational sessions, expanding the reach and impact of these community programs.

Executive Commentary:

Hamad Mosaed Al-Sayer, Chairman of Warba Bank, stated:

“This partnership reflects Warba Bank’s belief in the importance of investing in knowledge and research as essential pillars for sustainable development. Promoting economic awareness is a shared responsibility between the banking sector and civil society institutions, which is why we support high-quality educational content to develop national talent.”

Abdulaziz Abdullah Al-Humaidhi, Chairman of the Kuwait Economic Society, commented:

“We are proud to establish this partnership with Warba Bank, a model national institution supporting community initiatives. This agreement will expand the scope of our programs, improve the quality of economic research, and launch new initiatives serving the wider business community.”

About Warba Bank:

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

Trading hits KD 84.9 mln

Boursa sees modest gains in quiet session

KUWAIT CITY, July 13, (KUNA): Boursa Kuwait closed Monday’s session on a mixed note, with the General Index edging up 3.16 points, or 0.04 percent, to 8,679.20 points. Total trading activity reached 406.2 million shares across 23,523 transactions, with a combined value of KD 84.9 million (approximately USD 276.3 million).

The Premier Market Index recorded a gain of 9.02 points, or 0.10 percent, to settle at 9,090.81 points, supported by trades of 168.8 million shares through 9,594 transactions,

valued at KD 47.6 million (around USD 154.9 million).

In contrast, the Main Market Index declined by 23.64 points, or 0.27 percent, to 8,861.69 points. Trading volume in this segment totaled 237.4 million shares across 13,929 transactions, with a value of KD 37.3 million (approximately USD 121.3 million).

The Main 50 Index also slipped, losing 1.58 points, or 0.02 percent, to close at 10,166.09 points, with 198.3 million shares traded in 9,191 transactions worth KD 31 million (around USD 100.9 million).

Crude surges, stocks mixed amid Middle East escalation

BANGKOK, July 13, (AP): Oil prices jumped and world shares were mixed on Monday after the U.S. carried out airstrikes and Iran retaliated. In early European trading, Germany’s DAX added 0.2% to 25,105.55 and the CAC 40 in Paris edged 0.1% higher, to 8,347.26. Britain’s FTSE 100 also was up just 0.1%, at 10,506.86.

U.S. stock futures were mixed, with the contract for the S&P 500 down 0.3% and that for the Dow nearly unchanged. The Nasdaq composite future lost 0.9%.

The price of Brent crude, the international standard, climbed as much as nearly 5% early Monday before falling back. As of early morning in Europe, it was up 2.3% at \$77.72 per barrel, while U.S. benchmark crude added 2.1% to \$72.92 per barrel.

Prices for both types of crude oil recently had slipped back to around the levels they were at before the war with Iran began after the two sides set an interim agreement on ending the conflict and ships resumed transporting oil through the Strait of Hormuz.

However, the United States launched several waves of strikes on Iran into Monday morning over an Iranian attack on a container ship in the strait that set it ablaze and left a crew member missing over the weekend. Iran retaliated by targeting countries across the Middle East.

In Asian share trading, Tokyo’s Nikkei 225 index lost 1.9% to 67,242.73, while in Seoul, the Kospi declined 9% to 6,806.93. It’s now at its lowest level since early May.

Shares in South Korean memory chipmaker SK Hynix, which soared 13% in their debut Friday on Wall Street, slumped 15.4% in Seoul. Its bigger rival Samsung Electronics sank 10.7%.

Elsewhere in Asia, Hong Kong’s Hang Seng edged 0.2% higher, to 24,212.36, and the Shanghai Composite index shed 2.1% to 3,913.79.

In Australia, the S&P/ASX 200 was nearly unchanged at 8,808.50.

U.S. stocks ticked higher Friday after investors showed sustained appetite for winners of the artificial-intelligence boom. The S&P 500 rose 0.4% and the Dow Jones Industrial Average added 0.3%. The Nasdaq composite climbed 0.3%.

SK Hynix’s shares jumped immediately after trading began in the mid-day hours after it raised roughly \$26.5 billion by selling American deposi-

tary shares at a price of \$149 each.

SK Hynix’s stock in Seoul had already surged more than 600% over the last year thanks to euphoria around AI. The boom has created real profits due to surging demand for computer memory. But it has also raised worries that AI stock prices have shot have too high and that all the world’s spending on chips and data centers won’t be able to produce enough productivity and profit growth to make it worth it.

“The reason why this stock, along with other memory chipmakers, has gone parabolic is that AI demand has somehow created the perception that a sector historically defined by boom-and-bust cycles could remain permanently in the boom phase,” Ipek Ozkardeskaya of Swissquote said in a commentary.

SK Hynix plans to double its production capacity, or possibly more, to keep up with demand. However, “Technological breakthroughs, more efficient AI models or simply a slowdown in AI infrastructure investment could quickly turn the market into one of oversupply,” she said.

Similar concerns apply to many AI stocks as they’ve grown into some of Wall Street’s most influential because of their huge valuations. Beyond that, investors will be focusing on earnings reports, watching to see if corporate profits are growing fast enough to justify big gains in stock prices, which are broadly near records.

This week will bring earnings reports from many of the biggest U.S. banks, including Bank of America, Citigroup, JPMorgan Chase, Goldman Sachs and Wells Fargo on Tuesday alone.

Meanwhile, worries about how continued fighting with Iran will affect the global flow of crude are clouding the outlook both for energy costs and overall inflation.

High bond yields have been weighing on financial markets worldwide since more expensive oil and high inflation could push the Federal Reserve and other central banks to raise interest rates.

Higher rates can keep a lid on inflation, but they also slow the economy and hurt prices for all kinds of investments.

In other dealings early Monday, the U.S. dollar rose to 162.01 Japanese yen from 161.72 yen. The euro rose to \$1.1435 from \$1.1408.

Why estate planning matters & how to get started

By The Associated Press

Contemplating your own death or disability isn’t particularly pleasant, but estate planning can bring peace of mind for you and your family.

Here are the key steps to take.

Because your estate plan will likely need to be updated as the years go by, it makes sense to find an attorney who practices in the community where you live.

Start by asking other financial professionals who you work with for recommendations. If you have a specific situation that is likely to affect your estate plan – for example, if you’re a small-business owner or if you have a child with a disability – ask for referrals to attorneys well-versed in those areas.

Conduct a basic informational interview with prospective attorneys (it should be free), and ask the following:

1. How long have you been practicing law?
2. How long have you been practicing this type of law?
3. How many estates have you settled?
4. What is the typical asset level for your clients?
5. Do you have experience with situations like mine? (Blended/divorced family, business owner, child with addiction issue, etc.)
6. How do you charge for your services? What is an estimate of the charges for my estate plan?
7. Do you have experience with tax planning? (Particularly important for large estates)

Remember to weigh the intangibles: Do you like this person, and would you be comfortable supplying them with personal information about your finances and family situation?

List your assets and their value: investment accounts, life insurance, your home, your share of any businesses you own. Gather current information about any debts outstanding. Your estate-planning attorney is likely to provide you with a worksheet for this.

Who do you trust to ensure that your wishes are carried out in case of your death or incapacity? You’ll need individuals to fill the following key roles. Note that the same individual can fulfill more than one role.

8. Executor: A person who gathers your assets and makes sure they are distributed as spelled out in your will. The executor must be

detail-oriented and comfortable with numbers. The executor can be a family member or a professional (such as a bank trust officer).

9. Durable (or Financial) Power of Attorney: A document that grants an individual the legal authority to make financial decisions on your behalf if you can’t. This person must understand your wishes about your financial affairs. They should also be detail-oriented and adept with financial matters.

10. Power of Attorney for Healthcare: A document that specifies whom you entrust with making healthcare decisions on your behalf if you can’t. Ideally, this person lives reasonably close and understands your general wishes about healthcare.

11. Guardian: A person who is willing and financially able to look after and/or raise your minor children if you and your partner die. You want your child’s guardian to share your values and views on parenting.

At a minimum, ask your attorney to draft:

12. Last Will and Testament: Tells everyone how you would like your assets distributed after you’re gone.

13. Living Will: Tells your loved ones and healthcare providers how you would like to be cared for if you become terminally ill. It usually includes your wishes on the use of life-support equipment.

14. Healthcare Power of Attorney: Gives an individual the power to make healthcare decisions on your behalf.

15. Durable (Financial) Power of Attorney

Once your estate-planning documents are drafted, destroy any older versions. Keep the current ones in a secure place and tell the executor where they are.

Provide copies to your executor, agents for powers of attorney, and the guardian for your children, and discuss your wishes with them.

One of the biggest estate-planning pitfalls is drafting a plan but not keeping it up to date. Plan to notify your estate-planning attorney, and possibly revise your documents, in these situations:

16. A change in marital or family status (marriage, divorce, birth, adoption)
17. A major change in assets (sale or purchase)
18. A major change in financial status
19. The death or ill health of a beneficiary
20. The death or ill health of the executor, power of attorney, or guardian.

What's On

SPOTLIGHT



Got a birthday or event?
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We'll feature it on our What's On page!

Kuwait's only internationally classified marathon returns on 28 November

Early bird registration opens for the 12th edition of Gulf Bank 642 Marathon



A group photo of Gulf Bank and Suffix officials, with Najla Aleisa and Ahmed Al-Hazami in the center.



Part of the meeting to discuss marathon preparations.

KUWAIT CITY, June 13: As part of its ongoing commitment to promoting community well-being and supporting sustainable social initiatives, Gulf Bank, in partnership with Suffix, the sports event management company, announced the opening of early bird registration for the 12th edition of the Gulf Bank 642 Marathon. Kuwait's only internationally classified marathon is set to return on 28 November 2026, bringing together runners, families, athletes, beginners, people with special needs, and the wider community for one of the country's most anticipated annual sporting events.

Over the years, the Gulf Bank 642 Marathon has grown beyond a race. It has become a community platform that encourages healthier lifestyles, celebrates inclusion, supports local talent, and brings people together in the heart of Kuwait City. Each edition reflects the Bank's belief that sport plays an important role in strengthening communities, enhancing physical and mental well-being, and inspiring individuals and families to adopt more active lifestyles.

Gulf Bank renewed its annual invitation to athletes, running enthusiasts, beginners, families, people with special needs, and community members from Kuwait and abroad to take part in this landmark event. Registration is now open through the official marathon website: www.gulfbank642marathon.com also available on: <https://suffix.events/en/events/details/857>

As preparations continue for this year's edition, Suffix, in collaboration with Gulf Bank, has approved the final designs for the winners' medals across the different race categories, along with the official sportswear that will be distributed to participants ahead of the marathon. The designs reflect the values at the heart of the event, including national pride, community engagement, heritage preservation, and environmental sustainability.

The medals have become one of the most distinctive elements of the Gulf Bank 642 Marathon experience. More than a symbol of

- Final designs approved for winners' medals and participants' sportswear for the new edition
- This year's medals celebrate Kuwait's heritage, nature, landmarks, and national identity

completion, they have evolved into collectible pieces that runners look forward to each year, with every edition telling a new story inspired by Kuwait. The medals this year were designed to highlight Kuwait's identity, heritage, and landscapes, giving participants a meaningful keepsake that reflects both their achievement and their connection to the homeland. Each medal tells a distinct story. The 5K medal celebrates Kuwait's deep connection to the sea, featuring its marine life and a traditional dhow that reflects the nation's rich maritime heritage. The 10K medal highlights Gulf Bank's historic headquarters, an architectural landmark located in the heart of Kuwait City. The 21K medal captures the beauty and serenity of the Kuwaiti desert, featuring the falcon as a symbol of pride, strength, vision, and resilience deeply rooted in the region's heritage. Finally, the 42K medal celebrates Kuwait's national identity, showcasing the iconic Kuwait Towers alongside the Kuwaiti flag.

