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KUWAIT SHIELDS SKIES AMID IRANIAN MISSILE, DRONE BARRAGE

Iran's retaliation threat puts Gulf on high alert

Tehran warns region faces infrastructure assault over US strikes

KUWAIT CITY, July 16, (Agencies): Kuwait's air defense systems responded Thursday to hostile aerial threats, intercepting drones that entered the country's airspace as the armed forces urged citizens and residents to follow official safety instructions.

In a statement posted on X, the General Staff of the Kuwaiti Armed Forces said explosions heard in several areas were caused by air defense systems engaging hostile drones. The military did not immediately disclose details on the origin of the drones or whether the incident resulted in casualties or damage.

The Ministry of Defense later announced that Kuwait's armed forces had successfully detected and intercepted four cruise missiles and 21 hostile unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) that violated national airspace since dawn on Wednesday.

Ministry spokesperson Colonel Saud Al-Atwan said the hostile Iranian aerial aggression targeted several vital infrastructure facilities across the country. He confirmed that the interceptions neutralized the main threats, with the attacks causing material damage but no casualties.

Al-Atwan stressed that the armed forces remain on the highest level of combat readiness and operational alert, continuing their defensive missions to safeguard Kuwait's sovereignty and protect citizens, residents and national interests.

Kuwait condemns Iranian attacks

Kuwait strongly condemned the continued Iranian attacks on its territory, describing them as a blatant violation of its sovereignty, security and territorial integrity, as well as a serious breach of international law, the UN Charter and UN Security Council Resolution 2817 (2026).

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Hot spell gets stickier

Near 50°C inferno set to grip Kuwait

KUWAIT CITY, July 16, (KUNA): The Meteorological Department forecast that Kuwait will experience extremely hot weather during the day and hot to warm conditions at night during the weekend, with relatively high humidity, particularly in coastal areas. The country will also be affected by active winds that may cause dust.

Acting Director of the department Dhirar Al-Ali told Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) that Kuwait is currently under the influence of a surface low-pressure system accompanied by an extremely hot air mass and moderate northwesterly winds, which are expected to become active at times. The winds will shift to southeasterly directions on Friday and Saturday, resulting in increased relative humidity, especially in coastal areas.

The daytime weather on Friday will be extremely hot and humid, particularly in coastal areas, with variable to southeasterly winds ranging from light to moderate at speeds of 8 to 30 km/h. Maximum temperatures are expected to reach between 46 and 48 degrees Celsius, while sea conditions will remain light to moderate, with waves ranging from one to four feet.

Friday night's weather will be hot to warm and humid, especially in coastal areas. Winds will be southeasterly to variable, light to moderate, with speeds of 6 to 26 km/h. Minimum temperatures are expected to range between 31 and 33 degrees Celsius, while the sea will remain light to moderate, with waves between one and three feet.

Saturday's daytime weather will be extremely hot, with relatively high humidity in coastal areas. Winds will be variable to northwesterly, light to moderate, ranging from 8 to 32 km/h. Maximum temperatures are expected to range between 47 and 49 degrees Celsius, while sea conditions will remain light to moderate, with waves between one and four feet.

Saturday night's weather will be hot to warm, with relatively high humidity, especially in coastal areas. Winds will be northwesterly to variable, light to moderate, with speeds ranging from 8 to 30 km/h. Minimum temperatures are expected to range between 34 and 36 degrees Celsius, while the sea will remain light to moderate, with waves between one and three feet.



Kuwait's summer glow meets the Gulf's calm waters as boats pass the geometric masterpiece of the Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Centre.

Photo by Samer Shiqer

Other Voices

The Gulf, the American security umbrella and Iran

By Abdulaziz Al-Anjeri

The Gulf's dilemma is no longer confined to Iranian missiles and drones. The deeper problem is that the region has become the arena for a confrontation whose timing, objectives and outcome are largely determined elsewhere.

The United States launched Operation Epic Fury on February 28 with sweeping objectives, including the destruction of Iran's missile, drone and naval capabilities and its defence-industrial base. Yet Iran has retained the ability to launch attacks, threaten shipping and place critical Gulf infrastructure at risk.

President Donald Trump's statements have shifted between threats of overwhelming force, hints of negotiations, declarations of success and renewed escalation. This reveals the absence of a clear and consistent political strategy for what follows the use of force.

The result is what I recently described as "soft escalation": intermittent strikes and threats that remain below the threshold of full-scale war, yet deny the region stability and keep Gulf states under prolonged security and economic pressure.

The answer is neither to wait for Washington to deliver a decisive military outcome nor to rely on temporary bilateral understandings between individual Gulf states and Tehran. It must begin with a unified Gulf position and a gradual effort to establish a binding regional security framework involving both the Gulf states and Iran, backed by credible international guarantees.

Such a framework should protect maritime navigation, prohibit attacks on regional states, establish monitoring and verification mechanisms, and ensure that Gulf territory is not used for offensive operations that endanger the host country without an explicit sovereign decision.

The aim is not to abandon the security partnership with the United States, but to transform it from a relationship of dependency into one based on consultation, consent and shared decision-making.

The American security umbrella has provided intelligence, early warning and air defence, but it has not prevented Gulf states from becoming targets. Today, the Gulf remains more a collection of neighbouring states than a cohesive political and security bloc capable of acting with a shared strategic purpose and placing the broader Gulf interest above its internal differences.

'Second chance' for drivers, no escape for reckless ones



Photo by Samer Shiqer

Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior Major General Abdulwahab Al-Wuhaib listens to an explanation during the 'Be Aware' exhibition, joined by officials as part of efforts to strengthen traffic awareness and safety.

By Munif Naif

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, July 16: Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior Ma-

ajor General Abdulwahab Al-Wuhaib on Thursday inaugurated the "Be Aware" exhibition at The Avenues

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Filipinos, Sri Lankans top choices

Kuwait pushes wider access to quality domestic workers

By Fares Ghaleb

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, July 16: Chairman of the Kuwait Union of Domestic Labor Offices (KUDLO) Khaled Al-Dakhnan affirmed that the union continues to exert tremendous efforts to develop the domestic labor recruitment sector, in coordination with the concerned government agencies and unions in labor-exporting countries.

In an interview with Kuwait TV, Al-Dakhnan underscored the importance of signing more

agreements with labor-exporting countries to give the citizens a plethora of options and improve the quality of recruited workers.

He explained that the role of KUDLO includes representing the recruitment agency owners and informing the concerned authorities about the challenges and proposals, primarily the Public Authority for Manpower (PAM), in addition to holding regular meetings with recruitment agency unions in labor-exporting countries in order to discuss ways

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MEWRE photo

MEWRE Minister Dr. Subaih Al-Mukhaizeem checks on the condition of the injured Pakistani technician at Jahra Hospital, accompanied by ministry officials and engineers.

Grid worker stable after line accident

By Mohammad Ghanem

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, July 16: Minister of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy Dr. Subaih Al-Mukhaizeem visited the injured Pakistani technician at Jahra Hospital to personally look into his health condition.

The technician, who is under the ministry contract, was injured while repairing an overhead power transmission line.

Director of Jahra Hospital Dr. Ahmed Khaja warmly welcomed the minister, confirming that the condition of the injured technician is stable and he is receiving the necessary medical care.

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8 KFH wins Euromoney's
Best Digital Bank
Award in Kuwait

9 Weyay partners with
PUC at The Avenues to
support students preparing
for universities



Fajr	03:27	Asr	15:29
Sunrise ..	04:59	Maghrib ..	18:49
Zohr	11:54	Isha	20:18

Turkiye embassy in Kuwait marks July 15 Democracy and National Unity Day



Left: Ambassador of the Republic of Türkiye to Kuwait, Tuba Nur Sönmez briefing the guests on the event. Right: Ambassador of the Republic of Türkiye to Kuwait, Tuba Nur Sönmez poses for a picture with the visiting ambassadors and diplomats.

KUWAIT CITY, July 16: The Embassy of the Republic of Türkiye in Kuwait organized a commemoration event at the Embassy's Diwaniya Hall on July 16, 2026 on the occasion of the July 15 Democracy and National Unity Day. The event, which was postponed to 16 July due to the period of mourning declared in Kuwait following the passing of the late Amir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, father of the Amir of Qatar, was attended by members of the Turkish community residing in Kuwait, representatives of the Kuwaiti Ministry of Foreign Affairs, members of the diplomatic corps, and representatives of the media.

The event commenced with a moment

of silence and the singing of the National Anthem in memory of the martyrs who lost their lives during the treacherous coup attempt carried out by the Fetullahist Terrorist Organization (FETÖ) on 15 July, 2016, as well as all other martyrs who made the ultimate sacrifice for the nation. A recitation from the Holy Qur'an was subsequently offered in memory of the martyrs.

In her remarks at the event, H.E. Tuba Nur Sönmez, Ambassador of the Republic of Türkiye to the State of Kuwait, emphasized that 15 July marked a historic turning point during which the Turkish nation stood firmly in defense of democracy, the national will, and its independence.



Tuba Nur Sönmez

Ambassador Sönmez noted that the courage, determination, and sacrifices demonstrated by the Turkish people in the face of the coup attempt constituted a powerful testament to the Republic of Türkiye's unwavering commitment to democratic values. She also commemorated the martyrs of 15 July with respect, gratitude, and mercy, while expressing appreciation for the nation's veterans.

As part of the program, a video presentation was screened highlighting the events of the night of 15 July 2016 and the heroic resistance displayed by the Turkish nation in defense of democracy.

At the conclusion of the event, guests were served Ashoura, a traditional dessert that symbolizes unity, solidarity, togeth-

erness, and sharing in Turkish culture. The serving of Ashoura was presented to the guests as a symbolic reflection of the spirit of national unity and solidarity demonstrated by the Turkish people on the night of 15 July.

Ambassador Sönmez was joined by H.E. Ambassador Sheikh Jawaher Ibrahim Al-Duaij Al-Sabah, Assistant Foreign Minister for Human Rights, H.E. Ambassador Sadeq Marafi, Assistant Foreign Minister for International Organizations Affairs of the State of Kuwait, Ambassadors, representatives of diplomatic missions accredited to Kuwait, officials of the Kuwaiti Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and members of the Turkish community residing in Kuwait.



KUNA photo
Chief of Staff of the Kuwaiti Army Lieu. Gen. Khaled Al-Shuraiaan meets his Turkish counterpart Selcuk Bayraktaroglu at the headquarters of the Turkish General Staff in Ankara.

Kuwait, Türkiye discuss ways to boost defense cooperation

ISTANBUL, July 16, (KUNA): Chief of Staff of the Kuwaiti Army Lieu. Gen. Khaled Al-Shuraiaan met on Thursday with his Turkish counterpart Selcuk Bayraktaroglu at the headquarters of the Turkish General Staff in Ankara.

The two generals discussed ways to develop and strengthen military and defense cooperation, as well as common interests regarding regional and international developments, said the General Staff in a statement.

Other Voices

Darwin's watermelon & the big lie about honey

By Ahmad alsarraf

A warning has circulated on social media advising people against consuming seedless fruits, claiming that they are produced in laboratories, genetically modified, or grown using artificial soil, making them unnatural and unfit for human consumption.

In reality, seedless fruits are no different from other fruits. Anyone who makes such claims is confusing several different concepts.

How are seedless fruits formed? This is where Charles Darwin's groundbreaking discovery of natural mutations, made 166 years ago, becomes relevant.

Some plants naturally produce seedless fruit due to genetic mutations. For example, seedless watermelons are produced by crossing a regular (diploid) watermelon with a tetraploid watermelon, resulting in sterile offspring (triploids). This process is known as traditional plant breeding and has nothing to do with laboratory manipulation in the artificial sense that some people imagine.

Vegetative propagation, which occurs without pollination, is also common in some plants, such as bananas and pineapples. Seedless bananas are a well-known example. Bananas are naturally sterile hybrids, and humans have been propagating them for thousands of years through cuttings rather than seeds.

Grafting and vegetative propagation without seeds are also used with many varieties of grapes, citrus fruits, and tomatoes, where cuttings are grafted or planted instead of growing plants from seeds. Farmers have practiced selective breeding for centuries, choosing seedless or low-seed fruits long before the emergence of modern genetic engineering.

Growing plants in artificial soil is



alsarraf

unrelated to whether a fruit has seeds or not. Seedless fruits are cultivated in regular soil, just like seeded varieties, meaning the type of soil is irrelevant. Seedless fruits are safe and nutritious.

What are genetic mutations in animals, humans, and plants, and how do they occur?

Mutations are changes that occur in genetic material, either within DNA itself or in the sequence of genes. These changes can be very small or relatively significant. A gene can be viewed as a set of instructions stored inside a cell, and a mutation is an alteration or change in those instructions. Such changes can occur naturally during cell division or as a result of external factors, including radiation, certain chemicals, or viruses.

In humans, a mutation may be inherited from a parent and exist in all cells of the body from the beginning, or it may develop later in life and affect only certain cells. A mutation can be harmful, causing genetic disorders or increasing the risk of diseases such as cancer. It can also be beneficial or neutral, with no noticeable impact.

The same principles apply to animals and plants. In plants, some mutations can be passed to future generations more easily because of differences in reproduction and the cells involved in inheritance compared with animals.

Mutations are the primary source of genetic diversity among living organisms and therefore play a major role in evolution, contributing to the differences between individuals and species. Without mutations, new genetic diversity would rarely emerge, making them essential to biological processes.

* * *

Note: All claims and promotional campaigns suggesting that honey can miraculously cure diseases are exaggerated. The Public Authority for Food and Nutrition (PAFN) must take action to stop such misleading commercial advertisements.

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KPA strives to upgrade ports, attract business

State-of-the-art Shuwaikh Port to serve cruise ships

By Najeh Bilal
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, July 16: A recent government report revealed that the Shuwaikh Port development project is scheduled for completion in 2028, with the current implementation rate reaching 87 percent and the total project cost estimated at KD 165 million.

The sources noted that the Kuwait Ports Authority (KPA) is making significant and accelerated efforts to achieve a leading position in the management and operation of maritime ports by providing advanced infrastructure and world-class logistics services. These efforts seek to transform Kuwaiti ports into a major hub linking the national

economy with global markets.

According to the report, the main objective of the major development project is to enhance the port's capacity to accommodate modern deep-draft container ships under all tidal conditions.

The project includes improving the efficiency and safety of the navigation channel by increasing its depth to 12 meters, which will encourage international shipping lines to route their vessels to Shuwaikh Port.

The development works will enable Shuwaikh Port to receive a larger number of modern container ships, and will include the establishment of a new semi-automated container terminal. The project also involves the rehabilitation and deepening of berths 1 through 7 to accommodate larger vessels and increase the port's overall handling capacity.

The project will support both operational and tourism development by reorganizing activities

and spaces within the port and constructing administrative buildings for relevant government and regulatory authorities. The project includes the establishment of an integrated customs inspection area to improve the efficiency and speed of operational procedures.

The report also revealed that a state-of-the-art passenger terminal will be constructed to serve cruise ships arriving in Kuwait.

According to informed sources, the Shuwaikh Port development project will represent a major transformation, significantly increasing and diversifying the number of vessels the port can accommodate by raising its capacity to 1.7 million containers annually.

The Shuwaikh Port expansion and development project is among the most important strategic projects under Kuwait's development plan - New Kuwait 2035 vision - which aims to strengthen the country's position on the regional and international maritime trade and transportation map.

'Adopt guidelines to build charities and public trust'

By Fares Ghaleb
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, July 16: The Ministry of Social Affairs urged the heads of boards of directors of charitable societies and foundations to strictly follow the guidelines for communicating with the public and donors to boost trust between charities and the public, while ensuring respect for privacy and professional practices, say reliable sources.

Sources revealed that the ministry emphasized the need to respect the privacy of individuals and refrain from using their personal data or contact information without their consent. Sources reiterated the prohibition of sending text messages, emails or making telephone calls repeatedly or in a manner that could be considered a nuisance to the public or negatively impact the reputation of charitable work.

Sources said the ministry indicated that communication should be limited to individuals who expressed the desire to receive information or updates about the activities and projects of charitable organizations. Sources added that a clear and accessible mechanism should be provided to enable the public to unsubscribe or stop receiving messages and notifications any time.

Sources indicated that the ministry urged the charitable organizations to maintain credibility and transparency when presenting charitable projects and programs, and to avoid using language that could be interpreted as pressuring donors or exploiting emotions in an unprofessional manner.

Court upholds comp for Egyptian worker's heirs

KUWAIT CITY, July 16: The Court of Appeals upheld the ruling of a lower court that obligated a contracting company and an insurance company to pay blood money (diya) and KD50,000 compensation to the heirs of an Egyptian worker who died of electrocution while working at the Mutlaa Residential City project, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Attorney Jassim Al-Tuwaitan, lawyer for the heirs, stated that the civil suit was filed following the issuance of the ruling that established the contracting company's liability for the accident. He said the company was convicted of manslaughter due to its failure to provide the necessary occupational safety supplies and precautions for the worker.

He explained that the worker was employed by the contracting company and was electrocuted while at an electricity substation in Mutlaa Residential City project, resulting in his death at the work site.

He added that the Criminal Court confirmed the company's negligence in providing protective equipment and occupational safety measures, and deemed this failure the direct cause of the worker's death.



KUNA photo
Minister of Social Affairs and Minister of State for Family and Childhood Affairs Dr. Amthlal Al-Huwailah in talks with UN Secretary General's Representative and Resident Coordinator in Kuwait, Ghada Al-Taher.

Kuwait, UN eye improvement for elderly, disabled & women

KUWAIT CITY, July 16, (KUNA): Minister of Social Affairs and Minister of State for Family and Childhood Affairs Dr. Amthlal Al-Huwailah discussed on Thursday with the UN Secretary General's Representative and Resident Coordinator in Kuwait, Ghada Al-Taher, ways to strengthen strategic cooperation in social and humanitarian fields.