A Marathon for the Whole Community
The previous edition of the Gulf Bank 642 Marathon recorded exceptional participation, attracting more than 10,000 runners from different age groups, fitness levels, and nationalities, including around 5,000 non-Kuwaiti participants. These figures reflect the growing position of the marathon as an inclusive community event that welcomes everyone, from professional runners and regular athletes to first-time participants, families, and people with special needs.

The event also continues to reflect the diversity of Kuwait's community. Women represented 41% of total participants compared to 59%

men, while the youngest participant was 10 years old and the oldest was 85. The participation of people with special needs further reinforces the marathon's role as an accessible and inclusive event built around community spirit, determination, and shared achievement.

Gulf Bank's continued support for the marathon comes in line with its commitment to strengthening the culture of sports and active living in Kuwait. The Bank views sport as a key contributor to sustainable development, given its ability to improve well-being, build discipline, encourage positive habits, and create meaningful connections across society.

This commitment is particularly important as communities continue to face growing lifestyle-related health challenges, including diabetes, obesity, and cardiovascular disease. By encouraging individuals and families to make physical activity part of their daily lives, Gulf Bank aims to contribute to building a healthier, more active, and more resilient society.

The marathon also creates wider value for the community by supporting youth and national initiatives. Through its partnership with Suffix, Gulf Bank continues to provide a platform for local capabilities, small and medium-sized enterprises, volunteers, and Kuwaiti sporting talent. The event also helps support professional runners and promising athletes by giving them greater exposure and encouraging them to represent Kuwait in international marathons.

Participation Categories
The Gulf Bank 642 Marathon offers race categories suitable for different fitness levels and abilities, making the event accessible to experienced runners, first-time participants, families, and people with special needs. The marathon includes four categories: the 5K walk or run, the 10K run, the 21K half marathon, and the 42K full marathon. Participants aged 11 and above may register for the 5K race, while those aged 16 and above may take part in the 10K race. Participation in the half marathon is open to those aged 18 and above.



talabat grow x KGCA

Expanding the program's training ecosystem to empower local restaurant businesses

talabat extends hospitality to Kuwait Gastronomy & Culinary Arts Organization as official training partner for talabat grow

KUWAIT CITY, July 13: As part of its ongoing commitment to empowering Kuwait's small and medium-sized restaurant businesses, talabat Kuwait announced that Kuwait Gastronomy & Culinary Arts Organization (KGCA) has joined the talabat grow program as an official training partner. As Kuwait's first non-profit culinary organization, KGCA is dedicated to supporting chefs, restaurateurs, cafés, roasteries, coffee professionals, and culinary entrepreneurs through training, certifications, and industry initiatives.

The partnership brings together talabat's industry expertise with KGCA's extensive experience in culinary knowledge, restaurant consulting, and operational excellence to deliver practical, high-impact training for participating restaurants.

As part of the six-week talabat grow bootcamp, KGCA will lead a dedicated training module focused on restaurant performance, menu engineering, pricing strategies, kitchen operations, customer behavior, market trends, and competitive benchmarking. The sessions will also draw on the real-world experience of KGCA's team, who own and operate successful restaurant concepts in Kuwait, giving participants direct access to practical insights from industry practitioners.

Through talabat grow, restaurant partners gain access to specialized training, expert mentorship, and practical business tools designed to



- KGCA to lead specialized training sessions as part of talabat grow
- Practical training delivered by industry experts and restaurant operators
- Helping restaurant partners strengthen operations, performance, and long-term growth

help them strengthen their operations, improve performance, and achieve sustainable growth in an increasingly competitive market.

Commenting on the partnership, Abdullah Al-Mansour, Director of Corporate Affairs at talabat Kuwait, said: "At talabat, we believe meaningful growth begins with the right knowledge, guidance and expertise. Welcoming KGCA to 'talabat grow' as a partner adds significant value by giving participating restaurants direct access to professionals with hands-on experience in Kuwait's culinary and hospitality sector. This

partnership reflects our continued commitment to supporting local SMEs and contributing to the long-term development of Kuwait's restaurant ecosystem."

Chef Faisal Al Nashmi, President of Kuwait Gastronomy & Culinary Arts Organization, said: "We are proud to join 'talabat grow' and contribute to an initiative that invests in the future of Kuwait's restaurant industry. As culinary professionals and restaurant operators ourselves, we understand the opportunities and challenges facing F&B businesses at different stages of growth. Through this partnership, we look forward to sharing practical knowledge and real market experience that can help businesses build stronger foundations and achieve long-term success."

Launched in partnership with the National Fund for SME Development, "talabat grow" is a comprehensive business development program designed to empower local restaurants through expert-led training, mentorship, business insights, and strategic support – helping them unlock their full growth potential and contribute to Kuwait's evolving food sector.

Through partnerships such as this, talabat reinforces its broader vision of creating long-term value for Kuwait's SME ecosystem by bringing together leading public and private sector partners to equip local businesses with the knowledge, skills, and resources needed to thrive.

Session highlights learning, connection

Toastmasters launches 2026–27 NMOP with strong participation

KUWAIT CITY, July 13: The first series of the New Member Orientation Program for the term 2026–2027 was held online on 6 July 2026, marking an inspiring beginning for new and aspiring Toastmasters. NMOP plays a vital role in helping members understand the Toastmasters journey, become familiar with club practices, and feel confident as they take their first steps in communication and leadership. Designed to guide and empower members, the session brought together enthusiastic participants for an evening filled with learning, interaction, and valuable insights.

The program featured three impactful workshops that introduced participants to the spirit, structure, and support system of Toastmasters. TM Cecilia Mussi led the session on Introduction to Toastmasters, offering members a clear understanding of the Toastmasters journey and its many opportunities for growth. DTM Bindu John conducted an engaging workshop on Club Meeting Roles, helping participants understand how every role contributes to a successful club meeting. TM Asha Pradeep delivered an insightful session on Mentee Mentoring, highlighting the importance of guidance, support, and shared learning in a member's development.

The session was coordinated by NMOP Coordinator DTM Suhaan Abdul Munaf and initiated by Program Quality Director DTM Jahangir Khan. Their vision and commitment helped

set the tone for a meaningful orientation experience that focused not only on knowledge sharing but also on building confidence and connection among members.

Adding energy and smooth flow to the event was the Master of Ceremonies, TM Mohammad Hussain Shaik, who guided the audience through the program with warmth and professionalism. The session was powered by Area 20 Director TM Wafiq Anwar, with excellent technical support from Zoom Moderator TM Mohsin Arzouni and timely coordination by Timer TM Dev Edmond.

With more than 70 participants in attendance, the program reflected the enthusiasm and curiosity of members who are eager to make the most of their Toastmasters journey. The interactive nature of the workshops encouraged participation, clarified expectations, and created a welcoming space for members to learn, ask questions, and connect.

The New Member Orientation Program proved to be more than just an introduction; it was a strong foundation for growth, leadership, communication, and fellowship. By creating awareness, building confidence, and connecting members with the support system of Toastmasters, NMOP reaffirmed its importance as a meaningful first step in every member's journey. As the 2026–2027 term begins, this first series has set a positive and purposeful tone for the journey ahead. Stay tuned for the upcoming sessions!





This image released by Disney shows Catherine Laga'aia in a scene from 'Moana.' (AP)

No big tide for Moana

Disney's live-action leads box office with a modest splash

The Walt Disney Company's live action "Moana" may be the No. 1 movie at the domestic box office, but it did not make a big splash in its first weekend in theaters.

The movie, which cost a reported \$250 million to produce, earned just \$43 million from ticket sales in the U.S. and Canada, according to studio estimates Sunday.

Internationally, it earned \$52 million from 50 markets, adding up to a \$95 million global debut.

The studio bet big on "Moana," one of its most popular franchises. The 2016 animated film is the most watched movie on Disney+. Its sequel, which was stitched together from a planned streaming series, made over \$1 billion and scored a Thanksgiving record when it opened with \$225 million in 2024. "Moana 2" was also released just 19 months ago.

This latest "Moana," directed by Thomas Kail, brings Dwayne Johnson back as the demigod Maui and introduces Catherine Laga'aia as the adventuring Polynesian princess. Despite praise for Laga'aia, the film set sail on a wave of dismal reviews from critics for being essentially a shot-for-shot remake of the original.

It's currently sitting at a 34% on Rotten Tomatoes. Audiences, the majority of whom were women (66%), were less negative: According to PostTrak, 63% said they would "definitely" recommend the film to their friends.

Parent reactions were even stronger, with 78% saying they would recommend it to other parents. It also got a promising A- CinemaScore.

Disney's live action remakes of beloved animated films, new and old, have had their share of successes and disappointments. Some have made over \$1 billion, including "Lilo & Stitch," "The Lion King" and "Beauty and the Beast." Others have floundered, most notably last year's "Snow White," which made only \$205 million worldwide. "Moana" opened more on par with "Snow White" (\$42.2 million).

Paul Dergarabedian, the head of marketplace trends for Rentrak, said "Moana's" debut could also be a product of PG-rated oversaturation in the marketplace: Universal's "Minions & Monsters" was in second place with \$20.5 million and "Toy Story 5" was close behind in third place with \$18.5 million.

"Families love going to the movies, but right now there are three of them," Dergarabedian said. "That's a lot of competition."

PG-rated films outgrossed others in 2024 and 2025, so "Moana's" performance may not be a case of "family movie fatigue," he said, but simply shows there can be a ceiling. Families have to make a choice, and after four weekends, "Toy Story 5" is still going strong with a running global total of \$879.1 million.

There also are signs that these movies might not sink or swim based on the opening weekend alone. Although "Minions & Monsters" opened below expectations over the Fourth of July holiday, it also had a modest 45% drop this weekend. Its running domestic total is currently sitting at \$108.3 million.

The weekend's other big new opener was definitely not PG: The R-rated horror "Evil Dead Burn," a Warner Bros. release, opened in fourth place with \$13.7 million. It's a significant dip from the previous two films in the series, which both opened in the \$25 million range.

Angel Studios' George Washington movie "Young Washington" rounded out the top five films in its second weekend in theaters, with \$6.4 million. Olivia Wilde's chamber dramedy "The Invite" landed in sixth place in its first weekend in wide release, with \$5.7 million from 1,610 theaters.

And though it has dropped out of the top 10 domestically, "Michael" has officially crossed \$1 billion at the worldwide box office, only the second film this year to do so after "The Super Mario Galaxy Movie." It's also now the highest grossing musical biopic of all time, a title previously held by "Bohemian Rhapsody."

The total domestic box office for the year is currently sitting just under \$5.2 billion, up about 10.7% from

this point last year. While both May and June were very strong - both generating over \$1 billion in North America - July, Dergarabedian said, has faced some headwinds with a string of underperformers, including "Supergirl." Things will likely pick up next week with the arrival of Christopher Nolan's "The Odyssey" followed by "Spider-Man: Brand New Day" the weekend after.

"They could power a stronger August than July at the box office, which would be very unusual," Dergarabedian said.

With final domestic figures being released Monday, this list factors in the estimated ticket sales for Friday through Sunday at U.S. and Canadian theaters, according to Rentrak:

1. "Moana," \$43 million.
2. "Minions & Monsters," \$20.5 million.
3. "Toy Story 5," \$18.5 million.
4. "Evil Dead Burn," \$13.7 million.
5. "Young Washington," \$6.4 million.
6. "The Invite," \$5.7 million.
7. "Obsession," \$3.8 million.
8. "Supergirl," \$3.6 million.
9. "Disclosure Day," \$3.2 million.
10. "Backrooms," \$1.5 million. (AP)

Variety

LONDON: Prince William joined his wife Kate and two of their children for the men's final at Wimbledon on Sunday in a star-studded Royal Box that also included actors Dustin Hoffman, Nicole Kidman and Ben Stiller.



Kate is the patron of the All England Club and presented the trophy to winner Jannik Sinner after his match against Alexander Zverev. She also handed out the trophy to women's winner Linda Noskova on Saturday, but was not joined by any family members.

The couple's two eldest children, Prince George and Princess Charlotte, also attended Sunday's match. All four were on hand to watch Sinner beat Carlos Alcaraz in last year's final as well. (AP)

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico: Musicians and a DJ are among the dead in a plane crash in the Bahamas that killed 10, the Bahamas Musicians and Entertainers Union said Saturday, a day after the deadly incident.

The crash prompted the government to temporarily ground Flamingo Air flights. It happened in North Andros, located in waters just west of Nassau, the archipelago's capital.

"Among the dearly departed are some of the talented and vibrant members of our entertainment community, including members of The Pond Band and a DJ," the union said in a statement on X.

"(Their) passion, dedication, and artistry touched so many lives and helped to enrich the cultural fabric of The Bahamas," the union added. (AP)

Nolan's film finds an audience that knows the epic best

Greece embraces new take on Homer's 'The Odyssey'

ATHENS, July 13, (AP) - Christopher Nolan's "The Odyssey" opens Friday, to global anticipation and some controversy over his casting choices - but what do Greeks think?

Conversation about adaptations often revolves around how closely they follow a source text. But in a country where Homer's story is taught and retold at all schools, many point to how the epic has been kept alive for nearly 3,000 years: not despite reinvention, but because of it.

"What we want children to understand is that every new creation is exactly that - a new creation," Filippos Mantzaris, who teaches "The Odyssey" to seventh graders, told The Associated Press.

The film, starring Matt Damon as King Odysseus and a number of Hollywood stars, follows Homer's outline: The king's return home from war through gods and monsters to find a palace overrun by rivals.

In seventh grade, "The Odyssey" is taught in all Greek classrooms.

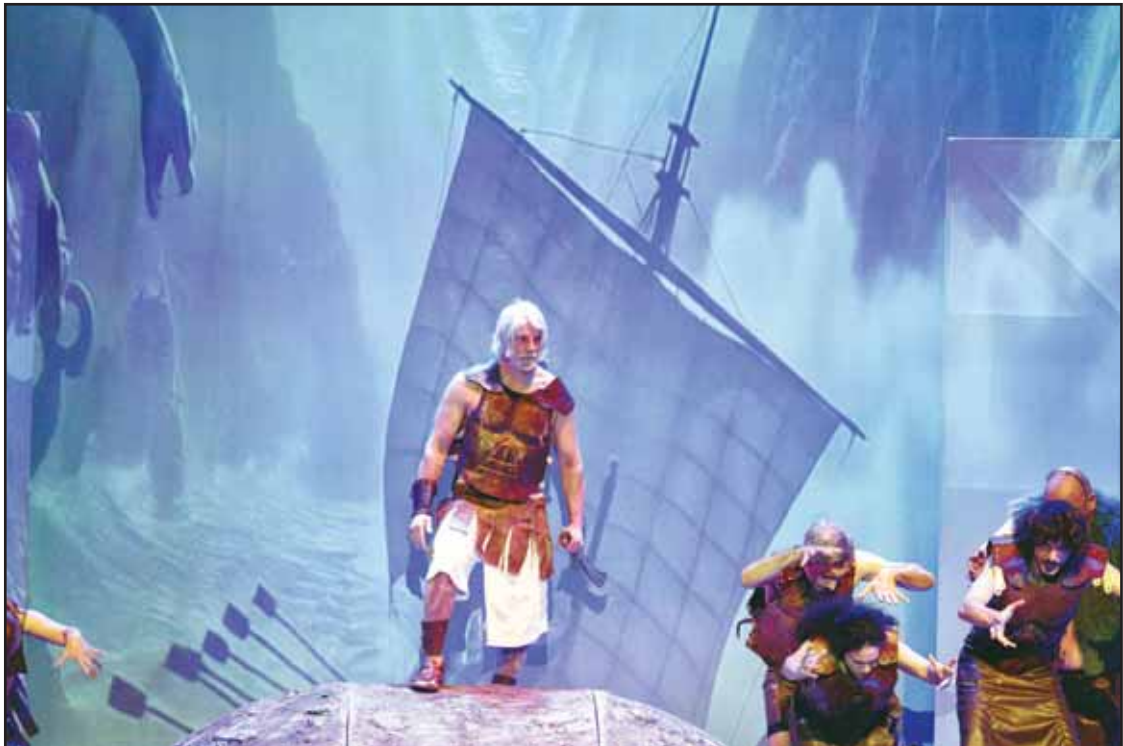
In Mantzaris' class, students eagerly debate Odysseus' encounters with monsters and other adventures. They are taught to compare the hero's intelligence with his strength, ask whether revenge is moral, whether the battle-hardened king is truly a role model, and whether his killing of his wife's suitors is justified. Role-playing exercises encourage children to imagine what they would do in Odysseus' place.

"It's an amazing literary text, with which children can identify, perhaps see Odysseus in themselves, but also see their own homeland," Mantzaris said.

Kyriakos Agapiou, 12, said reading the poem in Mantzaris' class taught him: "That everything is possible and we should never give up."

Farm scientist Nikos Varelas attended a stage adaptation with his 4-year-old son, after the pair read youth versions of both "The Iliad" and "The Odyssey" together.

"It is our duty as parents, as



Actor Manos Pintzis, portraying Odysseus, performs a theatrical production of The Odyssey in Athens, Sunday, March 29, 2026. (AP)



Left: Seventh-grade student Kyriakos Agapiou holds a well-worn copy of Homer's Odyssey that belonged to his mother when she attended the same Gymnasio (middle school) in the Athens suburb of Tavros, Wednesday, May 27, 2026. Right: Sculptor and ceramicist Haralampos Goumas works on a terracotta bust of the ancient Greek poet Homer, the author of the Iliad and the Odyssey, at his workshop in the Athens suburb of Aigaleo, Wednesday, May 27, 2026. (AP)

Greeks," Varelas said.

Interpreting the story as theater, said actor Manos Pintzis, who portrayed Odysseus in the local production, helps children discover

mythology in a way books alone cannot.

"You don't tell a child, 'Just read the story because you have to,' because the child will resist when

something is forced on them," Pintzis said. "When the child sees all of this unfolding before their eyes - that becomes a valuable step toward learning, to willingly learn

what they're expected to study."

In conservative circles in the U.S., much of the attention has focused on Nolan's casting choices rather than his adaptation of Homer's story.

Elon Musk claimed Nolan had desecrated "The Odyssey" after Black actor Lupita Nyong'o was picked as Helen of Troy - despite not having seen the movie. Conservative commentators including Matt Walsh argued the film prioritized identity politics, echoing past fan criticisms of sci-fi and fantasy reboots that cast Black and Latino actors as beloved characters of a different race or ethnicity.

In an interview with The Telegraph, Nolan said backlash "comes with the territory," adding "these conversations that happen before people see the film - they're always irrelevant, because no one having them knows what the film actually is yet."

Nolan told the AP he wanted to make the film accessible and relatable, and "not look back to sort of past Hollywood versions of how to take on the ancient world."

"You want to question people's assumptions about how things should be portrayed in movies and what those are based on," he said of his overall approach to the film. "There's a challenge to that and a risk to that. But my hope is that by creating a cohesive world, people understand the world as they watch the movie and they feel they understand it."

The controversy hasn't found much purchase in Greece, where people are used to foreigners playing ancient Greeks.

Scotsman Gerard Butler bellowed "This is Sparta!" as King Leonidas in "300." Oklahoma-born Brad Pitt played Achilles in "Troy." Ireland's Colin Farrell starred as Alexander the Great alongside Angelina Jolie as his mother.

Anthony Quinn's performance in "Zorba the Greek" way back in 1964 remains one of Greece's most beloved screen portrayals of a Greek character.

Obituary

The performer who mastered sci-fi to historical drama leaves a lasting legacy

Neill, star of ‘Jurassic Park’ & ‘The Piano’ dies at 78

WELLINGTON, New Zealand, July 13, (AP): Sam Neill, a smoothly elegant and versatile actor whose career moved from art film to blockbuster as he dodged velociraptors in “Jurassic Park” and played Holly Hunter’s husband in “The Piano,” has died. He was 78.

In 2023, Neill disclosed he had been diagnosed with angioimmunoblastic T-cell lymphoma, a rare type of non-Hodgkin lymphoma. Neill died on Monday in Sydney, according to a statement posted to the actor’s social media page.

His death was “sudden and unexpected,” the statement said, adding that he “remained cancer free” when he died. A cause of death wasn’t specified.

“Sam was surrounded by family and passed with the dignity that has characterised his whole life,” his family wrote.

Neill was one of a host of actors and directors who achieved international fame after an explosion of Australian films that began in the late 1970s, a list that includes Paul Hogan, Mel Gibson, Geoffrey Rush,



Sam Neill arrives at the premiere of “Apples Never Fall” on March 12, 2024, in Los Angeles. (AP)

Russell Crowe, Jane Campion, Peter Weir and Gillian Armstrong. His range was remarkable, playing opposite Helena Bonham Carter in the Alan Ayckbourn comedy “Sweet Revenge” to chopping off Hunter’s fin-

ger in “The Piano” to poking his own eyes out in the sci-fi horror “Event Horizon.”

In “Omen III: The Final Conflict,” he played Damien the Antichrist and he also played Cardinal Thomas

Wolsey in “The Tudors.”

The actor first came to the attention of international audiences in Armstrong’s 1979 film “My Brilliant Career,” which also introduced Judy Davis. He later appeared in Phillip Noyce’s “Dead Calm,” a classy thriller set at sea and co-starring the then-relatively unknown Nicole Kidman.

Neill twice co-starred with Meryl Streep, in Australian director Fred Schepisi’s “Plenty” and - again for Schepisi - in “A Cry in the Dark,” a film about the sensationalized aftermath of a dingo killing a baby in the Australian Outback. He earned an Emmy nomination for his performance in the title role of the 1998 miniseries “Merlin” and another as narrator of 2017’s “Wild New Zealand.”

Perhaps Neill achieved his highest level of fame in “Jurassic Park” playing paleontologist Alan Grant, who is summoned to an island off Costa Rica where a theme park has been built to house herds of cloned dinosaurs. He co-starred alongside Laura Dern, Jeff Goldblum and

Richard Attenborough.

His character was thoughtful and reasonable, a scientist who warned the mastermind of the theme park before the chaos: “Dinosaurs and man, two species separated by 65 million years of evolution have just been suddenly thrown back into the mix together. How can we possibly have the slightest idea what to expect?”

Grant survived the harrowing events when the creatures get loose, but didn’t return for “The Lost World: Jurassic Park II” in 1997. He came back for the third episode in 2001 and “Jurassic World: Dominion” in 2022.

“It’s probably a little late to learn these things,” he told the Daily New of New York in 2001, “but I finally feel I’ve worked out how to be an action hero. I’m happier with Grant this time. He’s gnarly and grizzled, but he looks like he knows what he’s doing.”

Born in 1947 in Northern Ireland, Neill emigrated to New Zealand at the age of 7. He was born Nigel Neill, but told interviewers he started

to go by Sam because there were too many Nigels at his school.

His family settled in Dunedin on the South Island and he was sent to boarding school in Christchurch. After college, he took the lead in “Sleeping Dogs” in 1977, the first feature made in New Zealand in more than a decade.

Neill’s other film roles included playing a Soviet submarine officer who memorably dreams of a home in Montana in “The Hunt for Red October” and an investigator in director John Carpenter’s “In the Mouth of Madness.”

On the small screen, Neill played the malign Chester Campbell in TV’s “Peaky Blinders” and Thomas Jefferson in the four-hour CBS miniseries, “Sally Hemings: an American Tragedy.” On Apple TV+, he was on “Invasion,” playing Oklahoma Sheriff John Bell Tyson, a man late in his career searching for his purpose. In 2024 he starred opposite Annette Bening in the Peacock series “Apples Never Fall.”