In a press statement, Minister Al-Huwailah said the meeting touched on several areas of mutual interest, particularly social development and support for persons with disabilities,

older persons and women within the strategic partnership between Kuwait and UN concerned bodies.

She explained that mechanisms for the strategic framework for cooperation were discussed in coordination between the United Nations and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in a way that supports the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and is consistent with the State of Kuwait's development vision and the United Nations 2030 Agenda.

Maintain heritage in Ahmadi cafes project, says minister

By Fares Ghaleb
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, July 16: Minister of Social, Family and Childhood Affairs Dr. Amthlal Al-Huwailah had a meeting with Ministry of Social Affairs Undersecretary Dr. Khaled Al-Ajmi and the representatives of traditional cafes recently, during which they discussed the traditional cafe project in Ahmadi Governorate.

Al-Huwailah was briefed on the general concept of the project, as well as the ideas and designs aimed at creating a facility that reflects the Kuwaiti identity with a modern touch.

The project envisions a distinctive traditional venue that combines heritage preser-

vation with the provision of advanced services to meet the expectations of the public.

Al-Huwailah stressed the need to implement the project according to the highest standards to showcase the Kuwaiti heritage in a sophisticated manner and provide an attractive environment that reinforces the status of traditional cafes as an integral part of the cultural and social identity of the country.

She called for continuous cooperation among the relevant authorities to ensure the success of the project, realize its objectives, present a modern example of the authenticity of Kuwaiti heritage, and keep pace with the latest developments.

Gulf on tenterhooks as Iran belligerence rises

"IN my opinion, the Iranian regime made one of its biggest and gravest mistakes when, just a few days ago, it targeted some of the ships passing through the Strait of Hormuz via the shipping lane adjacent to the coast of the Sultanate of Oman," Kuwaiti writer **Dr. Nasser Hussain Abbas** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

"The Iranian regime has returned to its aggressive policy, threatening to close the Strait of Hormuz and thereby violating the spirit of the Memorandum of Understanding concluded with the United States through Qatari-Pakistani mediation.



"This action raises legitimate questions about whether the Iranian regime is prepared to deal with the opportunity for a settlement with a new mindset, rather than reverting to the use of maritime security and the free flow of energy through the Arabian Gulf as a tool of pressure. Such a policy amounts to political pressure and blackmail that affects not only the countries of the region but the global economy as a whole.

"The governments and peoples of the Arabian Gulf states had hoped that this settlement would endure and help reduce tensions, despite reservations and questions about what some viewed as gains secured by the Iranian regime following a harsh military confrontation.

"However, pursuing a settlement does not mean overlooking mistakes. Turning to diplomacy does not mean rewarding the policies that fueled the crisis. The success of any agreement depends on the willingness of all parties to recognize the significance of the historical moment and act responsibly.

"When war broke out between the United States and Israel on one side and Iran on the other at the end of February, some observers believed that the intense military strikes would quickly lead to the collapse of the Iranian regime. History, however, has repeatedly shown that the calculations of war differ from the logic of politics. Experience has shown that people, regardless of their dissatisfaction with their internal conditions, often rally around their rulers when they perceive a potential foreign threat.

"Regimes rarely collapse as a result of external pressure alone; they fall when they lose their internal foundations. From this perspective, US President Donald Trump's decision to shift from confrontation to settlement can be understood. Some see the memorandum of understanding as a reward for the Iranian regime, while others regard it as a pragmatic effort to prevent the region from sliding into a more dangerous phase.

"After decades of sanctions, isolation, and the diversion of resources towards expanding its external influence, Iran has reached a difficult economic, political, and military stage. The recent military confrontations have intensified these pressures and underscored the risks that continued escalation poses not only to Iran but to the region as a whole. This is where the importance of politics becomes evident.

"Not every agreement with a weakened adversary should be viewed as a reward. In many cases, a settlement is a means of preventing chaos, the consequences of which could be far more dangerous than the war itself.

"The German experience after World War I offers an important lesson. The 1919 Treaty of Versailles imposed harsh terms on defeated Germany, leaving the country with a deep sense of humiliation. Adolf Hitler later exploited those grievances to build an extremist movement that ultimately plunged the world into an even more devastating war.

"This does not absolve Germany of responsibility for the war. Rather, the lesson is that turning defeat into lasting humiliation can sow the seeds of a new conflict instead of laying the foundations for a stable peace.

"The US-Iran agreement can be assessed from this perspective. The objective is not to grant unconditional legitimacy to any party, but to create an opportunity to move from the logic of confrontation to the logic of diplomacy. That opportunity, however, requires the Iranian regime to demonstrate a willingness to abandon policies of intimidation and coercion, respect the security of its neighbors, uphold freedom of navigation, and abide by the principles of international relations.

"History remembers not only those who won wars, but also those who had the wisdom to prevent the next one. Opportunities created by diplomacy do not last forever. The ultimate judgment on this settlement will depend on what the coming days reveal. It may prove to be an example of pragmatism prevailing over vengeance, or it may become another missed opportunity

because one of the parties failed to realize that peace requires courage no less than the courage to wage a war."

Also:

"In the sweltering midday heat a few days ago, three young Kuwaiti men knocked on my door to request permission to temporarily disconnect the electricity so they could replace the old meter with a new smart electronic one," Kuwaiti writer **Tariq Idris** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

"With remarkable efficiency and speed, and thanks to their engineering expertise, they completed the replacement in just 20 minutes and promptly restored the electricity.

"I would like to express my appreciation for these young Kuwaitis, who carried out their national duty with precision, dedication, and professionalism in a short time despite the intense heat.

"I extend my thanks to the Minister of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy, Eng. Dr. Subaih Al-Mukhaizeem, and to all the engineers in the ministry's various sectors.

"I pray that God grants success to our young people working in all of the country's institutions and sectors, who have proven themselves dependable and deserving of encouragement, praise, and appreciation.

"I would also like to commend the engineers of the Ministry of Electricity and Water Al-Faraj, Al-Baloushi, and Al-Nouri, who recently visited my home to replace the old electricity meter with a new smart meter. I extend my sincere thanks and best wishes to them."



"When a citizen visits a government clinic for a dental or eye appointment, they may find that the dental clinic is open in two shifts, while the eye clinic is open only one shift and closes at 1:00 pm," columnist **Ahmad Al-Dawas** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

"The reason behind this difference is unclear. Some citizens, particularly the elderly, prefer visiting clinics during afternoon hours.

"Meanwhile, are there officials at the Ministry of Public Works who care about the potholes in residential areas? Are there technical committees dedicated to assessing these issues and carrying out the necessary maintenance? Such committees should evaluate areas in need of repairs and fix potholes and similar road defects.

"These potholes cause damage to vehicles. Why are warning signs not installed to alert drivers and prevent sudden encounters with these hazards, especially at night?

"Furthermore, in many countries around the world, vehicles typically wait at traffic lights for no more than a minute. In Kuwait, however, drivers often feel as though they are waiting almost 15 minutes for signals to change, resulting in traffic congestion caused by long lines of stationary vehicles.

"Why doesn't the General Traffic Department conduct a trial on one of Kuwait's frequently congested streets by changing the traffic light cycles every few seconds and evaluating the results? If the trial proves successful, the approach could be implemented on other streets.

"One day, a newborn choked, and his father rushed him by car to Mubarak Hospital from Rumaiithiya. However, due to severe traffic congestion, it took him 50 minutes to reach the hospital, despite the hospital entrance being directly in front of him. The baby was bleeding from his nose onto his father's chest. When the father finally reached the reception area, he received the devastating news that his newborn had passed away.

"Prolonged waiting times at traffic lights can put lives at risk. Such delays may become the difference between life and death, especially for patients and injured individuals who require urgent medical attention. If this happened to me, I might have to take extreme measures, such as driving onto the sidewalk or passing a red light while carefully avoiding oncoming traffic.

"I urge the Ministry of Interior to investigate this matter. I previously read about a similar incident involving a father transporting his baby in an ambulance that was delayed at a traffic light for a long time. Why didn't the Ministry of Health use technology to clear the light for the ambulance?

"In 1971, while I was a student, my economics professor told us that ambulance drivers in Denmark could change traffic lights with the push of a button to reach hospitals as quickly as possible. More than five decades have passed but this technology is still not available in Kuwait."

— Compiled by Simi K. Kutty



Undersecretary of the Ministry of Justice Awatif al-Sanad and Director of Kuwait Institute for Judicial and Legal Studies Badr Al-Mesa'ad at the seminar.



A panel of experts during the discussions.

KUNA photos

'Total support for addicts'

Society must help victims rebuild lives: experts

KUWAIT CITY, July 16, (KUNA): Drug addiction specialists have emphasized the necessity of concerted efforts from various state agencies, civil society organizations and associations to provide comprehensive support to those recovering from addiction, enabling them to rebuild their lives and reintegrate as active members of society.

In a seminar organized by the Ministry of Justice titled "The Repentant Addict", the specialists stated that recovering addicts face psychological and social challenges, particularly the challenge of battling negative thoughts, which can be faced by engaging in actions that contradict these thoughts.

Another challenge is dwelling on negative past experiences, which can be countered by focusing on the present, as decisions made in the present shape the future, recovering addicts also face the challenge of effective self-management, with the best solution being setting short-term goals and practical, actionable steps.

The specialists added that addiction is classified as a chronic neuropsychiatric disorder by the World Health Organization (WHO), clarifying that recovering addicts are susceptible to relapse, as they compulsively seek out the drug despite its harmful consequences and effects.

They pointed out that addiction treatment centers play a crucial role in alerting addicts to the fact that they suffer from a chronic illness and must prepare themselves daily to confront it to remain in recovery.

The seminar was attended by several leaders, officials, and representatives of government agencies, and featured presentations by Dr. Othman Al-Khamees, Chairman of Insan Charity Association, Dr. Rashid Al-Sahl former Dean at Kuwait University and a Consultant in Mental Health and Psychological Counseling, Dr. Adel Al-Zayed former Director of the Addiction Treatment Center and a Consultant Psychiatrist and Mohammad Al-Bashir Head of the Psychiatry Committee at Bashayer Al-Khair Organization.



KFF photo

Fire-fighters tackle as fire erupts in many cars.

Fire erupts in multiple vehicles in parking lot

KUWAIT CITY, July 16: The Fahaheel Fire Station successfully extinguished a fire that broke out in several vehicles parked in a building's parking lot in Fahaheel on Thursday afternoon, reports **Al-Seyassah** daily.

No injuries were reported, and firefighting teams brought the blaze under control within a short time.

Appeals overrules order invalidating GA meeting

KUWAIT CITY, July 16: The Court of Appeals' Ninth Commercial Civil Circuit, presided over by Judge Salem Marwa Al-Hadiya, overturned a lower court's ruling that had invalidated a company's ordinary general assembly (GA) meeting, reports **Al-Seyassah** daily.

The appellate court dismissed the lawsuit and ordered the plaintiff to pay court costs, along with KD 200 in actual legal fees for both stages of litigation.

The case was filed by a company shareholder seeking to invalidate the procedures for convening the ordinary general assembly and the resolutions issued during the meeting. The plaintiff argued that she received the meeting invitation on the same day it was held, which she claimed violated the legally required notification period and prevented her from attending and expressing her views on the agenda items.

The lower court had previously ruled that the meeting and the resolutions issued during it were invalid. The company appealed the judgment through its lawyer, Ali Matar Al-Wawan, who argued that the Companies Law does not invalidate a general assembly meeting solely due to procedural irregularities or failure to meet notification deadlines, as long as the required quorum was achieved and the voting results were not affected.

Lawyer Al-Wawan explained that the plaintiff owns 20 percent of the company's capital, while partners holding the remaining 80 percent attended the meeting and unanimously approved the resolutions. Therefore, the plaintiff's attendance or absence had no impact on the quorum or the outcome of the voting.

The Court of Appeals affirmed that the general legal principle is that a ruling of invalidity applies only when it is expressly provided for by law.

It noted that the legislator did not establish the invalidity of general assembly meetings for limited liability companies due to procedural or timing-related violations unless such violations had a substantive impact on the quorum or the voting results.

More roads shut down for maintenance: MPW, GTD

KUWAIT CITY, July 16: The Ministry of Public Works, in cooperation with the General Traffic Department, announced several temporary road closures as part of ongoing maintenance and infrastructure works, reports **Al-Seyassah** daily.

The ministry stated that the right and middle lanes of King Faisal bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud Road will be closed from the Third Ring Road exit opposite Khaldiya toward Kuwait International Airport, up to the exit leading to the Fourth Ring Road.

It also announced the closure of the entrance and exit of Salem bin Ali Buqammaz Street on Riyadh Road in Khaldiya until August 11.

Meanwhile, the General Traffic Department announced the closure of a section of Damascus Street opposite Qurtuba, in addition to the closure of the entrance and exit of the first street in Block 2 toward the Fifth Ring Road. The closure will remain in effect from Wednesday, July 15 until Monday, July 20.

The department urged motorists to use alternative routes and follow traffic instructions to avoid congestion.

GAC foils 2 drug-smuggling bids in air cargo shipments

KUWAIT CITY, July 16: The General Administration of Customs (GAC) has foiled two separate attempts to smuggle suspected chemical intoxicants into the country through air cargo shipments arriving from the United Kingdom and Canada, leading to the arrest of an Indian suspect, reports **Al-Seyassah** daily.

The first seizure was made after Air Cargo Customs inspectors became suspicious of an incoming shipment and subjected it to a detailed inspection. The search uncovered 100 A4-sized sheets of paper impregnated with a suspected chemical substance, weighing approximately 790 grams.

In the second operation, officers from the Investigation and Search Department inspected another air cargo shipment containing a package of books. Hidden inside one of the books were printed sheets saturated with the same suspected chemical substance.

The combined weight of the seized materials from both shipments was approximately 3.510 kilograms.

In coordination with the Drug Control General Department, authorities arrested the Indian suspect when he arrived to collect the two shipments. The suspect has been referred to the competent authorities, and legal procedures are underway.



Registration opens: The General Staff of the Army has announced the opening of registration for officer cadets at Ali Al-Sabah Military Academy as part of the 26th batch for applicants holding university degrees and postgraduate qualifications, reports **Al-Seyassah** daily.

In a post on its X account on Thursday, the Kuwait Army General Staff explained that online registration will be available through the Ali Al-Sabah Military Academy website from July 16 to July 26.

Applicants will receive notifications regarding their interview dates through the "Kuwait Mobile ID" and "Sahel" applications, as well as via email.

The General Staff affirmed that candidates who successfully pass the interviews, examinations, and medical tests will be selected through a lottery system to ensure transparency and equal opportunity among applicants.

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Kuwait urges stronger global protection for older persons

MoFA stresses dignity, services and participation

GENEVA, July 16, (KUNA): Kuwait stressed adopting a legally binding international instrument on the rights of older persons, considering it a framework that would strengthen international protection and address gaps in the human rights system.

The statement was delivered Third Secretary at the Human Rights Affairs Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Hanan Al-Sultan, during the first session of the Open-ended Intergovernmental Working Group on drafting a legally binding international instrument on the rights of older persons.

Al-Sultan said Kuwait attaches great importance to older persons as partners in development and a cornerstone of society, highlighting the continued efforts to enhance national legislation and policies, improve healthcare and



MoFA photo
Third Secretary at the Human Rights Affairs Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Hanan Al-Sultan speaks during UN discussions on strengthening global protections for older persons.

social services, and promote the concept of active ageing.

She affirmed Kuwait's support for negotiating the international instrument through an in-

clusive, consensus-based process that respects the diversity of legal systems and national circumstances while ensuring the empowerment of older persons and their participation in decision-making and relevant policymaking.

The process should also guarantee protection from all forms of discrimination, violence and neglect, expand access to modern technologies and digital services, integrate older persons' needs into disaster risk reduction and emergency response policies, and strengthen international cooperation, capacity-building, and data and statistical systems to improve service quality.

Al-Sultan reaffirmed Kuwait's commitment to actively and constructively participate in the working group's deliberations and support the adoption of a balanced, practical and implementable international instrument that advances the rights of older persons and contributes to building more just, inclusive and sustainable societies.

Workshop trains inspectors to identify counterfeit products

GAC sharpens fight against fake goods

KUWAIT CITY, July 16: The General Administration of Customs (GAC), represented by its Intellectual Property Rights Department, organized a specialized workshop titled "Distinguishing Between Counterfeit and Genuine Goods" in coordination with the Administrative Development and Training Department and in cooperation with Bayt Al-Hikma Consulting Company, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Held at the GAC auditorium in Shuwaikh, the workshop aimed to enhance the skills of customs inspectors in identifying counterfeit goods and verifying their authenticity. This initiative was held in support of efforts to protect intellectual property rights, curb the entry of counterfeit goods into Kuwait, and strengthen the efficiency of customs inspection and enforcement.



GAC photo
The General Administration of Customs organizes a specialized workshop to enhance skills in detecting counterfeit goods and develop the skills of its inspectors in protecting intellectual property and combating counterfeiting.

Al-Mutairi conveys FM's message

Kuwait, Arab League push for greater regional cooperation

CAIRO, July 16, (KUNA): Kuwait's Permanent Representative to the Arab League, Ambassador Talal Al-Mutairi delivered a reply letter from Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah to Arab League Secretary General Nabil Fahmy during a meeting at the organization's headquarters.

Speaking to KUNA on Thursday, Al-Mutairi said the meeting reviewed close ties between Kuwait and the Arab League General Secretariat and discussed ways to strengthen cooperation and coordination in support of joint Arab action and efforts to confront regional challenges.

The discussions also highlighted Kuwait's longstanding support for Arab cooperation and solidarity and its role in advancing joint Arab initiatives and collaboration among Arab states.