Sugaya’s daily route helps protect lonely elderly residents

Tokyo tofu seller delivers more than healthy food

TOKYO, July 13, (AP): Akiko Sugaya wheels a cart through the alley-like streets of eastern Tokyo selling tofu, the protein-rich staple favored in much of Asia.

But delivering soybean curd in all shapes and textures is only a small slice of her mission.

And it’s just that. A mission.

More than simply a vendor of healthy food, she’s also a social conduit who checks on elderly customers as she guides her pink cart, wearing a straw hat and tooting a small brass bugle to signal her arrival.

She knows the habits of many of her customers like family, and they know hers. She’s lost some elderly customers over the years who’ve died alone, which is becoming more common in Japan, which has one of the world’s oldest populations.

“More than once I was the first one to find their bodies,” Sugaya explained, seated in a small store she also runs on a busy shopping street in Tokyo’s Ojima neighborhood.

It’s a largely residential area of small dwellings, layered with occasional strips of sprawling apartment blocks.

“In an area like this, some people just leave their doors unlocked,” Sugaya said. “Or I can get access by asking the landlords.”

Uncollected newspapers and unattended laundry are telltale signs of trouble, easily seen in small houses on the street. But large apartment buildings hide these signs of possible distress.

Sugaya is a savior for many, and the job - she’s been at it for 23 years - has also strengthened her own self-worth. She feels that the job saved



Akiko Sugaya blows an old-style horn while she peddles tofu, prepared food and beverages in a cart in Tokyo. (AP)

her.

She says she was bullied in school and fired from several jobs until she found that delivering high-quality, healthy food also nourished her own mental health and offered value to others.

“Selling tofu on a cart made me think I am OK to be myself,” Sugaya explained. “I used to be repeatedly put down, but through cart-selling I built up my self-esteem.”

“I was still nervous with women

around my ages,” she added. “But I felt safe when surrounded by the elderly whose smiles are warm and kind.”

Shinji Saito comes by Sugaya’s shop daily. Saito, who has epilepsy, calls her accepting personality “magical.”

She’s also a link to a time when vendors walked through neighborhoods selling ramen, sweet potatoes, vegetables and other items.

“Delivery of newspapers or tofu,

what used to be part of our daily lives, have been replaced by delivery apps or smart phones,” Sugaya said. “One can easily spend a day without having any verbal conversation with others.”

“When you go to a convenience store, you hit a button on a screen and don’t even say hello to anyone. It leaves you empty.”

Sugaya makes her rounds three days per week, a three-hour walk in the afternoon.

Relaxed regulations mark a new era for pet owners

Hong Kong’s dining scene goes dog-friendly



A dog sits on its owner at a dining table inside the Wan Land Cafe on the first day dogs are legally permitted in restaurants in Hong Kong, Thursday, July 9, 2026. (AP)

HONG KONG, July 13, (AP): Hong Kong dog owners and their four-legged friends have gained new freedoms after the city relaxed a decades-old rule, allowing the pets to join them at eateries.

Since 1994, only guide dogs and those performing statutory duties were allowed in restaurants under the city’s food business regulation. But the policy change aimed at promoting a pet-friendly culture kicked in Thursday, covering over 900 approved restaurants in the measure’s first phase.

It is the city’s latest step toward building an animal-friendly society. Hong Kong now allows pets on certain ferry routes and some metro trains serving rural areas, and public hospitals have started permitting pet visits for palliative care patients.

According to the government, more than 240,000 households in the city keep over 400,000 pet cats and dogs, accounting for about 9% of the city’s households.

At Wan Land Cafe, owner Kelvin Chan proudly put up a poster saying

his establishment can welcome dogs. Previously, dogs were only allowed in its outdoor area, making it tough for the animals during the hot and humid Hong Kong summer.

Chan doesn’t think the new policy will bring a spike in business, but as a dog owner himself, he hopes that it will cultivate a more pet-friendly society. He noted that while dog lovers welcome the change, it might be a challenge for those who are not used to eating out with dogs around.

He hopes that responsible pet owners in restaurants and other public spaces will eventually help non-pet lovers warm up to the idea and understand that being inclusive of pets is a progressive move.

“It could become part of our lives,” he said.

Franco Li, a regular at this cafe, said his Shiba, named Piku, is happy to have embraced a new way of living that allows it to join Li around the dining table and play with other dog friends.

“This is such a great step forward

for civilization,” Li said, holding Piku in his arms.

To prepare for the change, some dog owners have been taking their pets to “dog dining etiquette workshops.”

Heyton Lee, a dog trainer for 19 years, was particularly busy ahead of the new measure. His two-hour program that simulated a restaurant setting started with dog owners walking around the restaurant to encourage their pets to stay calm and not get overly-excited when they see their dog friends.

Lee also demonstrated some hand signs which are commonly used to instruct dogs to behave. The main goal was to teach dogs to be calm and show them how to take part in human society. For example, helping them understand that when people walk past them, the humans do not intend to kick them, he said.

“If a dog is just at home, when it goes out, it could get very nervous. Even if it’s just that people want to touch them, they might not want to let people do that,” he said.

Under the new measure, dogs

must be kept on a leash not exceeding 1.5 meters (5 feet) that must be held by an adult or tied to a fixture. The dogs should also be kept off tables, and may not consume food directly from reusable human utensils.

Dogs considered to be among the “fighting breed” by government standards are not allowed in the establishments at all.

Restaurants cannot cook food for the dogs but can offer prepackaged food to the pets.

Many eateries have also geared up to welcome their furry customers, with some of them hoping it would help boost their revenues.

Old Fung Teahouse, a dim sum restaurant, invested more than 10,000 Hong Kong dollars (\$1,276) in its preparation, installing an air purifier and setting up simple partitions to separate an area for tables serving pet owners. It also provides pet strollers and cleaning products. Its operators hope opening up to dogs might bring up to a 15% increase in business.

Data and Innovation boost Native graduation success

NEW YORK, July 13, (AP): During his senior year of high school on the Puyallup Reservation, Gerald Dillon traded much of his academic coursework for career training. When he walked into the second grade classroom where he worked as a teaching assistant, students would rush from their seats for a fist bump or a hug.

The 18-year-old, who once found classes boring and put in only enough effort to pass, found renewed purpose to come to school everyday.

“It motivates me. I like making connections with the kids, I like helping them,” Dillon said.

It began in his junior year when he enrolled in career training courses. Soon, Dillon said, his grades improved. He graduated in June from Chief Leschi Schools in Washington and is now considering going to college for a teaching degree.

Administrators at the school say a shift in focus to technical training and career readiness is paying off, with more students not only staying in school but graduating on time.

Those gains are emblematic of progress across the U.S. Bureau of Indian Education, which oversees 183 primary and secondary schools serving over 40,000 students. In 2015, just over half of high schoolers at BIE schools graduated within four years. That number soared to a record high of 79% by 2025.

Some BIE educators attribute that

surge to local innovations. Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs Billy Kirkland says they reflect the Trump administration’s commitment to Native American students, including efforts to strengthen teacher training. In addition, the way graduation rates are reported across BIE schools was changed to address flawed data collection that previously depressed the numbers.

But concerns loom that changes reshaping the BIE under the Trump administration - including the planned dismantling of the U.S. Department of Education and continued fallout from cuts instituted by DOGE - could undermine progress and prevent struggling schools from improving.

The surge in graduation rates reflects, in part, more accurate reporting rather than a sudden leap in student academic improvement, according to agency officials.

For years, school administrators across the system used flawed methods to track graduation rates, often counting students who had transferred to other schools as dropouts.

“We had to come to a consensus and set an accountability framework for our schools,” said Carmelia Becenti, the agency’s chief academic officer.

Beginning in 2018, BIE began standardizing data collection methods. In the years since, Becenti said, the data has painted a more accurate and encouraging picture.

Leyen warns of digital harms to children

EU moves toward social media limits for children

BRUSSELS, July 13, (AP): A top European Union official on Monday called for limits to be placed on children using social media as a special EU panel looking into the challenge recommended forbidding access for those under 13 until tech companies can prove their platforms are safe.

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

Laying out a list of her concerns about the use of social media by kids, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen - a doctor by training - said that children under 3 should have no exposure to screens at all.

“I believe we need to consider phased and gradual access for different age ranges because childhood won’t wait and once it’s gone, we can never give it back,” von der Leyen told reporters.

“Just as we don’t give our children keys to the car before they have their

license, or we do not let them buy alcohol until they are legally allowed. We need to set the age at which they can, the children can, legally access social media,” she said.

Von der Leyen noted infinite scrolling as one of the “addictive” traits that tech companies must address.

Beyond toddlers, she did not mention any precise restrictions, but she and the European Commission - the EU’s powerful executive branch - are likely to come up with a proposal for the 27 member countries to weigh in the near future. Von der Leyen’s policy proposals carry great influence with EU member countries.

A special panel set up to study child safety online delivered its report to the EU chief on Monday. The report said that when it comes to safety, “the burden of proof needs to be on providers, not regulators, parents and children.”

“Until they demonstrate that their services are safe by design, social media and other digital services providers should have restricted access to children under the age of 13 in the EU,” said the report, which is likely to influence von der Leyen’s thinking.



European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, center, poses with co-chairs of the Special Panel Maria Melchior, right, and Jörg M. Fegert during a report on children’s safety online at EU headquarters in Brussels, Monday, July 13, 2026. (AP)

Oxytocin important in maternal bonding with an infant

Nearly 20% of new moms have anxiety or depression, but new treatment on horizon

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



By Camille Hoffman
University of Colorado Anschutz

About 1 in 5 women will experience depression and anxiety during pregnancy or in the year after giving birth. If untreated, a mother who has these conditions has a higher risk of birth complications, overall poorer health, impaired bonding and nurturing of her infant, and a higher risk of death by suicide.

But a new treatment moving through the Food and Drug Administration clinical trials process may be key to treating, or even curing, depression and anxiety in postpartum people. It is a newly named psychedelic, *livesilocin*. It functions like *psilocin*, the psychoactive chemical within *psilocybin* mushrooms. It may be able to positively affect the unique hormonal shifts, brain changes and disconnection that can lead to these conditions like no existing treatments.

In prior studies of *psilocybin*, researchers have observed rapid improvement in symptoms - and sometimes a cure after a single dose - of conditions such as major depression and PTSD. In a recent FDA Phase 2 study of *livesilocin*, we found similar improvements in postpartum depression.

I was the site investigator for the University of Colorado, one of 35 participating sites across the US. The study enrolled 84 postpartum women who were within a year of giving birth and ended in May 2025.

I have spent my career as a board-certified obstetrician-gynecologist contemplating how the prenatal experience shapes lifetime health. I have also followed the psychedelic data closely. I’ve been eager to find evidence-based pregnancy and postpartum applications of psychedelics, given these drugs’ promise in treating other mental health conditions.

One drug that has been studied and enhanced our understanding of the way psychedelics work is *MDMA*, which is commonly known as *ecstasy* and causes a euphoric high.

According to peer-reviewed research published by Bessel van der Kolk in 2024, *MDMA* can lead to improvements in individuals being able to identify, describe and feel their feelings. Other improvements resulting from *MDMA*

assisted therapy include more self-compassion and a broader desire and capacity for connection with others.

Connection, especially the earliest one between a mother and infant, plays one of the most significant roles in providing the foundation for humans to grow and flourish. Postpartum depression is often defined by disconnection and impaired bonding.

Children born to mothers with untreated depression and anxiety have a higher risk of falling behind on early developmental milestones. They may also have behavioral concerns, such as hyperactivity or *ADHD*, and are more likely to withdraw from social activities. They tend to report somatic complaints, such as body aches and pains in early childhood.

Children of mothers who had depression or anxiety during pregnancy are also at risk of these same conditions as they enter their teenage years. They have nearly twice the risk of these conditions compared to teenagers whose mothers did not have untreated depression and anxiety. This pattern means depression and anxiety can become a multigenerational cycle. But this cycle can be interrupted with adequate treatment and support.

Increased levels of the hormone *oxytocin* were found by researchers in the blood of depression study participants who were given *MDMA*, *LSD* and *mescaline*, which are all psychedelic drugs. The increase in *oxytocin* led to more feelings of trust, empathy and connection.

Oxytocin is a hormone produced in the part of the brain called the *hypothalamus* and is released from the *pituitary gland* into the bloodstream. It plays a critical role in birth and infant feeding. It also aids in the wiring and formation of human social brains.

Oxytocin is important in maternal bonding with an infant. Conversely, early childhood stressors, such as a mother suffering from mental illness, reduces *oxytocin* levels in children. This may be a contributor to adverse mental and physical health outcomes later in life.

In depression studies that involved men, *psilocybin* did not have as great of an impact as other psychedelic medications on *oxytocin* production. But there is reason to believe that *oxytocin* may play a greater role in postpartum patients because it’s levels are higher during birth and lactation than in other phases of life.

In February 2026, the FDA granted *livesilocin* breakthrough therapy status. This status is used to speed up the development of promising new medications for serious or life-threatening conditions. The drug received this status

because our research found meaningful and rapid reductions in depression scores in those who received the treatment.

In the Phase 2 study, 77% of postpartum women who received a psychedelic dose, 30mg of *livesilocin*, had significant improvement in their postpartum depression. Overall, 71% had no symptoms of postpartum depression seven days after the psychedelic session.

The purpose of an FDA Phase 2 study is to determine the effectiveness of an experimental medication on a particular disease or condition. In this case, the study is evaluating *livesilocin*’s effect on postpartum depression scores and symptoms. In the group that received the placebo, a microdose of the drug, more than half experienced an improvement in their symptoms, but most still had some symptoms after seven days.

These are much higher response and remission rates than trials of the existing medications used for postpartum depression treatment. Existing treatments include selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors, known as *SSRIs*, and a medication called *zuranolone*. The latter is the only medication to have specific FDA approval for postpartum depression.

In 2023, the Colorado legislature passed the Natural Medicine Health Act. It offers a legal pathway for people to receive natural psychedelics, such as *psilocybin* mushrooms, in therapeutic settings. The first natural medicine healing centers opened in early 2026. Some locations advertise treatments for everything from postpartum depression to birth trauma.

Oregon has a similar state-regulated program. Numerous other states have different pathways toward legal psychedelic-assisted therapies and decriminalization of *psilocybin*-assisted therapy. Nationally, there was a recent federal executive order to accelerate action on treating serious mental illnesses. The order included mention of the use of psychedelic therapies.

By the end of 2026, Phase 3 of the *livesilocin* trial for postpartum depression is slated to begin. Phase 3 trials are conducted to confirm the effectiveness and further evaluate the overall risks and benefits of a new medication. Each phase is an important regulatory step before a medication can be approved and available in clinical settings.

In Phase 3, 200 participants with postpartum depression will be recruited across participating sites. While I’m optimistic about the potential of this research, I believe its value can be established only through rigorous blinded clinical trials, objective data analysis, and conclusions and approval that are fully supported by the evidence.

How to stay safe and still enjoy produce this summer with outbreak of diarrhea-causing parasite

WASHINGTON, July 13, (AP): Scores of people in the United States have been sickened by a parasite commonly linked to contaminated fresh produce that can cause weeks of watery diarrhea. But there are ways to protect yourself and still enjoy summer’s bounty of fruits and vegetables.

The exact source of one of the nation’s largest outbreaks in years of *cyclospora* infections is still not known. And it can be hard to figure out what food sick people had in common because sometimes it’s a single ingredient that might be common in multiple recipes - like *basil* or *cilantro*.

Luckily *cyclospora* infections are generally treatable with antibiotics and rarely cause serious complications.

And there are ways to avoid getting it altogether.

Here are tips for reducing the risk:

Cyclospora is a microscopic, spherical parasite that commonly causes watery diarrhea “with frequent and sometimes explosive bowel movements,” according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

More than 1,500 people in Michigan have been diagnosed with the parasitic infection and investigations into similar illnesses have been going on in 30 other states, making it the largest such outbreak in state history and one of the nation’s largest in years. No deaths have been reported.

Cyclospora surges can be tricky to investigate, and food poisoning sources can be hard to establish. Investigations can take months and sometimes never find a clear source.

In the past, people have been infected by consuming fruits or vegetables that were exposed to feces-contaminated irrigation water. Also, it’s possible that food distributors may channel contaminated foods to both grocery stores and restaurants, making it hard to discern where tainted food came from.

Outbreaks tend to occur most often in the late spring and summer.

The heat-loving parasite infects the bowels and spreads through feces.

While the source of the outbreak is unknown, it’s a reminder to always practice basic hygiene, including washing hands with soap and water after using the bathroom and before handling food, said Dr. Erika Noel, an assistant professor at Hawaii’s medical school and a pediatrician on the island of Kauai.

Alcohol-based hand sanitizers don’t kill *cyclospora*, but soap and water are highly effective at killing or removing the parasite from hands.

Previous outbreaks have been linked to raspberries, basil, cilantro, snow peas and salad mixes.

Noel has some tips for washing produce: When washing items like cilantro and basil, separate the leaves. For green onions, cut off the roots, remove the outer layer and run them under water while rubbing the surface. Cooking produce to an internal temperature of 158 degrees Fahrenheit (70 degrees Celsius) or higher will kill *cyclospora*.

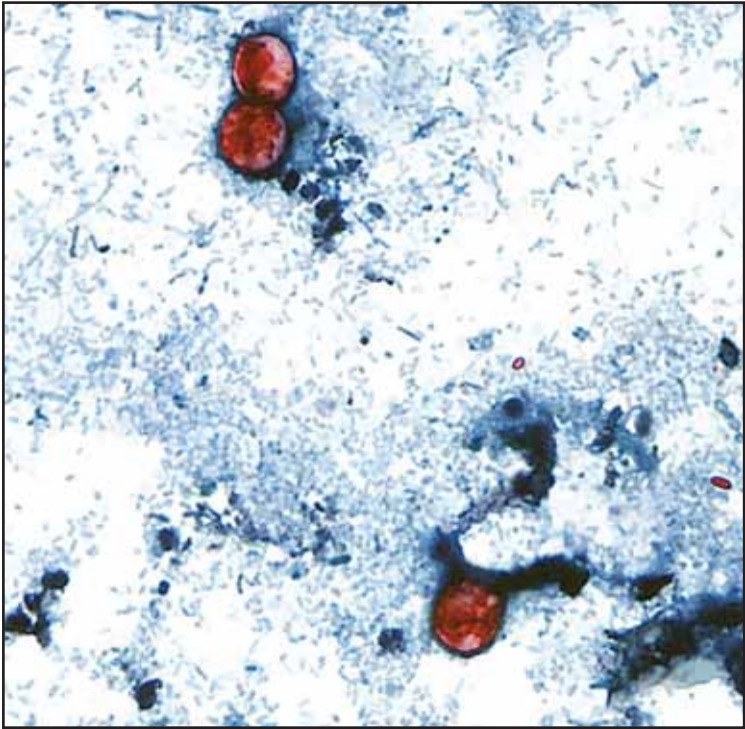
Research shows that washing fruits and vegetables in vinegar can be helpful. Vinegar won’t kill the parasite but can help remove it. Noel recommends submerging produce in a bowl filled with three parts water and one part vinegar and swishing it around for a few minutes. Using a salad spinner to rinse with water can help get rid of the vinegary taste.

Instead of purchasing pre-mixed salad and washing individual leaves, opt for a head of lettuce and removing the outer layer.

For melons, scrub the outside before cutting through as the knife can carry germs from the rind into the fruit inside.

Peel fruits and vegetables as much as possible.

Don’t forget to wash cutting boards and countertops.



This undated photo taken through a microscope provided by the CDC shows *Cyclospora cayetanensis* oocysts found in a fresh stool sample which had been prepared with a formalin solution and stained with safranin. (AP)



A highway cuts through a desertification control site of the Engebei Ecological Area near Ordos in northern China’s Inner Mongolia province on June 12. (AP)

China’s ‘Green Great Wall’ tames desert growth, but scientists warn fight not over

KUBUQI DESERT, China, July 13, (AP): For half a century, millions of workers have repeated a task across the deserts in northern China: inserting forearm-length sticks into shifting sand, first in a row, then in an intersecting line, gradually forming a grid. Then saplings are planted at the center of each small square.

The technique, known as “straw checkerboards,” is a simple yet widely used method to stabilize sand dunes against the wind and help plants take root by using water supplied through an irrigation system.

The widespread lattice it created across the sand has become the iconic image of China’s decades-long campaign against the spreading of desert conditions, known as the Three-North Protective Forest Program or the Green Great Wall.

The generations of work have yielded measurable progress, but scientists caution that preserving the gains will require decades of continued effort.

For a long time, drought, overgrazing and farming removed vegetation, harmed the soil and made

areas vulnerable to wind and sandstorms. That kind of degradation of the land over time is known as desertification. The area of desertified land in northern China peaked in 2000, and it has been reduced by over 1,000 square kilometers (400 square miles) each year since then, according to data published by state media.

The Chinese government said the initiative launched in 1978 has played a crucial role in transforming vast regions covering nearly half of China from “the desertification advancing and people retreating” to “greenery advancing and the desertification retreating.” Forests planted by the program now cover a cumulative 500,000 square kilometers (200,000 square miles) .

“The broad significance of the Three-North Program is not only the scale of restoration, but the long-term political commitment behind it,” said Barron Joseph Orr, chief scientist for the U.N. Convention to Combat Desertification. In a response to The Associated Press, he wrote that reversing desertification is possible when it becomes part of

long-term development strategies.

Elsewhere, efforts to combat desertification have included a project launched in Africa in 2007 to plant trees across a number of countries to hold back the Sahara Desert.

The progress is the result of the efforts of frontline sand-control workers, along with top-level planning and substantial state investment, said Zhu Jiaojun, a scientist at the Institute of Applied Ecology, Chinese Academy of Sciences, who has long been dedicated to the construction and management of the program. He added that increased rainfall in recent years in some areas has made vegetation restoration easier.

“The achievement of desertification combat is due to people’s hard work and a bit of luck with climate,” he said.

According to long-term monitoring data by Zhu’s team, China’s desertified land has shrunk by around 10% overall since 2000, and areas of severely or extremely desertified land have decreased by more than 40%. Forest cover in the program area has risen from around 5% in 1978 to 14% in 2022.

3.7mn Afghan kids at heightened risk of malnutrition, UNICEF warns

KABUL, July 13, (Xinhua): The UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF) has raised the alarm that 3.7 million children under the age of 5 in Afghanistan are at heightened risk of malnutrition, according to a new report issued on Sunday.

The report highlighted child food and nutrition insecurity as a primary driver of undernutrition, warning that poor diets and rising food insecurity are pushing vulnerable young children closer to life-threatening conditions even before the peak wasting season begins.

Compounding the crisis are multiple interconnected factors, including recurrent disease outbreaks, low immunization coverage, inadequate water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services, as well as widening funding and supply gaps, said the report.

The findings reveal early warning signs such as reduced dietary diversity, skipped meals, and children consuming less than their nutritional needs. “Young children in Afghanistan are being pushed closer



Latifa Bakkar attempts to give oxygen to her severely malnourished 2½-year-old son, Abu Bakar, as a nurse inserts an intravenous cannula into his arm at Indira Gandhi Children’s Hospital in Kabul, Afghanistan on Feb 15.

to malnutrition before the peak season has even begun,” said Tajudeen Oyewale, UNICEF representative in Afghanistan.