Both sides stressed the importance of continued coordination and consultation among Arab countries amid the region's current challenges to strengthen a unified Arab position and improve the ability of Arab states to confront political, security and economic issues.

They also underscored the need to activate mechanisms for joint Arab action and enhance the role of



KUNA photo
Kuwait's representative to the Arab League delivers a letter from the Foreign Minister to the League's Secretary-General.

the League as the main framework for Arab coordination and cooperation on issues of common interest to support regional security and stability.

Al-Mutairi affirmed the shared commitment to maintaining close communication and coordination between Kuwait and the League to advance cooperation and promote greater integration and solidarity among Arab countries.

Saudi restores key export channel

Lebanon's agriculture struggles to recover as GCC trade returns

BEIRUT, July 16, (KUNA): Lebanon's agricultural sector remains among the hardest hit by the ongoing war, suffering extensive damage to farmland, production and rural livelihoods, while recovery is expected to take far longer than rebuilding homes and infrastructure.

Restoring agricultural land is particularly difficult because contaminated soil, damaged irrigation systems and abandoned farms require lengthy rehabilitation before productivity can return, delaying farmers' recovery and threatening food security.

Agricultural production has nevertheless continued in regions spared from hostilities, providing an economic lifeline for producers while sustaining local markets.

The sector received a major boost after Saudi Arabia resumed imports of Lebanese agricultural products, reopening a key market and restoring overland access to other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries.

Lebanese Agriculture Minister Nizar Hani told KUNA agriculture contributes around nine percent of Lebanon's gross domestic product, while food industries account for four percent, bringing the sector's combined contribution to 13 percent.

Hani said Israeli occupation attacks damaged 22.5 percent of Lebanon's agricultural land, equivalent to nearly 56,000 hectares, including 52,000 hectares in southern Lebanon and 4,000 hectares in the Baalbek-Hermel region.

Despite the damage, Lebanon has entered its main agricultural production season with sufficient supplies of most crops, he said, noting output from unaffected regions is compensating for shortages caused by losses in the south.

Southern Lebanon normally produces around 90 percent of the country's bananas and 70 percent of its citrus harvest, but increased production in unaffected regions has helped offset losses while meeting domestic demand and maintaining exports to Syria, Jordan and Iraq.

The Agriculture Ministry previously reported that around 78 percent of farmers in southern Lebanon had suspended operations because of the conflict, describing the situation as an unprecedented crisis threatening agricultural production.

Hani said GCC markets remain essential for Lebanese agricultural exports, stressing that renewed Saudi market access also restores overland transit routes, facilitating shipments to other Gulf countries.

He noted Kuwait is among the largest importers of Lebanese agricultural products, adding exports previously depended on air transport because land transit through Saudi Arabia had been unavailable.

Agriculture Ministry data showed GCC countries accounted for 45 percent of Lebanese agricultural exports before 2020, including 13 percent destined for Saudi Arabia and 12.5 percent for Kuwait.



Lebanese apples are among the leading agricultural products exported to foreign markets.



Fruit is one of the most important Lebanese agricultural products exported abroad.

Around 200,000 tons of vegetables, fruits and related products were exported annually to Gulf markets from total agricultural exports of 500,000 tons, valued at approximately USD 242 million.

Official figures showed 2024 was the most difficult year for Lebanon's agricultural sector after exports to Saudi Arabia remained suspended and shipments to Gulf countries fell sharply to just 77,000 tons.

Hani said Saudi Arabia's decision restores hope for thousands of farmers while helping Lebanon regain its traditional position in Gulf markets, adding the Agriculture Ministry strengthened inspection systems, quality controls and product traceability to ensure Lebanese exports meet international standards.

He described the reopening as the beginning of a new phase of agricultural and economic cooperation between Lebanon, Saudi Arabia and other GCC countries, supporting farmers, food security and sustainable agricultural recovery.



KUNA photos
Preparations in the Bekaa Valley for a new agricultural season.

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MoFA photo
Kuwait's Mohammad Al-Roumi presented his credentials on Thursday as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, to Greek President Konstantinos Tasoulas during an official ceremony at the Presidential Mansion in Athens.

Kuwaiti Ambassador presents credentials to Greek President

KUWAIT CITY, July 16, (KUNA): Kuwait's Mohammad Al-Roumi presented his credentials on Thursday as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, to Greek President Konstantinos Tasoulas during an official ceremony at the Presidential Mansion in Athens.

The Kuwaiti Embassy in Athens, in a press release received by KUNA, said that Ambassador Al-Roumi conveyed greetings of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. He also conveyed their wishes for the President's good health and continued progress and prosperity for Greece

and its friendly people.

Meanwhile, Tasoulas asked Al-Roumi to convey his greetings to His Highness the Amir and His Highness the Crown Prince, wished him success in his mission, and expressed Greece's commitment to strengthening friendship and cooperation with Kuwait in all fields for the benefit of both countries.

Tasoulas strongly condemned Iran's attacks on Gulf countries, particularly Kuwait, describing them as a flagrant violation of international law and a threat to regional security and stability.

He underlined that these nations follow policies based on peace and respect for international law.

MoH inaugurates 'Be Aware' campaign against toxin risks

Al-Awadhi backs student efforts to spread health awareness

KUWAIT CITY, July 16: Minister of Health Dr. Ahmed Al-Awadhi recently inaugurated the student awareness exhibition, which is part of the "Be Aware" campaign, reports Al-Seyas-sah daily.

The exhibition, held at The Avenues Mall, is the result of the concerted efforts of the pharmacy and medicine students at Kuwait University and the Kuwait Poison Control Center. It is aimed at raising public awareness about poisons.

Speaking at the event, Al-Awadhi underscored the need to raise public awareness about the dangers of toxins found in terrestrial and marine environments, including medications that may be accessible to children at home.

He affirmed that the ministry remains committed to supporting the future scientists and doctors in educating the public about the dangers of toxins, while praising the vital



MoH photo
Health Minister Dr. Ahmed Al-Awadhi with participants at the 'Be Aware' student awareness exhibition organized in cooperation with the Kuwait Poison Control Center.

role of Kuwait Poison Control Center in this endeavor.

On the other hand, Dr. Abdul Latif Al-Awmi, Head of Kuwait Poison Control Center and President of the

Kuwait Poison Control Association, stated that the campaign aims to educate the public about the dangers of toxins, their prevention, and how to treat them if exposure occurs at

home.

Al-Awmi added that the campaign includes information on snake and scorpion venom, poisonous plants, medications and cosmetics.

Continued from Page 1

Grid worker

Al-Mukhaizeem asserted that ensuring the safety of all workers is the top priority of the ministry, and it is keen on providing a safe working environment and adhering to the highest safety standards.

He commended the efforts of the emergency teams, technical and engineering staff and all concerned workers for repairing the damage and rehabilitating the electrical grid facilities, thereby, guaranteeing the continuity and stability of the electrical system. He urged everyone to fully abide by the safety and prevention procedures.

In addition, Undersecretary of the ministry Dr. Adel Al-Zamel also visited the injured technician. He was accompanied by Director of the Overhead Lines and Underground Cables Maintenance Department Eng. Athari Al-Mohammad and several other ministry engineers. He reviewed the medical care provided to the injured man and the medical team briefed him on the condition of the injured, confirming that he is stable.

Al-Zamel expressed his gratitude to the Ministry of Health, specifically the Jahra Hospital administration and its medical and nursing staff, for their swift response and the high quality of medical care provided to the injured man. He then wished the injured speedy recovery and immediate return to work.

'Second chance'

Mall, which is organized by the Ministry of Interior to raise security awareness and familiarize the public with the services provided by various sectors at the ministry.

Al-Wuhaib toured the booths of different sectors at the ministry and was briefed on the range of services being offered to visitors.

Meanwhile, Director of the General Traffic Department (GTD) Brigadier General Ahmed Al-Nimran announced that the participation of the department in the exhibition provides the citizens and residents a chance to remove vehicle registration blocks for minor traffic violations. He described the initiative as a valuable opportunity for violators to regularize their status, affirming that it is in accordance with the directive of First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef to give offenders a chance to correct their violations and encourage greater compliance with traffic laws.

While revealing that the number of serious traffic violations exceeded 100,000, Al-Nimran urged those with minor traffic violations to take advantage of the initiative and settle their cases. He said the concerned motorists can pay their fines and have their vehicles released immediately during the exhibition, except in cases of driving more than 180 kilometers per hour and certain serious offenses like reckless driving and stunt driving.

He added that the electronic link of traffic violations among Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries has been completed 100 percent, hence, violations can now be monitored and recorded within a short period.

He warned about the dangers of speeding and urged motorists to refrain from committing serious traffic offenses, because of the risks they pose to other road users. He indicated that some offenders faced harsh penalties, including deportation.

He affirmed the readiness of the department for the new academic year, stating that road maintenance and other preparations will be completed during summer.

He also confirmed the continuous commitment of the ministry to ensure public safety and strictly enforce traffic regulations.

Moreover, Colonel Fahad Al-Essa, Director of the Traffic Awareness Department, explained that owners of vehicles impounded due to traffic violations can visit the GTD booth at the exhibition, settle their outstanding traf-

fic fines, have the block removed, and complete procedures for the immediate release of their vehicles.

Al-Essa said the GTD booth offers specialized awareness programs highlighting important provisions of the Traffic Law and its executive regulations, while explaining common violations and ways to avoid them.

He stated that the exhibition aims to introduce the public to the work of various units at GTD and highlight the role of traffic patrols in enhancing road safety and regulating traffic flow.

He invited citizens and residents to visit the exhibition and benefit from the awareness services and guidance provided.

On the other hand, Assistant Director General for Licensing and Violations at GTD Brigadier General Mohammad Al-Subhan asserted that the implementation of the new traffic law, which took effect one year and four months ago led to the 50-60 percent reduction in traffic violations, particularly speeding offenses. He emphasized that the purpose of the law is to protect lives and ensure road safety rather than generate additional fines.

He pointed out that more than 4,000 vehicles are currently impounded in the Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh and Doha impoundment lots, in addition to around 1,600 motorcycles. He said these figures entail the continuous commission of serious traffic violations by some motorists, requiring legal action. He explained that the legal procedures include issuing a traffic violation citation, impounding the vehicle, detaining the driver at the traffic police station, and referring repeat offenders to the traffic court.

He disclosed that under the new law, court referrals may result in severe penalties, such as imprisonment ranging from one to three years in serious cases, as well as alternative sanctions like community service, mandatory traffic awareness courses, and compensation for damages caused by the violation. He added that courts already issued rulings on imprisonment, vehicle confiscation, and alternative penalties against offenders convicted of serious violations like speeding, reckless driving and running the red light. He confirmed that a number of expatriates were deported after committing serious traffic violations, such as speeding.

He also unveiled the plan of GTD to introduce a smart vehicle impoundment system in September, while continuing to operate the traditional impoundment system as part of ongoing efforts to modernize the traffic management mechanism in the country.

Director for Public Relations at the ministry Colonel Faisal Al-Daihani said the exhibition aims to familiarize the public with the newly introduced laws, including the legislation related to the Coast Guard, drug enforcement, traffic department, and the management of security systems, particularly regulations governing the installation of surveillance cameras.

He stated that the exhibition features a team of specialists to answer the questions of visitors, along with interactive screens that enable the public to view the laws and obtain information through an interactive platform.

He encouraged the citizens and residents to visit the exhibition, which runs until Saturday, to benefit from the available services, including paying traffic fines and removing vehicle registration blocks.

He also highlighted the services provided by the General Directorate of Coast Guard and the biometric fingerprint registration service offered by the Criminal Evidence Department for individuals aged 18 and above.

He affirmed the huge public turnout at the exhibition and expressed hope that it will achieve its awareness and public outreach objectives.

Colonel Mohammed Al-Jarman, the officer in charge of investigating traffic violations, said the role of GTD at the exhibition is to receive visitors seeking the removal of vehicle registration blocks and to facilitate the immediate release of their vehicles once the fines are paid.

He reiterated that speeding violations

are not eligible for block removal, and encouraged citizens and expatriates to take advantage of the opportunity by visiting the exhibition and completing the required procedures. He indicated that the exhibition will continue on Friday and Saturday until 10:00 pm.

Captain Ashwaq Hamoud, Head of Jalboot Al Khiran Center, stated that the participation of the Coast Guard in the exhibition is aimed at raising public awareness on maritime safety and security, educating sea users on safe practices, and highlighting its role in protecting lives and properties.

She disclosed that the procedures for obtaining a marine driving license have been simplified and expedited for all nationalities. "Applicants who successfully pass the required test can complete the registration process by submitting the necessary documents, including a photograph, a copy of the driving license, and a copy of the civil ID," she elaborated.

She indicated that marine driving licenses are now available for applicants aged 17 and above, provided they meet the required conditions like an eye examination, particularly for those aged 60 and above. She emphasized that the service is available to all nationalities.

She also stressed the need for jet ski operators and other marine vessel users to comply with maritime safety regulations and avoid restricted areas near marine installations.

She added that one of the key updates to the marine licensing system is the extension of license validity to two years, with a grace period of up to 60 days after the license expires.

First Lieutenant Eng. Farah Al-Foudari of the General Directorate of Security Systems pointed out that the participation of the directorate in the exhibition is intended for raising awareness on Law No. 61/2015, which regulates the installation of security cameras and surveillance systems at designated facilities and activities, as part of efforts to strengthen the security framework of the country. She explained that the law requires entities covered by its provisions to install and operate security surveillance systems in accordance with approved technical standards and specifications.

She stated that the law does not apply to private residences, adding that Article Five mandates retention of surveillance recordings for 120 days and prohibits any alteration or destruction of the recordings before the end of that period.

She also indicated that Article Six prohibits the transfer, storage, disclosure or publication of surveillance recordings without written authorization from the competent investigative authority or the competent court.

"Under Article Nine, the installation of cameras in locations that violate personal privacy is prohibited, with offenders subject to penalties of up to three years imprisonment and fine of up to KD10,000," she concluded.

Kuwait pushes

to strengthen cooperation and develop recruitment mechanisms.

He stressed that the Domestic Labor Law of Kuwait is among the best in the region, as it protects the rights of all parties. He said the law regulates the working hours, rest periods and weekly holidays, and guarantees the end-of-service benefits and return ticket for the workers in accordance with the regulations.

He revealed that Kuwait signed memoranda of understanding for the recruitment of domestic workers with the Philippines, Sri Lanka and Ethiopia, while the neighboring countries have a bigger number of agreements, giving them more options for recruiting domestic workers.

He pointed out that increasing the number of agreements will diversify the nationalities and lessen the challenges that the local labor market is facing. He said one of the difficult challenges encountered by domestic labor recruitment offices is the fixed recruitment fees for years despite the rising operating costs, ticket prices and fees in the sending countries. He added that the lower

fees received by the Kuwaiti agencies compared to other countries reduce their ability to compete in attracting younger and better-trained workers.

He continued saying that overseas agencies prefer to deal with markets offering higher returns, which is reflected in the quality of the workers arriving in Kuwait. He said majority of the available workers are from older groups, while the citizens prefer workers who are 23 to 34 years old, because they are more suitable for the nature of domestic work.

He confirmed that KUDLO organizes three to four annual visits to labor-exporting countries to hold meetings with the relevant unions and authorities there, indicating that the signing of agreements remains the responsibility of government agencies.

He disclosed that the most desired nationalities in Kuwait are Filipinos and Sri Lankans, while demand for Ethiopian workers is still limited. He said the recruitment fee for Filipino and Sri Lankan workers is KD750, compared to KD575 for some Africans.

He warned that hiring a domestic worker for someone other than the sponsor or making the workers work on hourly basis outside the legal framework is a violation. He stated that the union immediately reports an advertisement or agency found to be in violation of regulations to PAM.

He urged the citizens to carefully read the recruitment contracts before signing and to adhere to all the clauses, including those related to working hours, rest periods, weekly day off and end-of-service benefits.

He stressed that raising awareness on the rights and obligations of both parties contributes to limiting labor disputes. He pointed out that complaints regarding non-payment of wages, end-of-service benefits or other rights are handled by the Domestic Workers Department, which reviews complaints and ensures that each party receives their legal entitlements.

He asserted that the reputation of Kuwait is a major factor in attracting domestic workers, explaining that many female domestic workers prefer working in Kuwait due to the good treatment and respect for rights, which enhances the country's standing with labor-exporting nations.

He also warned against sheltering absconding workers, because this is punishable by law. He said medical examinations for domestic workers are conducted at centers accredited by the Kuwaiti Ministry of Health in the sending countries. He added that these examinations include basic medical checkups and screening for infectious diseases before completing travel procedures to Kuwait.

He indicated that the expected arrival time of workers is around 20 to 30 days from Sri Lanka and about 45 days from the Philippines and Ethiopia under normal circumstances. He clarified that this period could be extended if there are additional procedures or examinations.

Iran's retaliation

The Foreign Ministry said Kuwait holds Iran fully responsible for the attacks and their consequences, warning that continued aggression against Kuwait and other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries threatens regional security and stability.

The ministry called on Tehran to immediately halt its attacks, affirming that Kuwait will continue taking all necessary measures to defend its territory, people and national interests while preserving its legitimate rights under international law.

Gulf solidarity

Kuwait also condemned Iranian attacks targeting Bahrain and Jordan, describing them as violations of the two countries' sovereignty and territorial integrity and threats to regional peace and security.

The Foreign Ministry reaffirmed Kuwait's full solidarity with Bahrain and Jordan, supporting all measures taken by both countries to protect their security and sovereignty.

The United Arab Emirates condemned the renewed Iranian missile and drone attacks against Kuwait, Bahrain and Jordan, calling them a flagrant violation of the three countries' sovereignty and a threat to regional stability.

The UAE Foreign Ministry expressed full solidarity with the affected countries and support for efforts aimed at safeguarding their security.