The agency is urgently calling for increased investment to safeguard

children’s diets and prevent a further surge in malnutrition cases, emphasizing the need for early intervention to protect the most vulnerable before the situation deteriorates further. Also:

Congo Ebola outbreak remains ‘very active,’ peak not yet in sight: minister

KINSHASA, July 13, (Agencies): The ongoing Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) remains in a “very active” phase, and it is still too early to determine when infections will reach their peak, Health Minister Roger Kamba said.

Kamba made the comments in a video provided Thursday by the health ministry during his visit to Bunia, capital of the eastern Ituri Province, epicenter of the outbreak.

“We are still in an active, even very active, phase of the disease,” Kamba said while reviewing the national response after nearly two months of operations.

Citing high population density, frequent population movement, and local factors that complicate community engagement, Kamba said: “We cannot yet determine today the point at which the outbreak will reach its peak.”

Meanwhile, a US citizen working for a humanitarian organization in Congo has tested positive for the Ebola



A health worker prepares a patient’s blood sample for testing at Bunia General Hospital in Bunia, Congo on June 11. (AP)

virus, the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said on Friday, as the Central African country struggles to contain the swelling outbreak.

The CDC said it was working with

the person’s employer, US agencies, the public health authorities and Congolese partners to prevent further transmission and identify close contacts.

Al-Fahaheel finalizes foreign signings as Al-Shatti nears Al-Khaldiya move

Challon joins Al-Arabi's foreign contingent; Sporty recruits Bahman

By Hassan Mosa
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff
KUWAIT CITY, July 13: Al-Arabi has added Brazilian midfielder Lucas Challon as their third foreign signing ahead of the new season, with the player joining Nigerian Anayo Iwuala and Ethiopian Kenan Maleko as part of the club's squad reinforcement plans.
Challon spent last season with Al-Sulaibikhat before making the move to the Green Castle.
The club's management continues to assess several foreign player options after ending its association with Bahrain international Kamil Al-Aswad and Moroccan defender Nabil Marmouk, while the future of Palestinian player Zaid Qanbar remains undecided.
Al-Arabi has also strengthened their local squad by signing Talal Al-Qaisi from Kazma and Ali Al-

Doukhi, who previously featured for Al-Shabab and Al-Fahaheel.
The team is also preparing for its upcoming continental assignment on August 12, when it hosts India's East Bengal in the AFC Champions League Two playoff round.
Meanwhile, Al-Arabi coach Nasser Al-Shatti is reportedly close to taking over at Bahrain's Al-Khaldiya, with talks between the two parties nearing completion despite his current contract with Al-Arabi running until June 2028.
Elsewhere, First Division side Sporty has signed actor Abdullah Bahman, who will join the team as a goalkeeper. Bahman completed the move in the presence of club president Ahmed Mudaath.
Sporty currently occupies the bottom position in the First Division League, which resumes on



Sporty Club president Ahmed Medath and officials pose with Abdullah Bahman during the presentation.

July 25.
Al-Fahaheel has finalized their foreign player roster ahead of the new season after signing Cape Verde striker Alvin Fortes and extending the contracts of Brazilian



Brazilian midfielder and new Al-Arabi signing Lucas Challon is in action during a game.

duo Vitor Vieira and Carlos Bruno. The club had previously se-

cured the services of Ethiopian international Gatos Banom and South African forward Ranga Chivaviro, 33, while also adding goalkeeper Ali Fadel, defenders Mohammed Al-Farsi and Abdulaziz Naji, and striker Hamad Al-Taweel.
Al-Fahaheel also appointed Slovak coach Martin Sevela as successor to Syrian coach Firas Al-Khatib. Sevela previously managed Saudi clubs Al-Adalah, Al-Okhlood and Abha.
In other transfer news, Al-Shabab signed former Kuwait internationals Omar Al-Habaiter and Rashid Al-Mutairi, along with Yousef Najaf and Mohammed Al-Qahtani.
The club also renewed the contracts of Ali Mustafa, Mohammed Khalil, goalkeeper Jassim Al-Awadhi, Shaheen Al-Khamis, Hussein Al-Harbi and Yaqoub Al-Tararwah

Ryu wins Evian playoff for 2nd straight major

Kim's perfect Sunday seals title

EVIAN-LES-BAINES, France, July 13, (AP): Haeran Ryu closed with an even-par 71 and birdied the first hole of a playoff with Brooke Henderson to win the Evian Championship on Sunday for a second straight major title in the space of three weeks.

The South Korean golfer backed up her victory at the Women's PGA Championship at Hazeltine National Golf Club on June 29.
Ryu and Henderson (64) finished on 19-under par for the week at Evian Golf Resort, with Henderson making three eagles in her final round as she sought a third major title of her career. They included a hole-in-one at No. 8 and an eagle at No. 18 that got the 2022 champion into the playoff.
They went back up No. 18, Henderson had to lay up after pulling her drive, and she wound up making par.
Ryu, who shot 60 on Saturday for the lowest round at a major, rolled in a birdie putt from three feet to ensure there would be double major winners in the same year for the first time in women's golf. Nelly Korda won the Chevron Championship and the U.S. Women's Open.
Tom Kim played bogey-free during a tight race to the finish Sunday and closed with a 6-under 64 for a two-shot victory in the Scottish Open, his first PGA Tour title since the fall of 2023.
Kim delivered the clinching blow with a shot from 203 yards to 6 feet on the par-4 16th, giving him a two-shot lead. He finished with a 4-foot par putt on the 18th. Min Woo lee shot 67 to finish alone in second.
Matt Fitzpatrick, who shared the 54-hole lead with Robert MacIntyre when the fog-delayed third round was completed Sunday morn-



Haeran Ryu, of South Korea, celebrates with her trophy after winning the Evian Championship women's golf tournament, in Evian, eastern France. (AP)

ing, had a 69 and tied for third with MacIntyre (69), Keita Nakajima (67) and Johnny Keefe (67).
It was a big finish for Keefe, the Korn Ferry Tour player of the year in 2025 who earned one of three spots to the British Open next week, along with Michael Thorbjornsen and Victor Perez.
Zach Johnson won his first PGA Tour Champions major in the final event at Firestone Country Club, closing with a 2-under 68 for a six-shot victory Sunday in the Kaulig Companies Championship.
Johnson had a 63 in the third round that staked him to a four-shot lead entering the final round, and even with a pair of bogeys in his opening four holes, no one came particularly close.

It was Johnson's third win in his rookie season on the 50-and-older PGA Tour Champions, allowing him to close the gap on Stewart Cink in the Charles Schwab Cup. The victory makes Johnson eligible for The Players Championship next year.
Johnson finished at 15-under 265. Boo Weekley closed with a 66 to finish alone in second at 9-under 271, followed by Rory Sabbatini, the 2020 Tokyo Olympic silver medalist from Slovakia, who had a 66-66 weekend. Cink finished fourth with a closing round of 68.
Steven Fisk outlasted Taylor Pendrith in the ISCO Championship on Sunday for his second PGA Tour title, two-putting for par on the third hole of a playoff.

Fisk closed with a 3-under 67 in cloudy and breezy conditions at Hurstbourne Country Club to match Pendrith at 16-under 264.
Played opposite the Scottish Open, the event was sanctioned by the PGA Tour and the European tour. The 29-year-old Fisk gets into the PGA Championship but not the Masters next year. Last October, he won the Sanderson Farms Championship in Mississippi for his first PGA Tour title.
Pendrith finished with a 65. The 35-year-old Canadian was trying to win for the second time on the tour.
Ross Steelman won The Blue Championship on Sunday for his first Korn Ferry Tour title, shooting a 4-under 68 for a one-stroke victory over Tommy Morrison.

Wallace loses second after penalty

Blaney wins rain-delayed Atlanta thriller

HAMPTON, Ga., July 13, (AP): A late brush with the wall wasn't enough to send Ryan Blaney to pit row.
The decision paid off with a dominant victory.
Blaney emerged from a three-wide battle on the final lap of overtime in the weather-delayed NASCAR Cup Series race at Atlanta early Monday.
Blaney won every stage of the race and led 171 laps after starting on the pole, but the Team Penske Ford driver had to fight off challenges from Bubba Wallace and Christopher Hill, who finished second, on the final lap. Carson Hocevar and Ty Gibbs rounded out the top four.
Wallace was penalized for passing below the double yellow lines and finished 29th instead of second.
There was a delay of 3 hours, 9 minutes because of rain and lightning. The race ended at 1:45 a.m. at EchoPark Speedway.
Blaney won the first two stages but brushed the wall with 29 laps remaining, causing possible damage on his right side, after he was cut off by Wallace. Blaney remained on the track despite telling his crew he felt a "terrible" vibration.
"I tried to make a move and just got loose and hit the fence," Blaney said. "You know I think it's just concrete in the wheels and paint and stuff like that but luckily it still drove



Bubba Wallace (23) and Ryan Blaney (12) move on the track during a NASCAR Cup Series auto race in Hampton, Ga. (AP)

really decent. ... It wasn't too bad. Luckily it wasn't enough damage we couldn't keep running."
Blaney's crew chief Jonathan Hassler said his team was able to view photos of the right side of the car and determine the best chance to win was to remain on the track.
"There were 30 cars on the lead lap at that point and not a lot of laps left," Hassler said. "Our best chance to win was to stay out there."
Multiple drivers, including Kyle Larson, Chase Briscoe and Riley Herbst,

were involved in a wreck with five laps remaining to set up the overtime.
There had been concern about approaching rain before lighting within eight miles of the 1.54-mile oval track near Atlanta led NASCAR officials to order cars off the track and advise fans to exit the grandstand. Rain began soon after the race was delayed. Following some caution laps and pit stops, the race went back to green at 12:02 a.m.
Blaney said he "took a nap and ate a little food" during the delay. Lar-

son said the resumption of the race a few minutes before midnight "is definitely past my bedtime."
Blaney won the pole and his Team Penske teammate Joey Logano joined him on the front row. A third Team Penske driver, Austin Cindric, moved up to third early in the race for an early strong showing for the Fords.
Cup Series points leader Denny Hamlin, who qualified 28th, finished 12th. Tyler Reddick was eighth.
Reddick, who won at EchoPark Speedway in February as part of his string of five wins in the season's first nine races, qualified only 31st on Saturday. By the 35th lap he already had moved up to fourth, proving early that he again would be a factor in Atlanta.
The weather delay was the first caution for cause in the race, a dramatic departure from the weekend's first race.
There were a track-record 13 cautions in Saturday night's O'Reilly Auto Parts Series race won by Justin Allgaier. That total included four red flag incidents, creating an ominous preview for the Cup Series race.
The first caution for an incident on the track in the Cup Series race came when AJ Allmendinger lost control of his Chevrolet with 67 laps remaining. Allmendinger blew a tire and hit the wall with 25 laps remaining to cause another caution.

Fever dominates Aces

Bueckers stars as Wings edge Sky to extend winning streak

DALLAS, July 13, (AP): Paige Bueckers had 22 points and 11 assists, Jessica Shepard added 19 points and 10 rebounds, and the Dallas Wings beat the Chicago Sky 96-91 on Sunday.
The Wings (16-8) have won a season-high five straight games, their longest streak since also winning five in a row in 2023.
Arike Ogunbowale scored 17 points and Azzi Fudd 16 for Dallas at the American Airlines Center, home of the NBA's Mavericks, in front of a crowd of 13,236.
Li Yueru had 10 points and a season-high 10 rebounds and slowed down Chicago's Kamilla Cardoso after a hot start. Cardoso had six points on 3-of-5 shooting and five rebounds in the first five minutes before Yueru came off the bench.
Fever to 109, Aces 75
In Las Vegas, Caitlin Clark had 12 points, seven rebounds and six assists, Kelsey Mitchell scored 27 points, and the Indiana Fever beat A'ja Wilson and the Las Vegas Aces.
Mitchell became the fifth player in WNBA history to score at least 25 points in six consecutive games, joining Wilson, Tina Charles, Arike Ogunbowale and Maya Moore.
Aliyah Boston added 19 points and 11 rebounds for the Fever (14-9), and Sophie Cunningham scored 20 points and tied her season high with six 3-pointers.
Wilson finished with 20 points and 12 rebounds and Chelsea Gray added 15 points for the Aces. Las Vegas (17-7), which beat Phoenix 106-58 on Saturday, fell a half-game behind WNBA-leading Minnesota into a second-place tie with Golden State.
Clark, on a minutes restriction as she recovers from a lingering back injury, made 5 of 11 from the field, just 1 of 5 from behind the arc.
Mitchell had her 39th consecutive game scoring in double figures, the second-longest streak of its kind in franchise history.
Mitchell scored 20 first-half points,

Boston added 15 and the duo combined for 14-of-22 (63.6%) shooting. The Fever, who shot 59% (22 of 37) from the field, made 7 of 13 (54%) from 3-point range, and hit 8 of 8 from the free-throw line, took a 59-48 lead at the intermission - tied for Indiana's highest-scoring first half this season.
Liberty 93, Toronto 91
In Montreal, Marina Mabrey scored 30 points, Nyara Sabally made the tie-breaking basket with 52 seconds left after Toronto blew a 20-point lead, and the Tempo beat the New York Liberty at the Bell Centre.
Mabrey had her second consecutive 30-point game and her fifth this season, including a 53-point performance - which tied the WNBA's single-game record - in a 125-97 win over Los Angeles on June 25.
Breanna Stewart made a layup that tied it at 91-all with 1:30 to play, but Julie Allemand, who finished with 10 assists, found Sabally for the go-ahead layup as the Tempo snapped a four-game losing streak, the longest of their expansion season.
Sabrina Ionescu scored 28 points and Stewart added 22 for the Liberty (13-11), who have lost seven of their last nine. Jonquel Jones had 10 points and 10 rebounds.
Mystics 84, Storm 79
In Washington, Shakira Austin scored 10 of her 27 points in the fourth quarter, Kiki Iriafen had 12 points and 13 rebounds for her ninth double-double this season, and the Washington Mystics beat the Seattle Storm.
Sonia Citron added 19 points and rookie Lauren Betts scored 11 for the Mystics (11-10).
The Storm shot just 4 of 14 (29%) from the field and committed eight of their 19 turnovers while they were outscored 20-11 in the fourth quarter.
Natasha Hiedeman scored a career-high 31 points on 14-of-24 shooting for the Storm (6-19). The rest of the team combined to make 16 of 46 (35%) from the field.

McCullum apologizes to England fans after being axed as test coach

BIRMINGHAM, England, July 13, (AP): Brendon McCullum has apologized to English cricket fans for his results as the national test coach and accepted "it's time for someone else to have a go."
McCullum remained in charge of the limited-overs setup but was axed on Sunday from the red-ball role he had held since 2022.
The New Zealander confirmed he was sacked and did not stand down, as the England and Wales Cricket Board said in a statement.
"Yeah, I got a tap on the shoulder," he said at Edgbaston on Monday, a day before England and India begin a one-day international series.
"I was disappointed but at the same time I fully respect the decision. We're in a results business and fundamentally our results weren't good enough. It's time for someone else to have a go."
McCullum's record as England

test coach was 27 wins, two draws, and 20 defeats. His tenure, alongside Ben Stokes as captain, was nicknamed Bazball. The aggressive play energized test cricket and produced spectacular results. England won 10 of his first 11 tests in charge.
But as veterans in the side retired, the results waned. England lost seven of his last nine tests, including 2-1 to New Zealand last month that culminated in Stokes' retirement.
England also couldn't win the flagship series; it drew with Australia and India 2-2 at home and lost to both away.
"We just weren't quite able to win those big series, against India and Australia. For that I guess I can only say sorry," he said.
"I was the leader of that group. I was in charge of the team culturally, in charge of the team tactically, in charge of the team results-wise as well.



VAR, new rules under fire after controversies

Officials stand firm amid criticism

ATLANTA, July 13, (AP): It was another game-changing moment at the World Cup that had more to do with television replays in a room far away than a moment of brilliance on the field.

The sending off of Switzerland’s Breel Embolo in Saturday’s quarterfinal game against Argentina was the latest call that may have left fans scratching their heads, not least because of the confusing name of the newly implemented law that swung the match.

It is called the “mistaken identity” rule. Yet, technically, Embolo was not shown a second yellow card - resulting in a red - for a case of mistaken identity. It was because the referee Joao Pinheiro did not see in real time that the forward had simulated a foul under a challenge from Argentina’s Leandro Paredes.

Paredes was initially shown a yellow card, which is a key factor. Under FIFA rules, because Paredes was shown a card, the video assistant referee (VAR) can intervene and recommend that the on-field official review the sideline monitor.

After review, the referee deemed Embolo to have committed a “clear simulation” and showed him a second yellow card and sent him off.

The rules state that the VAR can assist when the referee penalizes the “wrong team for an offense that results in a red or yellow card being shown to the wrong player.” It was a pivotal point in the match, coming five minutes after Switzerland had made it 1-1. Argentina won 3-1 after extra time.

It is not the first time at this World Cup that teams have hit out against new rules or technology.

Newly tightened regulations contributed to Germany’s shock elimination in the round of 32.

Defender Jonathan Tah’s potentially game-winning goal in extra time against Paraguay was ruled out after VAR review for a foul on goal-



The screen shows that a goal by Germany’s Jonathan Tah (4) was disqualified after a VAR check during the World Cup round of 32 soccer match between Germany and Paraguay in Foxborough, Mass., near Boston. (AP)

keeper Orlando Gill.

Replays showed Germany’s Waldemar Anton push Gill to the ground, but the minimal contact led to criticism of the decision. FIFA’s referees chief Pierluigi Collina said officials had been told to punish incidents when players try to block opponents and make no attempt to play the ball, especially where goalkeepers are concerned.

Germany went on to lose the game in a penalty shootout, with Tah firing a decisive spot kick over the bar.

Elimination could have a seismic

effect on German soccer, with coach Julian Nagelsmann resigning and Jurgen Klopp expected to take over.

The words “connected ball technology” will likely haunt Luka Modric and Croatia for years to come.

The high-tech soccer ball fitted with “advanced sensors” used at this World Cup cost Croatia a dramatic late equalizer against Portugal in the round of 32.

Josko Gvardiol thought he’d scored in added time to make it

2-2, but the goal was ruled offside after VAR review because the in-ball sensors picked up the slightest of touches from Croatia’s Igor Mantanovic in the buildup that was undetectable to the naked eye or even video replays.

FIFA said the in-ball sensors, which capture data 500 times per second, were so finely tuned to be “capable of determining any slight contact ... allowing officials an unprecedented level of data to make fast, accurate decisions.”

Croatia coach Zlatko Dalić, who

has since stepped down, was not impressed.

“All these decisions take the joy out of football,” he said.

It was shaping up to be one of the great World Cup upsets. Egypt led 2-0 against defending champion Argentina in the round of 16 and might have been 3-0 up if not for VAR.

With the score at 1-0 in the second half, Egypt’s Mostafa Zico finished off a sweeping attack. But wild celebrations were cut short when a foul on Argentina’s Lisandro Martinez

earlier in the move was confirmed on video review, and the goal was disallowed.

Argentina staged a spectacular late comeback to win 3-2.

Egypt coach Hossam Hassan launched a furious tirade.

“We have suffered injustice,” he said.

The Egyptian soccer federation went further.

“Several key incidents raised serious concerns and left profound questions about the consistency and fairness of decisions that directly influenced the course of the game,” it said.

Questions were raised about the amount of time between the foul on Martinez, which happened deep in Egypt’s half, and the goal at the other end of the field.

FIFA referees chief Collina responded to criticism to say there was “no defined limit regarding either the distance from goal or the amount of time between the incident and the goal.”

“Nobody can question the integrity of the FIFA World Cup match officials,” he added.

The high-tech sensor was called into action again as England beat Norway 2-1 in the quarterfinals.

Norway’s players and staff were adamant the ball hit a cable that suspends overhead cameras in the buildup to Jude Bellingham’s equalizing goal in the first half. If it had, play would have been stopped.

But FIFA insisted there was no contact, saying the sensor “showed no peak in the ‘heartbeat of the ball’ when in the air, and therefore no evidence that the ball touched the overhead wire.”

Norway also had a goal disallowed when the score was 1-1 after VAR spotted a foul by Erling Haaland on England’s Elliot Anderson.

The infringement came before the corner was taken and, under new rules to try to limit fouls by attacking teams during corner routines, VAR is allowed to intervene regarding incidents that happen even before the ball is kicked.

Police investigate the death of SA World Cup soccer player Adams

CAPE TOWN, South Africa, July 13, (AP): Police said Monday they are investigating the death of South Africa World Cup soccer player Jayden Adams, after his body was discovered this weekend at a property in the city of Cape Town.

The 25-year-old Adams died two weeks after helping South Africa reach the knockout stage of a World Cup for the first time.

Authorities have not released a cause of death.

“Cape Town central police registered an inquest for investigation following the discovery of the body of a 25-year-old male on Saturday,” police said in a statement sent to The Associated Press. “Circumstances surrounding this incident are under investigation.”

Police said the body was discovered at a property in the Cape Town neighborhood of Schotsche Kloof at around 11 a.m. on Saturday, but gave no more details.

Adams’ father, Juanito Adams, told South African TV news station eNCA on Sunday that the family were waiting for the results of an autopsy and had not yet made any funeral plans.

“As you all know, it was an untimely death. The family is struggling to process it,” Juanito Adams said. “It won’t be easy to carry on. People say it will become easier, but it won’t. You just learn to live with it.”

Adams played in all three of South Africa’s group games as it produced



In this file photo, South Africa’s Jayden Adams during the World Cup Group A soccer match between Czechia and South Africa in Atlanta. (AP)

its best performance at the World Cup. He did not feature in the 1-0 loss to Canada in the round of 32 on June 28.

South Africa Sports Minister Gayton McKenzie said Adams had played in his team’s group game against Czech Republic hours after learning that his grandmother had died. McKenzie asked the public and media to “exercise restraint and compassion” and not speculate on the cause of Adams’ death while authorities conduct an investigation.

KANSAS CITY, Mo., July 13, (AP): Switzerland forward Breel Embolo was sent off in the second half of its World Cup quarterfinal loss to Argentina on Saturday night, a controversial decision following a video review that is certain to fuel those who believe referees have been biased toward the reigning champion throughout the tournament.

Dan Ndoye had just tied the game at 1-all in the 67th minute when Argentina’s Leandro Paredes was shown a yellow card following a tackle on Embolo. But video showed that the Swiss player was falling before Paredes made contact with him, so Embolo was given a yellow card under the “mistaken identity” protocol that’s being used at the World Cup.

Embolo also had received a yellow card earlier in the match, so he was sent off and the Swiss were left to play with 10 men the rest of the way.

Switzerland managed to get the game to extra time, and was trying to survive to a shootout. But then Julián Alvarez scored from long range in the 112th minute, and Lautaro Martínez added another goal a few minutes later, sending Argentina to a 3-1 victory.

“We were punished because of a rule that in my opinion is completely unacceptable,” Swiss coach Murat Yakin said. “It’s very painful



Switzerland’s Breel Embolo (7) battles for the ball with Argentina’s Leandro Paredes (5) during the World Cup quarterfinal soccer match between Argentina and Switzerland in Kansas City, Mo. (AP)

that we were eliminated that way. I don’t think we deserve that today, and in my opinion, my boys are the real heroes. They put all their heart and their passion into their performance. I am very proud. They are very proud.”

Yakin wasn’t done with his criticism of Portuguese referee João Pinheiro, though.

“The referee made the wrong decision,” Yakin said. “It was in my opinion a harmless foul, if it even was a foul. I know they will protect their referee but this rule destroyed

our game today, and it’s very painful, and to be eliminated in that way hurts a lot.”