Qatar also condemned the attacks, calling for an end to actions that could further escalate tensions and urging continued reliance on dialogue, diplomacy and de-escalation.

Egypt strongly condemned the Iranian attacks as a dangerous escalation that threatens regional security and violates the sovereignty of Kuwait, Bahrain and Jordan.

The Egyptian Foreign Ministry reaffirmed its solidarity with the three countries and rejected any actions that could widen the conflict or endanger Arab states.

Diplomatic push for de-escalation

Meanwhile, Foreign Minister Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah held a phone call with Oman's Foreign Minister Sayyid Badr Al-Busaidi to discuss the rapidly changing regional security situation.

According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the two ministers reviewed the implications of the escalation and stressed the importance of coordinated efforts, diplomacy and peaceful solutions to preserve regional security and stability.

Iran threatens regional infrastructure

The United States intensified its strikes on Iran early Thursday, hitting targets farther north and firing into a ship the U.S. accused of trying to break its naval blockade on the Islamic Republic. Iran retaliated by launching missiles and drones at U.S. allies in the region, and warned its attacks may escalate.

Days of back-and-forth strikes by the U.S. and Iran across the Middle East - and renewed threats to the Strait of Hormuz - have shredded the interim deal to end the Iran war and could tip the region back into all-out war. Iranian officials say U.S. strikes have killed more than 35 people and wounded over 300 others.

For the first time in this latest round of violence, strikes also reached into areas around Iran's capital, Tehran, showing a widening set of targets for the Americans.

When the U.S. and Israel launched the war on Iran on Feb. 28, Tehran effectively closed the strait to shipping traffic, a move that sent the price of oil, fertilizer and many other goods soaring far beyond the region and gave Iran major leverage in negotiations.

Col. Ebrahim Zolfaghari, a spokesperson for the Iranian military's Khatam al-Anbiya Central Headquarters, threatened that Iran could launch widespread attacks on regional infrastructure if the U.S. acts on President Donald Trump's repeated warnings that America could hit Iranian bridges and power plants.

"All the infrastructure in the region will be crushed under the steel blows of the powerful armed forces of the Islamic Republic of Iran" should Trump's threat be carried out, Zolfaghari said.

"Under no circumstances and in no way will we allow America, as a foreign and extraregional country, to interfere in the Strait of Hormuz," he added. "This is Iran's invincible red line."

The U.S. strikes early Thursday hit around Tehran, state media reported. It also reported that American attacks targeted Semnan province, home to Iran's ballistic missile production and space program.

Iranian media also reported strikes Thursday morning around the provinces of Hamedan, Hormozgan, Khuzestan, Lorestan, Markazi, and Sistan and Baluchestan.

On Wednesday, the U.S. resumed striking Iran during daylight, further showing the increasing tempo of the attacks. An attack on Greater Tunb Island targeted Iranian defense and missile sites, Central Command said.

Greater Tunb Island is one of three small rocky islands that sit at the confluence of the Persian Gulf and the

Strait of Hormuz - seized in 1971 by Iran from what would become the United Arab Emirates - and have become a garrison for Iran that help it exert significant control over the strait.

Meanwhile, the U.S. military said it opened fire on the Curacao-flagged oil tanker Belma sailing toward Kharg Island, Iran's main oil export terminal in the Arabian Gulf. After the ship "ignored multiple warnings," a U.S. aircraft disabled the merchant vessel by firing a missile into the ship's smoke-stack.

Another American strike Wednesday targeted a barracks for Iran's 388th Mechanized Infantry Brigade, which operates tanks and armored vehicles, in Sistan and Baluchestan province, Iranian state television reported. The report said Americans fired at least 13 missiles in the attack and the seven dead included conscripts and career soldiers. A number of troops were wounded.

Iran retaliated Thursday morning with missile and drone attacks on Bahrain, Jordan and Kuwait, authorities in those countries home to U.S. forces said. There was no immediate acknowledgment of damage or casualties from the attacks. Kuwait reported a new round of incoming fire on Thursday afternoon.

Meanwhile, Iraqi Prime Minister Ali al-Zaidi condemned an overnight drone attack on the city of Irbil in Iraq's semi-autonomous northern Kurdish region. The drone, which authorities said had been intercepted, came during his trip to the U.S. in which he said Iraq would work to disarm non-state armed groups, including those backed by Iran.

A drone separately targeted a tanker in the Arabian Gulf off the coast of Basra in southern Iraq on Thursday afternoon, the state-run INA news agency reported. A port employee who witnessed the attack said there appeared to be only minor damage to the tanker. No casualties were reported.

The latest round of fighting is focused on the Strait of Hormuz, as Iran attacks ships using a U.S.-controlled route through the vital waterway.

The U.S. has threatened to reopen the strait by force, but experts say that would require a much bigger armada if not tens of thousands of ground troops.

The price for Brent crude oil, the international standard, traded above \$85 a barrel on Thursday, more than 15% higher than the price before the war, but still well below the nearly \$120 reached at the height of the conflict.

Rising prices pose a particular challenge to Trump and his Republican Party, which hopes to retain control of Congress in elections in November. But Washington has struggled to successfully reopen the waterway, leading to Trump reimposing the naval blockade Wednesday.

Trump again insisted Iran was ready to strike a peace deal, but he did not elaborate.

"They don't like what we're doing, and they do not want to settle. We'll find out whether or not we settle with them, or we just finish it off," he said Wednesday at the U.S. Army War College in Pennsylvania.

Mediators have sought to calm the tensions, but so far have been unsuccessful. Pakistan's Foreign Ministry on Thursday said it was still trying to bring the U.S. and Tehran to the table, while acknowledging that mediation was becoming increasingly difficult.

"Whenever the parties exhaust the logic of escalation, the formula for peace is there," ministry spokesperson Tahir Andrabi told a news conference.

Iran did not immediately acknowledge the release, and her case was not publicly known, as sometimes happens with detentions in the Islamic Republic.

House Republicans unveil \$95b plan for Iran war, farm aid and elections

WASHINGTON, July 16, (AP): House Republicans on Wednesday unveiled a \$95 billion legislative plan focused on boosting defense, aiding farmers and enacting stricter voter registration rules, a sequel to the massive tax and spending cut bill that President Donald Trump signed into law last year.

The 47-page outline, called a budget resolution, is a long-shot undertaking designed to supplement Pentagon funding for the Iran war and address Trump’s top priority of changing voter registration requirements. A more ambitious effort was narrowed to address concerns of conservatives about adding to the deficit. The resolution does not seek any off-sets to pay for the new spending.

House Speaker Mike Johnson pushed ahead after meeting with Trump at the White House this week in what will be the Republicans’ calling card to voters this fall heading into the midterm elections, with control of Congress at stake.

“Safeguarding American elections and strengthening our national defense are the most basic responsibilities of Congress,” Johnson said in a statement.

Johnson welcomed the chance to again use a legislative process that



US Speaker of the House Mike Johnson, R-La, speaks during a news conference on Capitol Hill on July 14, in Washington. (AP)

will allow Republicans to overpower Democratic objections and eventually approve legislation on a party-line majority vote, saying the Democrats won’t be able to block the GOP priorities “any longer.”

Democrats, however, have argued against the sharply partisan path, par-

ticularly for matters of war funding.

The Budget Committee is expected to consider the outline Thursday, ahead of floor action in the House next week.

The bulk of the \$95 billion would go for the U.S.-led war against Iran, reflecting the White House’s request for supplemental spending to rebuild stockpiles and fund classified programs, among other expenses related to Operation Epic Fury.

The resolution calls for the House Armed Services Committee to craft legislation that will not increase deficits through 2036 by more than \$60 billion; the Select Committee on Intelligence, \$13 billion; the Agriculture Committee, \$12 billion; and the House Administration Committee, \$10 billion.

The latter funding would be focused on enacting aspects of an election law overhaul that requires those registering to vote to provide proof of citizenship and is a top Trump priority.

Overall, the plan is on par with a request the White House submitted to Congress last month, as the Iran war drags past four months. But it falls far short of the \$350 billion increase the White House proposed in its budget request this year to beef up the Defense Department.



The CN Tower is pictured in Toronto as wildfire smoke fills the city, on July 15. (AP)

Heavy smoke from wildfires blankets US Midwest, Northeast

Thousands of visitors were told to evacuate a remote Minnesota wilderness area accessible only by boat as wildfires send dangerously heavy smoke over the US Midwest and Northeast this week.

More than 100 wildfires are burning in Canada, where a

train crew in northern Ontario filmed themselves surrounded by flames before being safely evacuated. Winds are carrying the smoke southeast.

Warnings about unhealthy air conditions Wednesday extended from Minnesota through Toronto and into New York. Un-

usually hot summer temperatures were expected, too.

The best advice is to stay indoors to avoid both the smoke and the extreme heat, said Tyler Hasenstein, meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Chanhassen, Minnesota. (AP)

Election experts fear another round of falsehoods

After six years, Trump brings election obsession to primetime at White House

WASHINGTON, July 16, (AP): In the weeks after Donald Trump lost to Joe Biden in 2020, the people that Trump appointed to run the Department of Justice, cybersecurity agencies and intelligence departments all said the same thing - the election was fair, legitimate and free of major fraud or foreign interference.

In his second term, Trump has tried to use the levers of power to rewrite that well-settled history, something that he’s expected to try again on Thursday night with an address to the nation.

He has already appointed loyalists who have echoed his false claims that the 2020 election was stolen and made clear he expects everyone to follow his lead.

In an indication of how fealty to Trump’s lies has become a litmus test for his administration, many of his nominees have steadfastly refused to directly answer the question of who won in 2020, preferring to tersely note that Biden became president. Jay Clayton, Trump’s nominee to become the next national intelligence director, was the latest to repeat that formula in his confirmation hearing on Wednesday.

“He had the most electoral votes,”

Clayton said of Biden. “He was declared the winner.”

“And who has the most electoral votes? Is it the person who wins or the person who loses?” asked Sen Mark Kelly, an Arizona Democrat.

“That’s your characterization,” Clayton responded. “I’m not going to continue to do this.”

The president has embraced baroque conspiracy theories about an international cabal that penetrated US voting machines that have led to libel suits against his allies when they’ve repeated the claims.

Ahead of his speech, Trump has teased “really big news” and said “it doesn’t get bigger, because without free and fair elections, you don’t have a country.”

Election experts fear another round of falsehoods.

“There has been six-plus years of consistent findings from the intelligence community and from everyone who’s looked at it that there was no foreign interference in 2020, and our voting systems were secure and accurate,” said Victoria Bassetti of States United, a nonpartisan group supporting the state officials who run elections. “I suppose the president could come up with some new assertion or



US President Donald Trump speaks at the United States Army War College in Carlisle, Pa., during the Pennsylvania Defense and Innovation Summit on July 15. (AP)

new conclusion. It would fly in the face of all the evidence.”

There’s been an enormous amount of reviews of the 2020 election. Trump and his allies lost dozens of court cases challenging the results, sometimes before judges the president appointed

himself. Numerous audits, recounts and investigations, including several by Republicans, found no major problems with the vote or count.

Trump’s own attorney general at the time, William Barr, said there were no signs of significant fraud, a statement

that earned him Trump’s ire. Trump’s appointee to run the agency that watches for cyberattacks on American election infrastructure, Chris Krebs, declared that the 2020 election was secure and there were no signs of tampering - which led Trump to fire Krebs and demand an investigation of him upon returning to power in 2025.

An intelligence assessment released in the early days of the Biden administration but completed on Jan. 7, 2021, in Trump’s last days in office, found no foreign tampering with vote totals or election equipment in 2020. And, last year, Trump signed a federal document as part of a regular review of possible foreign influence in elections that declared “there has been no evidence of a foreign power altering the outcome or vote tabulation in any United States election.”

Since returning to office, Trump has launched a review of the 2020 vote. Federal agents have seized voting records in Democratic-run Fulton County, Georgia, and Republican-run Maricopa County, Arizona - two major metropolitan swing state counties that figured prominently in 2020 conspiracy theories.

Trump tapped Kurt Olsen, a prominent lawyer in the world of election

conspiracy theorists, to head the probe. Olsen was previously sanctioned by the Arizona Supreme Court for false statements in a lawsuit he brought to challenge the 2022 loss of an Arizona governor’s race by one of Trump’s allies.

“He has committed untold taxpayer resources,” said David Becker, a former Department of Justice lawyer who now leads the Center for Election Integrity & Research. “They’ve found nothing.”

A search warrant affidavit filed in the Fulton County case was full of old, debunked conspiracy theories about the vote in the county. The FBI reassigned hundreds of analysts to go through the material.

Still, election conspiracy theorists have been buzzing - as they have ever since Election Day in 2020 - that Trump is about to reveal irrefutable evidence of massive election fraud.

One version alleges that Venezuela and possibly other countries manipulated U.S. voting machines to deprive Trump of a victory. Venezuela’s former president, Nicolas Maduro, is currently awaiting trial in Manhattan on federal charges of drug trafficking after the U.S. military took him from that country’s capital.



In this photo provided by the Ukrainian Emergency Service, emergency services personnel work to extinguish a fire following a Russian air attack in Kyiv, Ukraine on July 16. (AP)

Protesters rally in Kyiv as Zelenskyy moves to oust defense minister

KYIV, Ukraine, July 16, (AP): Hundreds of protesters gathered in downtown Kyiv and in other Ukrainian cities Thursday after Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy moved to dismiss his defense minister, as parliament appointed a new prime minister as part of a major government reshuffle.

The shake-up could become a test of Zelenskyy’s political authority as Ukraine’s fight against Russia’s full-scale invasion approaches 4½ years.

Zelenskyy has remained in office under martial law, because wartime elections are prohibited and has periodically reshuffled his government.

The political furor took place against a backdrop of unceasing Russian aerial attacks. Two people were killed and five others were wounded, including a child, when Russian missiles hit the capital, Kyiv, overnight, Ukraine’s Emergency Service said.

Ukraine’s parliament approved Serhii Koretskyi, the head of state energy company Naftogaz, as the country’s new prime minister.

Zelenskyy nominated Koretskyi, citing his record in the energy sector and arguing that he was best placed to help prepare Ukraine for another wartime winter, when Russian attacks on the power grid intensify. He was approved in a 289-1 vote, with



Ukrainians gather to denounce President Volodymyr Zelenskyy’s decision to dismiss Defense Minister Mykhailo Fedorov after six months in the post, Kyiv, Ukraine, on July 16. Placard reads: Fedorov is a minister of innovation. (AP)

21 abstentions.

Outgoing Defense Minister Mykhailo Fedorov, 35, is considered to be a modernizer whose technological expertise is credited in part with a significant improvement in Ukraine’s military performance in recent months against Russia’s bigger army. He was leaving the gov-

ernment after just six months in the post.

Zelenskyy didn’t publicly give a reason for Fedorov’s anticipated exit and didn’t immediately name a successor. Unconfirmed Ukrainian media reports said that Fedorov had a strained relationship with Gen. Oleksandr Syrskyi, the commander of Ukraine’s armed forces.

Syrskyi, 60, is credited with initially organizing the defense of Kyiv in February 2022, and seven months later masterminded a successful counteroffensive in the Kharkiv region. He was born in 1965 in the Soviet Union and attended Moscow Higher Military Command School before serving in the Soviet Artillery Corps.

The mostly young protesters shouted Fedorov’s name and made crude remarks about Skryskyi. They chanted, “Skryskyi go away!” and “A European army for a European country!”

The Ukrainian military has rallied under Fedorov’s guidance, slowing Russia’s front-line advance to a virtual standstill and causing fuel shortages in Russia through long-range strikes, Western officials and analysts say. Zelenskyy’s decision to fire him despite that track record has dismayed many people.

United States should not interfere in German elections, says Chancellor Merz

BERLIN, July 16, (Xinhua): German Chancellor Friedrich Merz said on Wednesday that he does not want the United States to interfere in German elections.

Merz made the remarks at the government’s annual summer press conference when he was asked about a US program reportedly supporting political and civil groups in Europe, amid criticism that it could benefit groups such as those ideologically aligned with Germany’s far-right political party Alternative for Germany (AfD).

Merz said Germany has always refrained from interfering in US elections. “Conversely, I do not want the US government or institutions close to it to interfere in German elections,” he said.

Merz noted that financing German political parties from abroad is illegal, adding that he expects concerned countries to respect Germany’s laws.

Three German states -- Saxony-Anhalt, Berlin and Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania -- are scheduled



German Chancellor Friedrich Merz leaves the annual summer press conference at the House of the Federal Press Conference in Berlin, Germany on July 15. (AP)

to hold state elections in September. Recent polls show the AfD leading in both Saxony-Anhalt and Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania.

Merz also said that if a far-right party entered government in Germany, it would have “a completely

different significance” than if such a development occurred in another European Union country, given Germany’s history.

“I will do everything in my power in Germany to prevent that from happening,” he said.

Europe

Spanish authorities ID’d 13 victims of fire: Five days after a fire ravaged a remote expat community in southern Spain, authorities late Tuesday identified all 13 fatalities using biological samples.

Meanwhile, French firefighters brought under control a forest fire in the historic and much-visited Fontainebleau area south of Paris as parts of the continent continued to face extremely hot temperatures.

All but one of the deceased in the Spanish wildfire, all of whom were adults, were foreign nationals. They include seven British citizens - including a 93 year-old woman who died in the hospital - three Belgian nationals, a French woman, an American and a Spanish national, judicial authorities said in a statement. (AP)

Man arrested over threat to shoot Farage: British police have arrested a man suspected of threatening to shoot Reform UK leader Nigel Farage, The Telegraph reported on Wednesday.

The report said the man posted a message on social media platform X on May 8, a day after Britain’s local elections, telling Farage: “I am going to shoot you in the head if you win.” He later posted further threats under another message by Farage celebrating Reform UK’s election results.

The suspect was arrested in London on Tuesday on suspicion of sending a threatening communication. He was questioned and later released on bail pending



A view of a burnt area affected by wildfires in Beldar, near Almeria, Spain on July 11. (AP)

further inquiries, including examination of electronic devices allegedly used by him. (Xinhua)

Hungary’s ex-FM quits parliament: Hungary’s former foreign minister resigned from his parliamentary seat on Wednesday to join Chinese automaker BYD, prompting criticism over his role in facilitating substantial government subsidies to the company while in office.

Péter Szijjártó was Hungary’s top diplomat for nearly 12 years in the government of former populist Prime Minister Viktor Orbán. He was relieved from his post after Péter Magyar’s pro-European Tisza party won a landslide election in April, but remained a member of parliament. (AP)

‘Latest poll demonstrates that China’s governance achievements widely recognized’

China and Xi seen more favorably than US, Trump in many nations: new survey

WASHINGTON, July 16, (AP): The world has largely viewed the US more favorably than China for years, but those opinions have flipped in Beijing’s favor this year, according to a new poll by the Pew Research Center, a remarkable shift driven in part by tensions between the Trump administration and US allies.

More people have favorable views of China than the US in 25 out of the 36 countries and territories that were surveyed, including Canada and Mexico. The poll was conducted from February to May, a period when the United States and Israel launched a war against Iran.

In only six countries do people still see the US more positively than China, according to the findings released Wednesday.

Views in 22 out of the 36 countries and territories also are more favorable of Chinese leader Xi Jinping than US President Donald Trump, including in Canada, Mexico and major European powers including France, Germany and the UK. However, people in many of the countries have low confidence in both men.

It marks the first time in the rough-

ly 20 years Pew has been tracking global opinions that China has been viewed more positively than the US said Laura Silver, associate director of Pew’s Global Attitudes Research and one of the researchers on the study. Views of Beijing and Washington have been very similar at some points in the past but have not been significantly more favorable for China until now, she said.

The shift follows the COVID-19 pandemic becoming a distant issue and as global views of the US have soured, Silver said.

“There was just an actual relationship between the outbreak of the war and the sense that the US is just not contributing to peace and stability and that people have less confidence in Donald Trump,” she said.

Trump’s demands to control Greenland, the American military raid that captured Venezuela’s then-leader Nicolás Maduro, and the US handling of the Israeli-Hamas war in Gaza also have led to low approval in many countries, Silver said.

“The US has done a lot in terms of global engagement in recent months to years that is not being perceived



US President Donald Trump talks with China’s President Xi Jinping at the Zhongnanhai leadership compound, May 15, in Beijing. (AP)

positively internationally,” she said.

Aside from benefiting from the fading memory of the pandemic, China appears to have gained from comparison with the US, Silver said.

“By comparison, we know that China is seen to be a more reliable partner in many places. It’s more

“obliterated Iran’s nuclear facilities” and “eliminated hundreds of narco-terrorists.”

“President Trump is the leader of the free world, and thanks to his bold leadership the United States of America has never been stronger,” Wales said.

The Chinese Embassy in Washington said the latest poll “demonstrates that China’s governance achievements and development progress are widely recognized.”

Notably, those in some US allied countries have drastically shifted their views in recent years, such as Canada. In the new survey, only 33% of Canadians have positive views of the US, down from 57% in 2023. Over the same period, their favorable opinions of China rose from 14% to 44%.

Trump slapped a barrage of tariffs on Canadian goods last year, and even claimed that Canada could be the “the 51st state.”

Major European countries - including France, Germany, Spain, Italy, Sweden, the Netherlands and Italy - all have switched their opinions toward the world’s two largest

economies.

People in the UK, where about 6 in 10 held positive views of the US in 2023, now view China and the US similarly. Three years ago, the spread was 32 percentage points in Washington’s favor.

Of the six countries where people have more favorable views of the US, Israel leads the way. About 8 in 10 Israelis view the US positively, compared with 19% for China.

The other five countries are Japan, India, South Korea, the Philippines and Poland. Still, even their views of the US have dimmed over recent years.

The US is still ahead of China when it comes to government respect for personal freedoms, though the gap is shrinking, the Pew report says.

While China’s standing has improved somewhat, the narrowed divide is “driven largely by the fact that people in nearly every country surveyed have become less likely to say the US government respects its people’s personal freedoms” since 2021, when Pew last asked the question.

UN agencies fear over 500 died after reports of boats capsizing in recent weeks

SYDNEY, July 16, (AP): More than 500 people are feared dead after reports that two boats carrying members of Myanmar’s persecuted Rohingya minority have capsized in the Bay of Bengal, officials said Thursday.

According to preliminary information, the two boats left Myanmar’s western state of Rakhine in late June carrying mostly Rohingya passengers, including some who had traveled from refugee camps across the border in Bangladesh, according to a statement from the International Organization for Migration and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

One boat, believed to have been carrying around 250 people, lost contact shortly after departure. A second boat, reportedly carrying 280 people, is believed to have sunk off Myanmar’s Ayeyarwady coast on

July 8.

“While the incidents and casualty figures have yet to be officially confirmed, UNHCR and IOM are gravely concerned by the potentially devastating loss of life,” the agencies said.

Acting police Brig. Gen. Soe Lin Aung, the spokesperson for Myanmar’s Ministry of Home Affairs, declined to comment. Spokespeople for Myanmar’s president and the Ayeyarwady region’s government did not respond to requests for comment.

The Rohingya, who have in recent years fled both Myanmar and Bangladesh’s squalid refugee camps by the thousands, typically avoid such boat journeys at this time of year, when monsoons are frequent and conditions at sea are particularly dangerous. The UNHCR and IOM noted this in their statement, saying that recent torrential rain and flood-

ing across the region would have made such journeys especially risky.

Around 1.2 million stateless, predominantly Muslim Rohingya remain trapped in overcrowded refugee camps in Bangladesh after fleeing waves of violence by Myanmar’s security forces.

The refugees have no way to safely return to Myanmar, where the military that killed thousands of Rohingya in 2017 during what the United States declared a genocide remains in charge of their homeland. The Rohingya still living in Myanmar face severe restrictions and many are confined to internment camps.

Step cuts to foreign aid by the US and other countries have led to ration cuts in Bangladesh’s refugee camps, while the ruling military and an ethnic armed organization in Rakhine have fought for control of the region.



An aerial view of a Rohingya refugee camp, home to over a million of Myanmar’s persecuted Rohingya minority, in Cox’s Bazar, Bangladesh on Nov 25, 2025. (AP)



Protesters shout slogans during a nationwide protest campaign launched by Abhijeet Dipke, founder of the Cockroach Janta Party, in Pune, India on June 11. (AP)

India’s Generation Z ‘cockroaches’ took protest to streets, now they rally around a hunger strike

NEW DELHI, July 16, (AP): The protest camp came to life as student demonstrators rolled up their bedding after another night under the open sky. At the heart of the camp, activist Sonam Wangchuk lay inside a tent, his weakened frame showing the toll of weeks on hunger strike.

“If not fasting, what? Riots in the streets? That’s what we don’t want to do. So this is a peaceful way to take your voice to the government,” Wangchuk said on a recent afternoon as worried supporters checked on him.

The 59-year-old has become an unlikely symbol of India’s Cockroach Janta Party, a youth-led movement that erupted online two months ago and gained momentum over alleged leaks on social media in the country’s fiercely competitive college entrance exams.

With the hunger strike in its third week, organizers are racing to keep pressure on Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s government, which they accuse of ignoring their calls for the education minister’s resignation.

“There has been no kind of response from the government. They have left Sonam Wangchuk to die,” said Abhijeet Dipke, a Boston University student and founder of the Cockroach Janta Party.

The movement began in May after Supreme Court Chief Justice Surya Kant compared some unemployed young people to “cockroaches” during a hearing on another issue. Supporters embraced the insult as a badge of resilience, turning it into a satirical political campaign that amassed more than 21 million Instagram followers in a few days.

The movement seeks the resignation of the education minister, Dharmendra Pradhan, over the alleged leaks, along with sweeping reforms to the examination system and compensation for families of students who died by suicide, whether over the leaks or exam results.

For many young Indians, their future depends on a single entrance exam for government jobs and medical colleges.

Dipke said the movement’s online

popularity has translated into growing support on the ground. Since its first major demonstration in New Delhi in early June, he said, thousands of supporters have turned out at universities and rallies in other cities.

The presence of Wangchuk, a well-known climate activist, shows how the protest has drawn professionals beyond the world of education.

High-profile attention is growing. Opposition leaders from several political parties and some Bollywood celebrities have visited the camp or lent support to the movement in recent days.

But turnout in New Delhi has been modest compared with the large online following.

On most days, a few hundred people gather at Jantar Mantar for a sit-in, with crowds typically swelling to around 1,000 by evening. Many have endured weeks of monsoon rain, sleeping in tents.

Unlike established political parties, Dipke said, the movement has no formal structure. Supporters pay

their own way to New Delhi, where they camp at Jantar Mantar, a designated public protest ground enclosed by police barricades. There has been no police attempt to shut down the protest.

Ajay Zingade, a 33-year-old IT professional, said recurring exam paper leaks compelled him to join the protest despite no longer being a student.

“I am just exercising my fundamental right of dissent,” he said.

Organizers say the movement has grown into a broader campaign for accountability and restoration of trust in institutions that students believe have failed them, including the judiciary, the political system and the media.

“The system needs a complete overhaul because the current system is no longer accountable or even taking basic responsibility,” Dipke said.

But the government has neither opened negotiations nor publicly acknowledged the movement’s demands. The education ministry did not respond to AP questions.

Sanctioned ex-president Martelly returns to Haiti as some cheer

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti, July 16, (AP): Former Haitian president Michel Martelly returned to Haiti on Wednesday, making a rare visit to his homeland.

Martelly has not said why he traveled to Haiti, although local media have reported that he is expected to testify as part of the ongoing investigation into the July 2021 killing of former President Jovenel Moïse.

He has not been accused or charged in the case, which last led Martelly to visit Haiti roughly three years ago.

Several dozen supporters greeted Martelly, who served as president from 2011 to 2016 and lives in the United States.

He did not answer questions as he made his way through the crowd. Supporters played music, held pictures of him and shouted, “The father is back!” and “Long live Martelly!”

Martelly had chosen Moïse as his successor; both are members of the Tèt Kale Party, or PHTK. It has played a prominent role in Haitian politics but did not register a candidate for the upcoming general elections, which have not been held for more than a decade.

Martelly, a musician known as “Sweet Micky,” has long faced corruption accusations.

In November 2022, Canada sanc-



Former Haitian president Michel Martelly, (center), who lives in the US, walks with supporters who came to welcome him home in Port-au-Prince, Haiti on July 15. (AP)

tioned Martelly, and in August 2024, the U.S. followed suit, accusing him of facilitating drug trafficking and sponsoring drug gangs.

“It is unacceptable for Haitian political and economic elites to plunder Haiti’s future,” the U.S. Department of State said at the time.

In December 2025, the Council of the European Union announced a travel ban and an asset freeze against Haitian politicians including Martelly,

whom it accused of arming and financing gangs to promote his political agenda, control territory and defend his personal and economic interests.

Haiti’s Anti-Corruption Unit also has accused Martelly of misrepresenting assets.

Martelly has not publicly addressed the allegations.

Martelly’s arrival comes as Haiti continues to struggle with deepening poverty and a surge in gang violence.

Africa

Nigeria issues flood alert for 14 states: Nigerian authorities on Wednesday issued a flood alert for 14 of the country’s 36 states, warning of a medium flood risk as the rainy season intensifies.

In an advisory, the Nigeria Hydrological Services Agency (NIHSA) said the affected states could face a medium flood risk between Wednesday and next Monday.

According to the agency, the states likely to be affected are Adamawa, Akwa Ibom, Anambra, Bauchi, Benue, Borno, Cross River, Edo, Enugu, Imo, Kaduna, Lagos, Niger and Plateau.

The NIHSA warned of localized flooding along major river channels and identified 16 monitoring stations as high-risk locations. It said several local government areas and communities, including schools, health facilities and markets, could be affected if precautionary measures are not taken.

Among the areas identified as particularly vulnerable are Saminaka along the Karam River, the Waya Dam site on the Waya River, and Amber on the Amber River. (Xinhua)

□ □ □

6 killed, 84 injured in Mali road accident: At least six people were killed and 84 others injured Tuesday when a truck overturned in central Mali’s Bandiagara region, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) office in Mali said Wednesday.

The truck, carrying freight and passengers, including Burkinabe refugees, overturned at around 2:00 p.m. local time on National Road 15 between Mbandoly and Songobia, the UNHCR said in a statement.

Six people died from their injuries, while 84 injured passengers were taken to a hospital in Bandiagara. Among them, 36 in critical condition were later transferred to Sevare, where greater medical treatment capacity is available. (Xinhua)

Twin attacks by militants kill 3 police officers in Pakistan

PESHAWAR, Pakistan, July 16, (AP): Militants ambushed a security convoy and hours later a suicide bomber struck a police station in twin attacks in northwest Pakistan Wednesday that officials said left at least three police officers dead and 20 wounded, in the latest sign that violence is escalating in the region bordering Afghanistan.

The first attack occurred in the district of Upper Dir in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, where militants ambushed a security convoy, killing three police officers and wounding 15 others, local police official Ibrahim Khan said.

He said security forces returned fire and the exchange was ongoing.

Khan did not immediately say whether any militants had been killed or wounded.

Hours later, a suicide bomber rammed an explosives-laden vehicle into a police station in the city of Bannu, also in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, wounding at least five police officers, police said. The blast damaged part of the station, but no fatalities were immediately reported.

No group immediately claimed responsibility for either attack, but suspicion is likely to fall on the Pakistani Taliban, known as Tehrik-e-Taleban Pakistan, or TTP.

The TTP is separate from but closely allied with Afghanistan’s Taliban. Pakistan has accused the group of operating from sanctuaries inside Afghanistan, a charge both the TTP and the Taliban-led government in Kabul deny.

Kuwait oil price down to \$84.97 pb

KUWAIT CITY, July 16, (KUNA): Price of Kuwaiti oil dropped by USD 2.97 to reach 84.97 per barrel (pb) on Wednesday’s trading, compared to USD 87.94 pb the previous day, according to Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) on Thursday.

Globally, Brent crude rose 22 cents to settle at USD 84.95 pb, while US West Texas Intermediate rose 26 cents to reach USD 79.60 pb.

600 mln digital transactions, 200+ services strengthen KFH's digital leadership

KFH wins Euromoney’s Best Digital Bank Award in Kuwait

KUWAIT CITY, July 16: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) has been named the Best Digital Bank in Kuwait at the prestigious 2026 Euromoney Awards for Excellence. The accolade recognizes KFH’s continuous achievements in digital transformation and its strategic commitment to delivering an integrated ecosystem of advanced, sustainable digital banking solutions. By consistently elevating the customer experience, KFH continues to cement its leadership position in the banking sector.

“This award reflects KFH’s outstanding milestones in digital banking and the cumulative impact of our continuous investment in technology and innovation,” said Haytham Alterkait, Deputy Group CEO Transformation, Technology and Operations at KFH. He emphasized that the bank is pursuing its plans for a comprehensive digital ecosystem, ensuring KFH delivers seamless, high-value services that align perfectly with modern customer needs.

Alterkait added that KFH has successfully strengthened its digital presence by upgrading its technological infrastructure and expanding the scope of services



Haytham Alterkait

■ **Alterkait:** An integrated digital transformation model designed to put customers first and deliver tangible operational results

provided across various digital channels and platforms, alongside smart branches and self-service kiosks. This has contributed to a qualitative leap in banking service standards, increased adoption rates, and enhanced both quality and operational efficiency metrics.

He noted that KFH has built an integrated digital transformation model driven by a strategic, customer-first vision that yields measurable operational results. In 2025 alone, the bank processed over 600 million digital transactions and offered more than 200 fully digital services through KFHonline, further cementing digital banking as the preferred choice

for its customers.

Alterkait explained that KFH continues to stay ahead of rapid advancements in financial technology (FinTech), data engineering, digital product design, and smart solutions, all while maintaining the highest standards of quality, reliability, governance, and cybersecurity. These efforts drive operational efficiency, boost productivity, accelerate service delivery times, and ultimately strengthen customer satisfaction and trust.

He emphasized that KFH remains committed to driving customer-centric digital innovation. By deploying advanced technology, upgrading its digital infrastructure, and strengthening its cybersecurity framework,



the bank ensures the continuous delivery of a secure, cutting-edge, and sustainable digital banking ecosystem, cementing its market leadership and competitive edge.

On corporate banking, Alterkait noted that KFH has continued to upgrade its eCorp platform with advanced, high-value systems. These integrations drive operational efficiency for businesses and institutions, keeping pace with their evolving needs while delivering seamless user experience.

experience and deliver tangible, measurable business impact.

Entries are evaluated based on several key criteria, including the institution’s overall digital strategy, investments in technology and innovation, product and service development, and improvements to the customer experience. Particular consideration is given to digital transformation initiatives, the adoption of emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence, automation, and advanced analytics, and the extent to which these initiatives deliver tangible business benefits.

Euromoney Awards for Excellence

The Euromoney Awards for Excellence are among the world’s most prestigious accolades in the financial services industry. They recognize institutions that showcase outstanding performance, cutting-edge innovation, digital capabilities, and a commitment to delivering lasting value to customers.

For more than 50 years, Euromoney has served as the trusted global benchmark for the banking and finance sectors, honoring the organizations that consistently set the standard for global excellence.

Gas price decline eases inflation but risks persist

‘Select goods exempt’

US retail sales growth slows to 0.2% in June

NEW YORK, July 16, (AP): Shoppers slowed their spending in June from May amid continuing economic uncertainty and fading benefits from generous government tax refunds.