Argentina coach Lionel Scaloni acknowledged that “luck was on our side because one of their players was sent off.”

It was the second time a yellow card was overturned using the “mistaken identity” protocol at the World Cup. The relatively obscure rule allows the video assistant referee to intervene when an incorrect player is shown a yellow or red card.

“I think the red card changed our

game,” Swiss captain Granit Khaka said. “This decision was difficult to accept now after the game because the dressing room was very quiet, disappointed.”

Earlier this week, the Egyptian Football Association said it “cannot remain silent” after what it believed was biased officiating in its 3-2 loss to Argentina in the Round of 16. Egypt coach Hossam Hassan and several players had criticized the officiating after the defending champion scored three unanswered goals to pull off one of the biggest comebacks in World Cup history.

“Nobody can question the integrity of the FIFA World Cup match officials,” FIFA’s chief of refereeing Pierluigi Collina said in response Wednesday. “When this happens, it may provoke reactions that lead to threats against them and their families. This is not right.”

Yakin stopped short of saying Argentina was being favored by World Cup referees. But he also did not hold back about an incident that he believes changed the complexion of Saturday night’s match.

“We were punished by a referee’s mistake,” he said. “I didn’t know this rule before. It was a very harmless situation, and then a yellow card was awarded. The VAR interfered. It was a very meaningful moment for us, and it was decisive in the outcome of the match.”

Former Spanish leader criticized for comments about France team

MADRID, July 13, (AP): A former Spanish prime minister is facing criticism for saying that France’s World Cup team “does not have any French players,” which French and Spanish leaders have called racist.

Mariano Rajoy, a member of Spain’s conservative Popular Party, made the comment in a column for Spanish outlet El Debate ahead of Tuesday’s World Cup semifinal between the European neighbors.

“They’ve won every match they’ve played at this World Cup and are currently top of the FIFA rankings. They also have an exceptionally strong squad. That said, one thing they don’t have is any French players,” Rajoy wrote

on July 10.

On Monday, French Foreign Minister Jean-Noël Barrot told French broadcaster BFM TV that “France has no skin color. Any contrary claim stems from stupidity, racism or a combination of the two.”

A day earlier, French Football Federation president Philippe Diallo wrote on X that “Mariano Rajoy’s remarks about the French team carry intolerable whiffs of racism,” adding that “they also raise questions about the deplorable climate that gives rise to such sentiments. Our players do not need a certificate of nationality from a former Spanish prime minister.”

Spain’s ruling Socialist govern-



France’s Kylian Mbappe (10) celebrates after winning the World Cup quarterfinal soccer match between France and Morocco in Foxborough, Mass., near Boston. (AP)

ment swiftly condemned the remarks by Rajoy, who was prime minister from 2011 to 2018.

On Sunday, Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez referenced the comments without naming his predecessor, writing on X: “There are those who still measure belonging by surname, place of birth, or skin color. Others measure it by our roots in a country and our will to contribute to it. Playing soccer. Caring for our elders. Or opening businesses. France, we’ll see you in the semifinals. May the best one win and may racism lose.”

France will face Spain on Tuesday in Dallas.

Spain’s Foreign Minister José Manuel Albares also spoke out Monday, saying the Popular Par-

ty’s leader, Alberto Núñez Feijóo, needed to disavow the remarks.

It’s not the first time France’s team has faced racism during this World Cup.

Earlier this month, French captain and star player Kylian Mbappé

condemned a Paraguayan senator over remarks she made following Paraguay’s loss to France in the round of 16.

Celeste Amarilla, a senator from Paraguay’s Liberal Radical Party, posted a series of comments on X mocking the French player’s origins, upbringing, education and appearance after France won on July 4 with a penalty by Mbappé.



In this file photo, Dortmund's Karim Adeyemi controls the ball during the German Bundesliga soccer match between Borussia Dortmund and FC Heidenheim in Dortmund, Germany. Barcelona has reached a deal to sign Borussia Dortmund forward Karim Adeyemi, according to club president Joan Laporta. (AP)

Sports

European giants France, Spain fight for final spot

La Roja enter clash with confidence

DALLAS, July 13, (AP): Two European giants go head-to-head tonight as France, two-time world champions in 1998 and 2018, face Spain, the 2010 winners, in a highly anticipated 2026 World Cup semifinal clash in Dallas, Texas.

France has produced a near-perfect tournament so far, winning all three of its Group I matches before navigating the knockout stages without conceding a goal. Didier Deschamps' side overcame Sweden 3-0 in the round of 32, defeated Paraguay 1-0 in the round of 16, and continued its impressive run with a 2-0 quarterfinal victory over Morocco, despite Kylian Mbappé missing an early penalty.

The semifinal appearance marks France's third straight World Cup trip to the last four and its eighth overall, with only Germany having reached the stage more often with 12 appearances.

The encounter will also see Deschamps set a World Cup record by taking charge of his 26th match at the tournament.

A victory would send France into a third consecutive World Cup final, joining an exclusive list of teams — Brazil and Germany being the only others — to achieve that milestone. It would also provide an opportunity to overcome the disappointment of the 2022 final, when Argentina



Left: Spain's Lamine Yamal (19) controls the ball during the World Cup quarterfinal soccer match between Spain and Belgium in Inglewood, Calif., near Los Angeles. Right: France's Kylian Mbappe (10) celebrates after winning the World Cup quarterfinal soccer match between France and Morocco in Foxborough, Mass., near Boston. (AP)



denied it back-to-back titles after a penalty shootout victory in Qatar.

Spain, meanwhile, arrives as reigning European champion and has grown stronger throughout the competition after a slow start. La Roja were held to a surprise goalless draw by Cape Verde in its opening Group

H match but recovered to finish top of the group with seven points.

After ending a long wait for World Cup knockout success, Spain defeated Austria 3-0 in the round of 32 and Portugal 1-0 in the round of 16 before edging Belgium 2-1 in the quarterfinals. It conceded its first

goal of the tournament in that match, with substitute Mikel Merino once again proving decisive by scoring a late winner after previously rescuing Spain in the earlier rounds.

This is only Spain's second World Cup semifinal appearance since its 2010 triumph, but its recent re-

cord in major tournaments remains impressive, having reached six of its last seven semifinal stages.

Coach Luis de la Fuente's side enters the clash with confidence, carrying the longest unbeaten streak across World Cup and European Championship matches, with 12

wins and one draw. Spain has also avoided defeat in regular time since March 2024, recording 26 victories and 10 draws.

The two teams have faced each other 38 times, with Spain holding the historical advantage with 18 wins, seven draws and 13 defeats.

Al-Jalahma meets club chiefs over facilities and competition reforms



Minister of State for Youth and Sports Affairs Dr. Tareq Al-Jalahma hold meeting with presidents of local sports clubs.

KUWAIT CITY, July 13: Minister of State for Youth and Sports Affairs Dr. Tareq Al-Jalahma met with presidents of local sports clubs to discuss key issues affecting the sports sector, including club facilities and the organization of competitions.

The Public Authority for Sports said the meeting focused on assessing the current situation of clubs and addressing the main challenges they face, while providing a platform for dialogue and the exchange of ideas aimed at

improving the overall sports system.

During the meeting, clubs suggested reviewing the competition format by staging matches at three or four designated venues instead of following the traditional home-and-away system.

Al-Jalahma urged clubs to use their investment revenues to maintain their facilities, noting that the ministry has not allocated a dedicated budget for maintenance work.

Kuwait targets deep run as 2nd West Asia Volleyball Championship opens in Muscat

By Khaled Al-Enezi
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

MUSCAT, July 13: The second West Asia Men's Volleyball Championship gets underway today in Muscat, Oman, with seven national teams competing for the title in a tournament set to run until July 22.

The opening match will feature hosts Oman against Lebanon in Group B, as teams from across the region begin their quest for championship glory.

Kuwait's national team enters the competition with strong ambitions after completing an intensive preparation phase that included a training camp in Cairo. During the camp, the team played four friendly matches as the coaching staff worked on improving the players' technical and physical readiness while finalizing the squad's lineup.

Kuwait will begin its campaign tomorrow against Syria in Group A, while Iraq and Saudi Arabia will also meet in another Group B fixture.

The seven participating teams have been divided into two groups, with the top two sides from each group advancing to the semifinals. The remaining teams will compete in placement matches to determine



Players preparing for the opening match against Syria.

their final rankings.

Led by Argentine coach Julian Alvarez, Kuwait hopes to capitalize on the team's growing cohesion and the experience of several key players as it aims for a deep run and a place in the final. The tournament also serves as a valuable preparation opportunity ahead of future continental challenges.

The championship has drawn considerable interest from the West Asia Volleyball Association, which is focused on strengthening competition among regional teams and contributing to the continued growth of the sport. The Omani organizing committee has completed all arrangements for the event, which concludes on July 22.

Zverev leapfrogs Alcaraz into the No. 2 spot

Sinner keeps improving, echoing Federer, Nadal and Djokovic's winning formula

LONDON, July 13, (AP): A perfectly-placed top-spin lob winner that sailed beyond reach of his 6-foot-6 (1.98-meter) opponent and landed on the outside of the baseline in the second game.

A delicate drop shot which made Alexander Zverev change direction so suddenly that the German player over-extended his right knee at a crucial point of the third set.

Sure, there were plenty of the usual whizzing, missile-like baseline winners from Jannik Sinner in his victory over Zverev in the Wimbledon final. He also showed off the new variety of his game, though - which came in handy when Zverev unleashed more power than he had used before against the top-ranked player.

The variety of shots were what Sinner's two coaches, Darren Cahill and Simone Vagnozzi, appreciated most from their player in Sunday's match.

Just like the Big Three and Big Four before them - Roger Federer, Rafael Nadal, Novak Djokovic and Andy Murray - Sinner, Zverev and Carlos Alcaraz (who is out injured) are continually evolving their games, Cahill noted.

"Alexander is now playing a different style of



Jannik Sinner of Italy holds up the winners trophy after defeating Alexander Zverev of Germany in the men's singles final at Wimbledon Tennis Championships in London. (AP)

tennis against Jannik," Cahill said. "We know Jannik is going to have to improve in certain areas to handle that type of game. Carlos is going to come back really strong, as well - as we all hope ... You need to keep adding things to his game."

"We saw a lot of the stuff he doesn't normally like doing, even in the final today: sliced back-

hands, a couple lobs, couple drop shots. Really stepping up when he needed to in the big moments."

Sinner's second consecutive Wimbledon victory matched the two titles that Alcaraz won before him at the All England Club and raised his overall tally to five Grand Slams - narrowing the gap to Alcaraz's seven.

Alcaraz missed the French Open and Wimbledon this year due to a right wrist injury and it remains unclear if he'll return in time for the year's final Grand Slam at the U.S. Open.

Zverev's performance in London leapfrogged him ahead of Alcaraz into the No. 2 spot when the new rankings were released Monday.

Zverev's run on the grass followed his first major title at the French Open last month - after Sinner's stunning second-round meltdown in Paris.

"Big, big respect to Sascha, because he's doing something amazing. His game is growing and growing," Sinner said, using Zverev's nickname. "You have always someone who is pushing you to the limit. We hope that Carlos is coming back, as well, because tennis needs him."

Sheikh Jaber Al-Sabah claims podium finish in Formula 4 rookie category

AMSTERDAM, July 13, (KUNA): Kuwaiti racer Sheikh Jaber Athbi Al-Sabah secured third place in the rookie category and finished seventh overall in the third round of the Formula 4 (F4) championship, held in the Netherlands.

Speaking to KUNA by phone, Sheikh Jaber said his performances have been improving steadily while competing against experienced international drivers, describing his strong results in such a competitive environment as a major achievement.

He expressed confidence in continuing to progress throughout the championship, highlighting his fifth-place finish in qualifying as a significant accomplishment given the high level of competition from drivers representing different countries in the global series.



KUNA photo
Kuwaiti racer Sheikh Jaber Athbi Al-Sabah