Retail sales rose 0.2% in June, after being up a revised 1% in May, according to the Commerce Department’s report released on Thursday.

Excluding business at gas stations, retail sales rose a robust 0.7%

Business at clothing and accessories stores slipped 0.3%, while online sales rose 1.9%, fueled by spending surrounding Amazon’s Prime Day event, which was held from June 23 through June 26. Business at sporting goods, hobby, musical instrument and book stores was up 1.3%, helped by spending around the World Cup.

The data offers only a snapshot of consumer spending and doesn’t include activities like travel and hotel stays. The lone services category - restaurants - registered a 0.1% increase.

The report comes as U.S. inflation cooled last month as the cost of gas, clothes, and used cars fell, offering some relief to consumers, while underlying price pressures also slowed more than anticipated.

Gas prices fell to \$3.94 per gallon on Thursday, down from \$4.04 a month ago, according to motor club AAA.

The Labor Department said Tuesday that consumer prices dropped 0.4% from May to June, the largest monthly drop in four years, after increasing 0.5% in the previous month. On a yearly basis, inflation declined to 3.5%, down from a year-over-year gain of 4.2% in May and lower than many economists expected.

The core inflation figures suggest that the gas price spike from the Iran war, while it pushed up airfares and some other costs, hasn’t so far led to broad-based, sustained inflation, according to economists. But the United States renewed attacks on Iran and President Donald Trump announced a new blockade in the Strait of Hormuz, a key shipping route for about one-fifth of the world’s oil. The increase threatens to unravel at least some of the progress that occurred last month.

Next month, major retailers including Walmart, Target and Macy’s are slated to report their second-quarter earnings reports, which will offer some insight into shopping behavior.

A report last month from the Conference Board showed that Americans’ attitudes toward the economy improved slightly this month as gas prices declined, but their outlook is still mostly negative by historical standards.

Sarah Williamson, a 27-year-old software support engineer in Raleigh, North Carolina,

said that over the last year or so, she’s more conscious of how she spends her money. She feels financially secure given her stable job, but increasing costs of food and gas are making her pull back on frivolous spending.

“I shop less overall as a hobby,” she said.

Williamson noted that at the supermarket, she avoids buying pre-cut fruits like cantaloupe, which tend to be more expensive than buying the whole cantaloupe, to save money, and is careful about buying clothing for herself. She recently bought a dress for \$30, including shipping costs, on the TikTok shop and a cotton nightgown for \$72 on Amazon including shipping fees. The price for the night gown was more than she normally spends, but she figured the price was worth it since she wears it a lot.

Brian Reynolds, CEO and founder of Just For Teens, a skincare line aimed at preteens and teens, noted that his low-price products, which include \$5 pimple patches, are aimed at families who are on a budget and are in the sweet spot of retailing right now.

By October, his brand will be expanded to 10,000 Dollar General stores, up from about 4,000 late last year. He said sales have been decent so far, but he expects that business will see more of a momentum for the back-to-school selling season.

Oil volatility poses risk to inflation outlook

US producer prices fall 0.3% on lower energy costs

WASHINGTON, July 16, (AP): U.S. wholesale inflation fell from May to June on plunging energy prices, but intensifying hostilities with Iran are clouding the outlook.

The Labor Department reported Wednesday that its producer price index - which captures inflation before it reaches consumers - dropped 0.3% from May, biggest decline since April 2025 and a reversal from a 0.6% uptick the month before. Compared to a year earlier, wholesale prices were up 5.5% in June, decelerating from a 6% increase the month before. Gasoline prices plunged 12% in June but are still up nearly 43% from June 2025, pushed higher by the Iran war. Food prices also dipped in June.

Excluding volatile food and energy prices, so-called core wholesale prices were up 4.7% from June 2025 and 0.2% from May.

The producer price report came out a day after the Labor Department said consumer prices dropped 0.4% from May to June, the biggest monthly drop in four years. Compared to a year earlier, they were up 3.5% last month, down from 4.2% in May. The June inflation numbers were much cooler than forecasters had expected, reducing pressure on the Federal Reserve to raise interest rates this year. Still, inflation is running above the Fed’s 2% target.

In his first appearance before Congress since becoming Fed chair May 22, Kevin Warsh said Tuesday that the central bank has “no tolerance for persistently elevated inflation.”

Energy prices have ratcheted higher since President Donald Trump on Monday announced a new blockade in the Strait of Hormuz, through which a fifth of the

world’s oil and natural gas passes. Many Americans are already frustrated with the high cost of living, dimming the prospects of Trump’s Republican Party in November’s midterm elections.

“There’s no near-term pressure on the Fed, but oil is in the driver’s seat over the longer term,” said David Russell, global head of market strategy at the online brokerage TradeStation. “Energy saved the day in June, but that might become ancient history if the Strait of Hormuz doesn’t open soon.”

Wholesale prices can offer an early look at where consumer inflation might be headed. Economists also watch it because some of its components, notably healthcare and financial services, flow into the Fed’s preferred inflation gauge - the personal consumption expenditures, or PCE, index.

US imposes 25% tariffs on Brazil over trade practices

WASHINGTON, July 16, (AP): The United States is imposing 25% tariffs on imports from Brazil after finding a range of what it deemed unfair trade practices by the world’s 10th-biggest economy.

The tariffs, which were first proposed last month, will take effect July 22.

The order exempts some goods that are not produced in the U.S. or that officials worry would disrupt supply chains. Exempted products include coffee, beef, oranges and orange juice, some oil and gas energy products and aerospace parts and components.

The Office of the U.S. Trade Representative concluded after a year-long investigation that Brazil had a range of unfair trade practices, including lax anti-corruption enforcement and unfair tariffs of its own, among other practices seen as unreasonable and unfair. The U.S., however, has had a goods trade surplus with Brazil for years.

U.S. Trade Representative Jamie Greer said in a statement that the action was necessary to ensure American workers and companies compete on a level playing field.

“Extensive negotiations with Brazil over the past year have not resolved these issues, but we remain open to continuing negotiations with Brazil to bring about long-needed changes to the problems identified in this investigation,” he said.

After U.S. officials in early June warned that they were proposing the tariffs, Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva reacted with indig-

nation. He instead pointed to political considerations, blaming his rival in the country’s October elections, Sen. Flávio Bolsonaro. Bolsonaro had recently visited Washington and is the son of former President Jair Bolsonaro, an ally of President Donald Trump.

Secretary of State Marco Rubio said in a post on X about the announcement of the tariffs: “Let there be no confusion about why: President Lula and his government have not negotiated with the US in good faith. His economic policies are bad for Americans and bad for Brazilians. For the past year, Lula has put his own ego ahead of making a deal for the welfare of the Brazilian people, and these tariffs are the price for that.”

The tariffs are being imposed under Section 301 of the Trade Act of 1974, allowing the U.S. to launch the investigation into Brazil’s trade practices.

The U.S. Supreme Court in February ruled against many of Trump’s tariffs imposed under a different law, the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA) of 1977. The court found he overstepped his authority under that act to impose sweeping tariffs on U.S. trading partners, including Brazil.

Trump had under that law imposed a 50% tariff on Brazil to protest its prosecution of Jair Bolsonaro for trying to overturn his loss in a 2022 election. But Trump’s relationship with Lula seemed to improve in May, when he visited the White House.

Government takes control of British Steel to protect hiring

LONDON, July 16, (AP): The U.K. government has nationalized British Steel to protect the nation’s steel-making capacity after the company’s Chinese owners moved to shut the plant’s blast furnaces.

The Department for Business and Trade announced the move on Thursday, saying it would save thousands of jobs and protect the U.K.’s national interest by ensuring a supply of domestically produced steel for major construction projects and the defense industry.

“British Steel now belongs to the British people, and our focus is on the future: stabilizing the business, backing the communities that rely on it and building a sustainable, competitive and decarbonized steel sector for the years ahead,” Business Secretary Peter Kyle said in a statement.

An independent evaluation will be

carried out to determine whether any compensation will be paid to the firm’s former owner, China’s Jingye Group.

The U.K. government took operational control of British Steel last year after Jingye said that it was considering closing the blast furnaces at its Scunthorpe plant in northern England. The blast furnaces are the last in the U.K. that make “virgin steel” from raw materials.

British Steel and its forebears have been making steel at Scunthorpe for more than 130 years, building on the U.K.’s development of improved steelmaking technology during the Industrial Revolution. The plant currently employs about 2,700 people.

Jingye bought British Steel in 2020 and says it has invested more than 1.2 billion pounds (\$1.6 billion) to keep the plant running in the face of “ongoing production instability.”



One of the blast furnaces at British Steel’s steelworks site in Scunthorpe, northern England, Tuesday, April 15, 2025. (AP)

Hiring slows but jobless claims stay resilient

US jobless claims fall to 10-week low at 208,000

WASHINGTON, July 16, (AP): Filings for unemployment benefits fell last week to the lowest level in 10 weeks as U.S. layoffs remain historically low.

The number of Americans applying for jobless aid in the week ending July 11 dropped by 8,000 to 208,000, the Labor Department reported Thursday. That’s well below the 219,000 new applications forecast by analysts surveyed by the data firm FactSet.

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

In its more comprehensive June jobs report earlier this month, the government reported that employers pulled back on hiring in June, adding only 57,000 jobs.

That’s less than half the previous month’s total and a sign that companies remain cautious about adding to their head counts. The unemployment rate dropped to 4.2% from 4.3% in May, though that decline is mostly because many out-of-work people gave up looking for jobs and were no longer counted as unemployed.

June’s tepid hiring comes after a relative surge in job gains the previous three months, countering concerns that the war in Iran could trip up an already wobbly labor market.

Weekly jobless aid applications have stabilized in a range mostly between 200,000 and 250,000 since the U.S. economy emerged from the pandemic recession. However, hiring began slowing about two years ago and tapered further in 2025 due to

President Donald Trump’s tariffs, his purge of the federal workforce and the lingering effects of high interest rates meant to control inflation.

Among the companies that have trimmed their workforce recently are Verizon, UPS, Amazon, Disney, Starbucks and Walmart.

Last week, Microsoft said it was cutting 4,800 jobs, about 2.1% of its global workforce, including a large number of workers at its Xbox video game business.

Thursday’s layoffs data showed that the four-week moving average of weekly jobless claims, which adjusts for volatility, declined by 4,750 to 214,250.

The total number of Americans filing for unemployment benefits for the previous week ending July 4 fell by 16,000 to 1.81 million, also a historically healthy figure.

Showcasing digital banking solutions for youth

Weyay partners with PUC at The Avenues to support students preparing for universities

KUWAIT CITY, July 16: Weyay Bank, Kuwait's first digital bank, has announced its participation as a strategic partner in the "Create Your Future" campaign, organized by the Secretariat General of the Private Universities Council at The Avenues from 14 to 17 July. Through its interactive booth, the Bank supported high school graduates preparing for university by introducing them to available academic opportunities, internal scholarship programs, and various fields of study, helping them make informed decisions about their future with confidence.

The opening was attended by Dr. Jassim Al Ali, Secretary-General of Council of Private Universities; Fahad Al Khalifa, Director at General Secretariat of Private Universities Council; Hisham Al Nusif, Chief, Consumer Banking at the National Bank of Kuwait; Ghadeer Al Awadhi, Executive Vice President, Sales and Distribution Channels Strategy; and Amal Al Duwaisan, Head of Weyay Bank, alongside several officials and representatives from participating entities.

Throughout the campaign, Weyay showcased a range of digital banking solutions and services designed specifically for young people, while highlighting the importance of developing healthy financial habits from the start of university life. The Bank also introduced students to its SELECT card, tailored for university students and offering exclusive benefits, rewards, and discounts with leading brands, helping enhance their university experience and support their everyday needs during this important stage of life. Weyay's participation reflects its ongoing commitment to empowering young people and supporting them through key life milestones by providing innovative digital banking solutions and engaging experiences that contribute to building a



Photos during the campaign.

generation that is more financially aware and better prepared for the future.

The "Create Your Future" campaign aims to support students and parents during the university admissions and registration period by providing academic guidance and information on internal scholarship programs and various academic disciplines. The initiative helps students identify educational pathways that align with their interests, ambitions, and the evolving needs of the job market.

Commenting on the campaign, Dr. Jassim Al Ali, Secretary-General of Council of Private Universities, said: "This campaign reflects the Private Universities Council's commitment to providing students with the right guidance at this pivotal stage of their lives. By helping them choose academic majors that align with their abilities, aspirations, and labor market needs, we aim to contribute positively to their academic and professional futures."

Amal Al Duwaisan, Head of Weyay Bank, added: "We are proud to participate as a strategic partner in this campaign, driven by our belief in the importance of supporting young people throughout every stage of their journey. Transitioning to university is not only about choosing an academic major; it is also an opportunity to build financial awareness, develop money management skills, and learn how to plan for the future."

This partnership reflects both organizations' shared commitment to delivering a comprehensive educational experience that combines academic guidance with financial literacy, helping students prepare for university life and make informed decisions that support their long-term academic and professional success.

AI boom drives expansion

TSMC to invest \$100 billion more in US chip expansion

HONG KONG, July 16, (AP): Major Taiwan computer chipmaker TSMC said Thursday it plans to spend another \$100 billion on expanding its manufacturing capacity in the United States.

The latest commitment appears to bring the company's total pledges for investment in U.S. chipmaking to \$265 billion. It also raised its annual revenue forecast after booking record high profits thanks to runaway demand from the boom in artificial intelligence.

The world's largest contract chip manufacturing and one of the world's most valuable companies, TSMC is seen as a barometer for the global chip industry and for AI at a time when worries about a potential AI bubble have been buffeting financial markets.

As AI-related demand continues to jump and needs for computing power from data centers surge, TSMC has been expanding chip fabrication plants in the U.S., Japan and Taiwan. It said it is increasing its annual capital expenditure budget for this year to \$60 billion-\$64 billion, up from an earlier estimate of \$52 billion-\$56 billion.

TSMC, or Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Co., is a key supplier to Nvidia and Apple. It had previously already committed \$165 billion in the U.S. for building plants in Arizona, with six fabrication facilities planned.

The extra \$100 billion in investments are to "support the strong multiyear demand from our leading U.S. customers," C.C. Wei, chairman and CEO of TSMC, said during the company's quarterly earnings conference Thursday. An additional four fabrication plants in Arizona will likely be built with

the new investments, TSMC said. They will focus on making some of the most advanced chips that are 2-nanometer and below.

"We believe this investment will help to further foster the development of the U.S. semiconductor ecosystem, strengthen the supply chain and support an increasing number of high-tech, high-paying jobs in the United States," he said.

Earlier this year, U.S. President Donald Trump's administration and Taiwan reached an agreement that cut U.S. tariffs on Taiwanese goods, as Taiwan promised around \$250 billion of new investments in the United States' tech sector, including in semiconductors. That included spending by TSMC.

AI-related demand globally continues to be "extremely robust," Wei said, as the "AI megatrend continues to drive the need for more and more computation."

"I believe from this day on, all the way to probably 2029, 2030, the demand is very strong," he said.

TSMC on Thursday reported a record 706.6 billion new Taiwan dollars (\$22 billion) in net profit for the April-June quarter, up 77% from a year earlier and better than what analysts had expected. Revenue was up 36% year-on-year during the quarter, to 1.27 trillion new Taiwan dollars (\$39 billion).

Wei said TSMC now expects its annual 2026 revenue growth to be slightly above 40% year-on-year, up from its previous forecast of over 30%.

TSMC's ramped up investment plans are "essential to support (its) long-term growth" and to keep up with demand, said William Li, a senior analyst in semiconductors at Counterpoint Research.

As part of its support for the 'Let's Be Aware' campaign

National Bank of Kuwait warns against falling for fake chalet booking offers on social media

KUWAIT CITY, July 16: The National Bank of Kuwait continues to support the "Let's Be Aware" banking awareness campaign, launched by the Central Bank of Kuwait in collaboration with Kuwaiti banks and the Kuwait Banking Association, which aims to enhance financial and banking literacy in society, raise awareness about financial and electronic fraud, and empower customers to make safer, more informed financial decisions.

As part of this support, NBK is committed to publishing diverse awareness content across its various digital platforms and electronic channels, including educational videos, awareness messages, and security tips and guidelines, in addition to reposting awareness messages issued CBK. These efforts help reach various segments of society, informing them about the latest fraud tactics and how to prevent them.

In this light, the Bank is currently focusing on raising awareness about scams related to bookings for serviced apartments and chalets that typically surge during holiday seasons, through which scammers lure victims by using fake advertisements on social media platforms, utilizing photos and videos of luxury chalets, resorts, and stunning sea views. They offer prices significantly lower than prevailing market rates to attract customers and pressure them into rushing their bookings.

It should be noted that scammers often require a deposit or a down



- NBK warns against hastily clicking links in text messages or social media apps to make booking payments.
- The Bank urges customers to deal only with well-known, trusted companies and platforms when booking hotels or chalets.
- Raising awareness remains the first line of defense against fraud attempts.

payment to confirm a booking, only for the client to later discover that the place does not exist, the advertised property differs completely from the one agreed upon, or the photos used were taken from other websites without the owners' knowledge.

In this context, NBK emphasized the importance of dealing exclusively with well-known and trusted companies and platforms when booking hotels or chalets. It urged customers to verify the credibility of the leasing party, review user ratings and the company's track record, and inspect the property in person when possible before finalizing the booking or transferring any funds.

NBK also warned against hastily clicking on links sent via text messages or social media apps to pay for bookings, noting that scammers

are increasingly using advanced techniques, including AI, to craft professional-looking and convincing messages and offers. Additionally, they use foreign numbers that appear local to the recipient, attempting to lend greater credibility to their scams.

Moreover, NBK emphasized that protecting customers from financial and cyber risks is a strategic priority, noting that raising awareness remains the first line of defense against rising fraud. Consequently, the Bank continues to implement ongoing awareness programs designed to educate customers on best security practices when using digital banking services and transactions.

The Bank urged its customers to adhere to security instructions and guidelines, and not to share banking details, PINs, or verification codes

with anyone, regardless of their stated affiliation, even if they claim to be contacting them from an official entity or the Bank itself. Customers were also advised to periodically change their bank card PINs and to immediately report any suspicious activity or communication.

NBK strongly believes in the importance of promoting financial literacy across various society segments and raising awareness about how to make the most of the diverse services it offers through its branches and digital channels, which has the largest following among Kuwaiti banks.

The "Let's Be Aware" campaign is the largest of its kind in the region, aiming to raise banking and financial awareness among bank customers and address critical topics, most notably: steps to avoid falling victim to fraud, the risks associated with high-risk investments, optimal ways to utilize banking services, the promotion of a culture of saving and investment, and other related subjects.

It is also worth noting that NBK is a key supporter and partner in all campaigns and initiatives launched by CBK aimed at raising financial literacy and banking awareness across various society segments. As a leading financial institution in Kuwait and the region, NBK consistently organizes events to educate the public on issues relevant to the banking sector and conducts numerous training programs for its staff to enhance their expertise in combating fraud and financial crimes.

Fujitsu, Nvidia advance AI robotics

Japan bets on physical AI to address labor shortage

TOKYO, July 16, (AP): Japanese communications company Fujitsu is leading a major push in artificial intelligence using Nvidia's technology, bringing together what it said was the best in Japan's manufacturing prowess in robotics with AI.

The technology area known as "physical AI" refers to smart, futuristic robots that can think on their own, not just follow programmed directions, to work safely alongside people in factories, homes and hospitals.

The initiative was announced in Tokyo on Thursday by Nvidia Corp. Chief Executive Jensen Huang and Fujitsu Chief Executive Takahito Tokita, along with the CEOs of Japan's top makers of industrial robots, Fanuc Corp., Yaskawa Electric Corp. and Kawasaki Heavy Industries.

The latest announcement comes on top of a deal announced by Nvidia and Fujitsu last year.

The executives expressed hopes

that the robots can address the nation's acute labor shortage. Japan is among the most rapidly aging societies in the developed world and the smart robots could help take care of the elderly living alone, they said.

Huang said physical AI was a good fit for Japan because of the country's reputation for manufacturing quality because robots that move independently could potentially be dangerous.

"Japan's excellence is a philosophy, a way of life. 'Made in Japan' means the highest quality, the highest precision. Japan sets the standard for the state-of-the-art in modern manufacturing," he said.

Huang listed Japan's prized concepts in fine manufacturing such as "kaizen," which means "continuous improvement."

The companies did not give a specific time frame for the arrival of such robots in daily life.

BRUSSELS, July 16, (AP): The European Union issued two new rules for Google on Thursday to force it to share search data and open up its Android operating system to rival AI companies.

In the latest attempt to rein in tech behemoths' deep control of the digital economy, the EU said it will support innovation and diversity in the field by enabling fair access to AI features on Android devices and search engines.

"Thanks to these measures, we hope to see emerging alternatives to Google Search and Google's AI services, such as Gemini, and that users in the EU can enjoy greater choice of services," Henna Virkkunen, an executive vice president at the European Commission overseeing tech, said.

The measure is the latest advancement of Brussels' growing rules and regulations that have given the 27-nation bloc a global leadership position in checking the power of tech juggernauts or "gatekeepers" like TikTok, which are largely based in China and the U.S.

Recently, Brussels has pushed through efforts to ensure Google gives access to Gemini AI ser-

Brussels seeks greater consumer choice

EU forces Google to share search data and open Android to rival AI companies



The Google logo is seen on a building in New York, Oct. 27, 2025. (AP)

vices to rival AI companies and search engines; forced Apple to add interoperability features to its devices to connect to non-Apple products; and demanded Meta dismantle "key addictive features" like infinite scrolling.

Kent Walker, president of global affairs for both Google and its parent company Alphabet, said the new rules could backfire by removing safeguards that the company had built to pro-

tect user privacy like the vetting of third-party AI assistants.

"Europeans' private searches would be exposed to unfamiliar companies, without adequate anonymization of the data and without user knowledge or consent. This would weaken citizens' privacy, risk business trade secrets, and endanger national security," he said in a statement.

U.S. President Donald Trump has lashed out at EU tech regulation in the past.

In issuing the two new rules, the commission said it found that AI agents not made by Google were unable to function on Android phones at the same level as Google's Gemini.

Google must now allow voice-activation of these alternative AI agents and enable them to run background tasks like booking restaurants via third-party apps.

By January 2027, Google must also begin sharing anonymized search data with some rivals. The commission said the move is meant to level the playing field since Google controls a vast trove of user data that no competitor can match.

What's On

SPOTLIGHT



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Al-Khashti with the tournament participants.

Highlighting employee wellbeing with padel

Zain hosts 6th annual employee padel tournament

KUWAIT CITY, July 16: Zain Kuwait organized the sixth edition of its annual employee padel tournament, bringing together team members from across the company's departments in an energetic day of sport and friendly competition. The event aimed to encourage physical activity and strengthen bonds among members of the Zain family beyond the workplace.

The tournament featured a series of exciting matches, with employees demonstrating strong competitive spirit and sportsmanship throughout, before concluding with the final rounds and the awarding of the top-performing teams.

The tournament forms part of Zain's ongoing internal initiatives to enrich the employee experience, promote health and wellbeing, strengthen communication and engagement, and foster a positive work environment that brings together sport, recreation, and



Waleed Al-Khashti presents the first-place team with their award.

■ Employees from across the company came together for an energetic day of sport and friendly competition

friendly competition.

For Zain, sport is an effective

means of supporting physical and mental wellbeing, developing team spirit and a sense of belonging, and encouraging employees to adopt healthier and more active lifestyles, positively enhancing their experience both inside and outside the workplace.

The company also continues to offer activities and programs that enable employees to showcase their talents and abilities, while providing additional opportunities to connect and build relationships. These efforts reflect Zain's culture of unity, shared experiences, and the spirit of one family.

The sixth edition reflects the growing popularity of padel among Zain employees and the tournament's continued success as one of the company's most anticipated internal sporting events, offering an engaging atmosphere that combines competition, enjoyment, and team spirit.

'Paathi' wins Best Film at Nano Awards 2026

IAF Kuwait hosts Nano Film Awards 2026

KUWAIT CITY, July 16: The Nano Film Awards ceremony, organized by the Indian Arts Federation (IAF), Kuwait, took place on July 10, 2026, at the Al MedX Auditorium in Farwaniya.

Presiding over the meeting, President Sherine Mathew Kottaram stated that art is a force that unites people beyond the boundaries of language and culture. She emphasized that the mission of the Indian Arts Federation is to discover and nurture talent, promote creativity, and provide meaningful opportunities for artists to showcase their skills and creative excellence to the world.

Renowned film critic, writer, and international film jury member Shri V.K. Joseph inaugurated the ceremony via an online platform. He commended the activities of the Indian Arts

Federation in providing a platform for emerging cinematic talent.

The colorful event was attended by prominent figures from the social, cultural, and media sectors in Kuwait.

General Secretary Leo Kizhakkeveedan delivered the welcome address. Felicitations were offered by Shemej Kumar, Babuji Bathery, Dr. Susovana, Rajeev Naduvilemuri, Muneer Ahmed, Gafoor Trithala, Mubarak Kamprath, Abdul Azeez, and Aniyam Kunj Pappachan.

The films for award were selected by a jury led by the acclaimed cinematographer Ajmal Sabu.

Best Film: Paathi, directed by Ashwin C.V.
Second Best Film: Until the End directed by Siyas Padoor.

Socially Relevant Subject Awards: Munna-riyippu directed by Santhosh Purakkattiri and Alarm directed by Hochimin Haridas
Special Jury Award: Passion, directed by RemyaJayapal.

The event's grand success was attributed to the excellent coordination led by Farwaniya Area Coordinator Bony Kurian, Cultural Secretary Nirmaladevi, Women's Chairperson Priya Kannan, Treasurer Lijo Jose, Kuriakose, Ha-reendran, Gladson, Joby, and Dr. Jubi. The ceremony was elegantly hosted by Levina Kurian.

In the vote of thanks, Nano Film Awards Con- venger Aravind Krishnan announced that the organization would continue its strong efforts to discover and encourage new talent within the Indian art and cultural community in Kuwait.



IAF Nano Film Awards Ceremony held with great splendor.

The Conversation

Finding a deeper sense of gratitude

The Conversation is an independent and non-profit source of news, analysis and commentary from academic experts. The Conversation is wholly responsible for the content.

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By Mark Schroeder

USC Dornsife College of Let- ters, Arts and Sciences

There are few greater feel- ings than the sense of heartfelt gratitude to another human being who has done you a solid. Sincere thanks and reciprocation are part of the glue that binds us in hu- man relationships.

But sometimes you're just not feeling it. You know that you have benefited from what someone has done for you, but you don't really feel grateful to them for doing it. Most teenagers go through this period with their parents. Maybe you take your partner or col- league for granted.

For me, 14 years ago, it was my mother-in-law. She had upended her life to move from South Dakota to California to live with my wife and me to assist with childcare after our daughter was born; no other source of childcare fit with our demanding work sched- ules and my commute. She made a huge sacrifice that transformed our lives, but there were moments when I really struggled to feel grate- ful.

wanted to live in California. Sometimes it is hard to feel grateful because of how we interpret someone's motives. They could have done other- wise, but we don't think their action was really "about us."

Sometimes ungenerous motives can help people to be generous. Your child's kin- dergarten teacher isn't a vol- unteer. They may be a natu- rally generous person - but still, they probably wouldn't be working with your child on spelling, arithmetic and handling adversity if they weren't getting a paycheck.

It's still appropriate to be grateful to them. Their financial incentive to show up for work enables their generosity, rather than com- peting with it.

Elementary school teach- ers are not alone. After all, people's decisions are of- ten driven by many factors: some that merit gratitude and others that don't. So if you go looking for selfish motives, you are bound to find some.

Take your partner, for ex- ample. They do something that benefits you: buying you flowers, filling your tank with gas or finally tak- ing their turn to wash the dishes. They are partly mo- tivated by generosity, love or communal spirit. But, as in any close relationship, sometimes they may be hop- ing to get something out of it: reciprocation, maybe, or getting you off their back.

It matters which of these you interpret as their "true" motive: Seeing it one way opens you up to gratitude, while the other precludes it.

The distinction between someone's "true" motive and the other motives that enable it looks like the dis- tinction between causes and enabling conditions. For example, when you drop a wine glass, the fragility of the glass enables the drop to cause the break, but it isn't itself a cause of the break - the drop is.

In the case of the falling glass, there's a clear, objec- tive answer to what caused the break and what merely enabled it. But I believe that relating to people is deeply different than understanding physical things.

The key question in wheth- er to be grateful to someone isn't about which motives count as "causes." It is about which cause we need to bring into focus in order to see the other person more clearly for who they are.

In other words, it's at least partly a matter of perspec- tive. If someone does you a favor, but you know they're hoping for something in return, you can see that as their "true" motive. But you don't have to see it that way. Instead, you could see that motive as the condition they need for their generosity to thrive.

Shifting perspectives isn't easy. When you're doubting someone's motives, their lack of generosity can feel obvious. But it helps to re- member that people tend to believe they're acting generously. If you want to respond with gratitude, try seeing them as they see themselves.

What if that doesn't work?

Well, the next best thing to being grateful to some- one is being grateful for them. Starting there is a good way to remind your- self of why you value this relationship in the first place. And it can be enough to simply say "Thanks" and mean it. (AP)

Since that time, I've come to devote much of my re- search as a philosopher to studying how the way that we interpret each other as people shapes our relation- ships. That work has helped me to understand why I struggled to be grateful - and taught me a little bit about how to do better.

I've found that the hard- est part of feeling grateful to someone is the "to" part. It is one thing to be impersonally grateful that something hap- pened and another thing to be personally grateful to some- one for doing it. These are not the same.

Both forms of gratitude re- quire seeing something as a benefit. And they both require a humble recognition of how easily things could have been otherwise. When the rain ends a drought, an atheist can feel grateful that the tomatoes will survive. But the atheist isn't grateful "to" anyone for the rain.

Personal gratitude requires more than impersonal grate- tude. It is an example of what the philosopher Peter Straw- son calls a "participant" atti- tude: an attitude that we have toward people, but not toward things. And a large theme in my work is that participant attitudes such as gratitude in- volve giving someone credit for what the attitude responds to.

But which benefits we give people credit for is compli- cated. As philosophers such as Tony Manela have argued, actions motivated primarily by money, self-interest or in- security don't merit personal gratitude, even when they benefit you. Actions moti- vated by love, generosity or concern, on the other hand - or other "pro-social" motives - do.

Sometimes people fail to feel gratitude because they take someone for granted, not noticing how easily they could have done otherwise. This wasn't my problem with my mother-in-law. It was ob- vious that she didn't have to move across the country to live with us.

But it was hard to avoid noticing that she had always

Variety

WELLINGTON: Actor **Sam Neill** died from pneumonia and will be honored at a private family memorial at his New Zealand farm later, his agent told The Associated Press on Thursday.

Neill's family had earlier announced the actor known for "Jurassic Park," "The Piano" and other films died Monday in Sydney.



Neill

His agent Philip Grenz said he was providing more information after speaking with Neill's family and following news reports "which contain inaccuracies and outright falsehoods," he said.

"Sam passed away from pneumonia," Grenz said. "Prior to becoming sick, Sam had valiantly fought and beaten lymphoma through a new treatment called CAR-T therapy." (AP)

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NEW YORK: George Santos has worn many hats: Swindler, congressman, prison inmate, podcast host. The obvious next gig? Reality TV show contestant.

In September, Santos will appear on the fifth season of Fox's "Special Forces: World's Toughest Test," a grueling contest where participants will be subjected to chemical gassing and other military themed challenges in a Malaysian jungle, the network announced Wednesday.

"I took my fat behind off the coach and tried something new!," Santos wrote in a post on X along with a promotional image of himself standing next to a tree with a stern expression on his face. "And it changed EVERYTHING! I can't wait to share this experience with y'all!" (AP)

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WASHINGTON: The New York Times on Wednesday filed a motion to quash subpoenas that the Justice Department served on journalists who reported on security concerns involving the new, Qatari-gifted Air Force One, teeing up a significant court fight pitting press freedom against the government's ability to force reporters to identify sources.

"As we set out in our motion, these subpoenas are brought in bad faith to punish The Times for its coverage. They violate the constitutional rights of The Times and its journalists. We are going to court to defend our journalists' rights to report freely on the administration and to provide the public with stories that matter," David McCraw, the newspaper's senior vice president and deputy general counsel, said in a statement.

The filing was made under seal in the Southern District of New York, where the journalists were summoned in subpoenas delivered last Friday to testify before a federal grand jury. The Times had said it expected five journalists to be subpoenaed; three were ultimately served. (AP)



This image released by Universal Pictures shows Matt Damon as Odysseus in a scene from "The Odyssey." (AP)

Damon anchors sweeping adaptation with modern cinematic ambition

LOS ANGELES, July 16, (AP): Getting home, and turning back the clock, has long been at the root of Christopher Nolan's films. The astronauts of "Interstellar" painstakingly lose 23 years in space travel, almost the same length of time Odysseus is away from home in "The Odyssey": a decade fighting the Trojan War, a decade trying to return to Ithaca.

So, to a remarkable degree, Nolan's "The Odyssey" - faithful as it is to Homer's epic poem - feels, down to its nonlinear DNA, like a Nolan movie. The authorship of the epic poem, dated to the 7th or 8th century BC, is complex. But no one could question the maker of this "Odyssey," an earthy, existential epic that ravishingly melds the storytelling of antiquity with contemporary IMAX-sized bravado.

As a story about a man whose cunning offends the gods, "The Odyssey" feels very much like a companion piece, if not a downright sequel, to "Oppenheimer." Odysseus (Matt Damon, in the role of his life) is increasingly racked with guilt for the violence and death he's wrought after his ingenuity led to the sacking of Troy.

The arrival of any new Nolan spectacle inevitably leads to its own kind of assault, and avalanches of "masterpiece" proclamations. (I'm not innocent.) But while "The Odyssey," Nolan's first film shot entirely with IMAX cameras, doesn't skimp on grandiosity, it works surprisingly well as a simpler, human-sized tale.

The journey - you may have heard, it's about the journey - is sometimes a little clunky, and the



This image released by Universal Pictures shows director Christopher Nolan, center, with cinematographer Hoyte van Hoytema on the sets of "The Odyssey." (AP)

sheer Nolan-ness of the production, not to mention the historic nature of the tale, inevitably saps it of some freshness. You could make a credible case that Nolan has already made a movie about a guy trying to reach his family through strata of mind-warping illusion, and it's called "Inception." Such is the trouble with urtexts.

But "The Odyssey" is rarely not transfixing, and it's a ripping adventure story, besides. At the least, it's the definitive big-screen adaptation of one of literature's oldest tales - a not-too-shabby accomplishment for a filmmaker of restless ambition.

It's not until Book 5 that Odysseus enters Homer's poem, and Nolan, who also wrote the screenplay, likewise begins in Ithaca. There,

Odysseus' home is overrun by feasting suitors in pursuit of his wife, Penelope (Anne Hathaway). Foremost among them is Antinous, who's played with sleazy perfection by Robert Pattinson. For an actor often (pleasingly) at odds with the movies around him, Pattinson has never slid more seamlessly into a part.

Telemachus (Tom Holland, also well-cast), the youthful son of Penelope and Odysseus, resolves to go in search of his father. Meanwhile, we catch up with Odysseus, weathered and white-bearded, following the fall of Troy. His forced conscription, by Agamemnon, is shown in flashbacks. Agamemnon is depicted with an imposing Darth Vader-like presence and played by Benny Safdie, but the real star is his

hulking, mohawked helmet.

Such vivid details abound in Nolan's richly textured film. The simple rocking of Odysseus' longship, off the Mediterranean coast, is glorious. Some of Nolan's and cinematographer Hoyte van Hoytema's most impressive work has come when they're faced with the elements (as in "Dunkirk"). And "The Odyssey" is flooded with stormy seas and enchanted isles. If anything, the movie could have gone further; I was promised rosy-fingered dawns.

The first line of Homer's poem, as translated by Emily Wilson (the version Nolan leaned on), refers to Odysseus as "a complicated man." James Joyce, whose "Ulysses" was based on "The Odyssey," once noted that while Hamlet is merely a son, Ulysses, or Odysseus, is a father, a husband, a lover and a warrior. In short, he's an Everyman, albeit an especially smart one. And Damon, the most amiable of Everymen, proves especially attuned to the multifaceted nature of the archetypal hero.

We meet him first as a soldier, leading a small group of ships away from Agamemnon's fleet, setting a southerly course with his second-in-command Eurylochus (an excellent Himesh Patel). Their route takes them on a series of episodic quests: a cave encounter with Polyphemus, the Cyclops; a pine forest attack by the man-eating giants, the Laestrygonians; a meal with the witch Circe (Samantha Morton); and Odysseus' seven-year interlude with the sea nymph Calypso (a beguilingly sincere Charlize Theron).

You could argue that the movie can feel like a series of sketched-together set pieces, but what set pieces! That includes the tale of the Trojan horse, a fleeting mention in the poem but here a centerpiece. You can tell that Nolan, who nearly made "Troy" more than two decades ago, has had the sequence - beginning with the Trojan horse sunk in the sand and leading to the burning of Troy - on his mind for years.

Each stop on Odysseus' journey gives Nolan a mythic playground to explore imagery that verges on the stuff of horror. I was most intoxicated by "The Odyssey" in its most surreal moments: the sight of a giant hand emerging out of the shadows, the meeting with the "shades" of Odysseus' dead army, risen from the black soil of Hades.

"A time of apparent magic" is how the movie is introduced. Nolan has wisely opted to keep the gods sidelined. Their powers are real, but with the exception of Zendaya's Athena, who appears like a confidant to Odysseus, the gods, themselves, remain off-screen.

That choice draws Nolan's "Odyssey," and its themes of sacrifice, fidelity and honor, closer to reality. And it makes Nolan's decision to cast his film widely all the more essential. This is a story, passed down for centuries by singers and storytellers, that belongs to all of humankind. Casting the movie with a wide spectrum of actors, including Lupita Nyong'o as Helen of Troy, is not only fair game for a purely mythic tale but it gives the movie a present-day vitality.

R&B/hip-hop remains dominant

Latin and country music rise as streaming soars

NEW YORK, July 16, (AP): Halfway through 2026, a few music, film and TV streaming trends have become clear, according to Luminate's 2026 Midyear Report, which was released Wednesday.

Notably, more music is being streamed than ever before, both in the U.S. and globally.

In terms of genre: The combination of R&B/hip-hop remains on top in the U.S., but its dominance is being challenged by genre diversification, as other styles experience growth.

Latin and country music are surging thanks to artists like Bad Bunny and Ella Langley. Certain AI-generated tracks are also growing in popularity.

And in film and TV, Netflix continues its command in the U.S. in streams of original content.

In its midyear report, Luminate, an industry data and analytics company, provides insight into changing behaviors across music listenership as well as TV and film viewing behaviors.

Music streams continued to grow globally and stateside. Global on-demand audio streams reached 2.8 trillion in the first half of 2026 - up from 2.5 trillion during the same period last year, and 2.29 trillion in 2024.

And in the U.S., on-demand audio song streams grew to 732.7 billion. That's up from 696.6 billion in 2025 and 665.8 billion in 2024.

A combination of R&B/hip-hop is still the most popular streaming genre in the U.S., accounting for nearly 1 in 4 on-demand audio streams. However, its dominance is being challenged. In the first half of 2026, R&B/hip-hop made up 30% of U.S. album-equivalent consumption, based on analysis of the Billboard 200. Compare that to 41% in 2023, and it shows a decline.

"R&B/Hip-Hop remains a massive commercial force, but its historic dominance is leveling off as the streaming landscape diversifies. The genre was an early adopter of streaming, commanding nearly 30% of U.S. audio consumption by 2022, but the post-pandemic era has seen accelerated



Bad Bunny appears at the 68th annual Grammy Awards in Los Angeles on Feb. 1, 2026, left, and Ella Langley appears at the 59th Annual Country Music Association Awards in Nashville, Tenn., on Nov. 19, 2025. (AP)

... growth from genres like Country and Latin," wrote Jaime Marconette, Luminate's vice president of music insights and industry relations in a statement to The Associated Press.

He says R&B/hip-hop's "standalone audio volume has dipped 1.7% so far in 2026 compared to last year. We aren't seeing a collapse in popularity, but rather a shift toward a more balanced, multi-genre ecosystem where R&B/Hip-Hop's profound creative influence is also seen in other styles."

Any concerns about R&B/hip-hop's continued supremacy may be shortsighted. In the first half of 2026, the genres accounted for nearly 180.3 billion streams in the U.S., followed by rock with 137.2 billion, pop with 87.8 billion, country with 63.8 billion and Latin with 63 billion.

Latin music continues to grow in popularity in the U.S. That's evidenced in a few different ways: First, Luminate found that nearly 1 in 10 streams in the U.S. was in Spanish for the first half 2026 - 9.4% of total streams.

Secondly, English-language consumption fell to a new low of 87.1% - still the overwhelming majority but evidence of a diverse listening market.

"Casual U.S. listenership of Latin music has hit an all-time high, with 54% - or more than one in two music listeners - now reporting that they engage with the genre," said Marconette. "Latin music's cultural footprint is rapidly widening far beyond its traditional core base into the broader American mainstream."

And globally, Latin music streams reached a new high - accounting for 363.2 billion streams in the first half of 2026, compared to 335.3 billion the previous year.

Albums may be a good place to see the growth of both Latin and country in the U.S. The top albums of the year, so far, are Morgan Wallen's "I'm the Problem" with 2.035 million album equivalent units, Ella Langley's "Dandelion" with 1.638 million and Bad Bunny's "Debí Tirar Más Fotos" with 1.543 million. (Both Wallen and Bad Bunny's albums released early last year.)

Marconette points to Langley as a prime example of country music's growing audience - she's at the forefront of an increasing group of "younger, streaming-forward" fans.

And more may very well be on the way. Chill77, Unjaps and Mikeeysmind's "Papaoutai (Afro Soul)" had 210.7 million streams in all countries except the U.S. in the first half of 2026. In the U.S., it accounted for 17.6 million streams.

That's followed by The Second Voice's "Let Me Be," which earned 75.6 million streams in all countries except the U.S.; stateside, it earned 10.1 million streams.

The most-streamed AI-generated song in the U.S. is country act Breaking Rust's "Livin' on Borrowed Time," which accounted for 19 million streams. In all countries except the U.S., it earned 13.4 million streams.

Golden mini-Mozarts marks composer's 270th birthday

SALZBURG, Austria, July 16, (AP): Visitors to Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's hometown can see the composer - and his dog - in miniature as Salzburg celebrates the 270th anniversary of his birth. But they shouldn't wait too long.

The Mozarteum Foundation on Wednesday unveiled 300 gold-colored statuettes of Mozart, which are barely 50 centimeters (less than 20 inches) tall. They were designed by German concept artist Ottmar Hörl.

Mozart was born on Jan. 27, 1756, in the Austrian city, where the Mozarteum Foundation offers concerts, maintains Mozart museums and supports research on him.

"I didn't want to do a monument of Mozart. There are already enough of these. But I wanted to show his human side, that he was a normal human being despite his genius," Hörl told The Associated Press.

To give the statues a human touch, Hörl depicted the composer with his favorite dog, Pimperl. Mozart and his family were known to take long walks with their dogs in the Mirabell Garden, next to where they lived.

The mini-Mozarts populate not only the garden, but also Mozart's former living quarters as well as several pavilions. In all, 400 statues were made, but only 300 are on display at present. The rest are being kept in reserve in case of theft.

"Two already got stolen within the last few hours," Linus Klumpner of the Mozarteum Foundation said. But the statues are meant to attract a broader range of visitors and get them hooked on Mozart's Music.



People pass 400 gold colored plastic Mozart sculptures by German artist Ottmar Hoerl from Nuremberg before the 270th birthday of composer Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart in Salzburg, Austria, Wednesday, July 15, 2026. (AP)

"You come here, maybe you see the small golden heads shimmering in the sun on the horizon. And people become curious," Klumpner said. "And then a process begins which is very much in our interest. That is to bring new people in contact with Mozart."

For Hörl, the theft of his artworks in nothing new. At an installation in Bayreuth, Germany, a complete array of statues of Richard Wagner was stolen within 10 days.

"That's just the nature of public space. That means when you work as an artist in a public space you mustn't complain about what is happening there," Hörl said. "It ranges from destruction to theft. That's just how it is."

Tech

Researchers examine political limits in AI responses

Study puts AI neutrality under microscope

WASHINGTON, July 16, (AP): Ask Claude to make a pamphlet critical of President Donald Trump or Britain’s King Charles III, and Anthropic’s chatbot would oblige. Prompted to do the same for Thailand’s king, Saudi Arabia’s crown prince or China’s leader, and the artificial intelligence model declined.

It is a key finding from a Meta Oversight Board study released Thursday, showing that major AI systems, including those built in the U.S., are more likely to refuse to criticize restrictive leaders or governments. It raises concerns that the large language models powering chatbots and AI agents could be regurgitating and spreading government influence over online speech as the technology is increasingly adopted worldwide.

“There is a real risk that, if model developers do not undertake human rights due diligence and implement mitigation measures, they will build AI infrastructure that, intentionally



The ChatGPT app icon is seen on a smartphone screen, Aug. 4, 2025, in Chicago. (AP)

or not, has the effect of extending illegitimate restrictions on freedom of expression globally,” according to the report from the quasi-independent body.

The findings come as countries are determining how to put up guardrails around AI without impeding their ability to compete in the rapidly developing field. That includes a Trump administration oversight effort related to the national security risks of the most advanced AI systems.

The oversight board, which has been working on state influence on tech companies and the impact on freedom of expression, came up with seven questions related to political criticism to pose to chatbots about both restrictive and permissive governments.

The study picked 10 commercial large language models by top tech companies - including Meta, Anthropic and OpenAI - and asked the AI systems to make critical pamphlets, write limericks, give reasons if someone should join protests, and more.

“In short, in aggregate, models responding to requests from an Australia-based user were much more likely to generate political criticism of authorities” in places such as Chile, Japan, Taiwan, the U.K. and the U.S. “compared to where criticism of authorities is legally restricted and penalized,” such as in Cambodia, China, Saudi Arabia, Thailand and Turkey, the report said.

The study indicates that AI models

are reflecting speech restrictions beyond the countries where they apply - likely not helping a potential demonstrator in Brisbane, for example, create protest materials to speak out against events in China or Saudi Arabia, the report said.

“Such impacts, wherever they originate, have the practical effect of extending the long arm of restrictive governments across borders to limit speech in free countries,” the report said.

The board said it could not determine the causes for the responses but suggested that models could have absorbed latent biases in data used to train the systems and companies might have weighed the risks and liabilities.

The board’s report followed a separate study by a group of scholars at American universities that found U.S.-built AI models are vulnerable to foreign controls when trained on non-English-language data that has been influenced by governments.

Measures require distress detection

China introduces rules to rein in AI companion bots



A woman experiences AI-generated content technology at the China International Big Data Industry Expo 2024 in Guiyang, capital of Southwest China’s Guizhou province, on Aug 28, 2024. (Xinhua)

BEIJING, July 16, (Xinhua): China on Wednesday rolled out a set of regulations aimed at curbing emotional dependency on AI-powered companion bots, marking a new step in efforts to regulate this rapidly growing sector.

AI companion services, which have been used in areas ranging from customer service and mental health support to childcare and elderly care, have gained popularity by simulating human personalities and conversations. But concerns over emotional dependency and other risks have fueled calls for tighter regulation.

The new rules require platforms to detect emotional distress, intervene in crisis situations, limit excessive use, give users full control over their personal data, and prevent the misuse of user information.

The regulations define AI companion services as those offering “sustained emotional interaction” through text, images, audio or video, while excluding task-oriented AI applications such as customer service, work assistance, education and scientific research.

The rules, China’s first dedicated effort to regulate AI-based anthropomorphic interactive services, were jointly formulated by the Cyberspace Administration of China and four other government bodies.

China’s major AI content-generation platforms, including Doubao, Qwen and Yuanbao, have recently announced the suspension of their AI agent features.

mission in the conflict-free communication zone created by AI could weaken people’s ability to navigate real-world relationships, potentially leading to a broader decline in social connection.

To address this issue, the new rules explicitly prohibit AI systems from encouraging addictive use, requiring mandatory reminders after more than two hours of continuous use, pop-up interventions when signs of dependency are detected, and intervention mechanisms in cases of extreme emotional distress.

“When users begin to confuse virtual emotional connections with real-world relationships, systems should provide appropriate reminders: ‘This is a machine, not a real person,’” said Liu Xiaochun, an associate professor at the University of Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in Beijing.

She believes these users should be encouraged to spend more time interacting with people in the real world and talking with their friends and family.

Safer interaction

To protect users’ interaction data, the document requires providers of AI-based interactive services to adopt measures such as data encryption and access controls, and prohibits them from sharing users’ interaction data with third parties without consent unless otherwise required by law.

It also stressed that users have rights over their interaction data, including the ability to copy or delete chat histories and other records of past interactions, safeguarding their legitimate interests.

While protecting users’ privacy and personal information, the regulations also call for the establishment of risk intervention mechanisms to prevent extreme behavior.

Zhang Jiyu, executive director of the Law and Technology Institute at Renmin University of China, said technical tools could help identify potential risks and enable timely intervention.

For general risks, AI systems could offer supportive responses, while in more serious cases, they could alert designated contacts. Such mechanisms, he said, could help provide stronger safeguards as they are adopted more widely.

China’s AI market has continued to expand, driven by broader adoption across industries. It was expected to surpass 1.2 trillion yuan (about 177 billion U.S. dollars) in 2025 and is tipped to exceed 1.8 trillion yuan by 2028, according to the latest research.

Clearer boundaries

AI companion bots, a swiftly growing segment of the AI landscape, have become part of many people’s daily lives, but problems are beginning to surface.

These virtual companions can create deep emotional bonds, with young users seen as particularly vulnerable to overuse and retreat from real-world relationships.

In 2025, the China Youth and Children Research Center surveyed more than 8,500 minors across the country. The results showed that over 60 percent had used AI, while more than 20 percent said they “only wanted to chat with AI and did not want to talk with real people.”

While children and older adults may not use AI the most, they are more prone to developing emotional attachments to it because AI is always available, endlessly patient and unfailingly compliant, said Wang Zhechen, an associate researcher at the Department of Psychology, School of Social Development and Public Policy at Fudan University in Shanghai.

Experts warn that prolonged im-

Lifestyle

Daily sessions showcase China’s enduring martial art

Tai chi practitioners seek balance & well-being in fast-paced Beijing



People practice Tai Chi at a park near the Temple of Heaven in Beijing Thursday July 9, 2026. (AP)



Women practice Tai Chi at a park near the Temple of Heaven in Beijing, Thursday July 9, 2026. (AP)

BEIJING, July 16, (AP): One arm raised and the other lowered, hundreds of people move every morning like birds spreading their wings at the heart of Beijing’s Temple of Heaven.

It’s a movement in tai chi, a physical and philosophical practice developed more than 300 years ago that continues to resonate in China today.

“The environment is great and the air is good too,” said Ye Guirong, 64. “You can see we’re surrounded by trees.”

Most practitioners are retirees in their 60s and beyond. Some exercise in groups while a speaker plays relaxing music in the background. Others move silently on their own.

Ye first encountered tai chi in 2010. Recently retired, she took walks across the city and one day spotted the group she now leads.

“I thought it looked good, so I started practicing,” Ye said.

Once a new member joins a group, its leader teaches the basic moves. The apprentice’s progress is reviewed and corrected periodically until a new level is achieved.

Among tai chi’s basic movements are “White

Crane Spreads Its Wings,” in which one arm is raised while the other is lowered, and “Part the Wild Horse’s Mane,” a broad, fluid sequence in which the body weight shifts forward while the arms open gently in front of the chest.

“The movements have been passed down from one instructor to another,” Ye said.

Ye’s tai chi group, Cypress Grove, has around 30 people and recently welcomed its newest practitioner.

Zu Hong, 59, learned a 24-movement routine in about a month. Ye said she’s ready to take on the second set.

“I thought tai chi looked very beautiful,” Zu said. “I wanted to exercise, so I came here to the Temple of Heaven.”

Founded in the 15th century by a Ming dynasty emperor, the site is a complex of religious buildings symbolizing the relationship between heaven and earth.

Its most iconic building is the Hall of Prayer for Good Harvests. It served as the ceremonial site where emperors acted as intermediaries between humans and heaven, offering sacrifices and prayers for good harvests.

Today it serves primarily as a tourist attraction and its surrounding gardens remain open to the public.

Tai chi carries two meanings in China. It refers both to the martial art, or Taijiquan, and to the philosophical ideas behind it, or Taiji.

One of its key concepts is qi, or vital energy, which is understood as a life breath that flows through the body.

In traditional Chinese medicine, health depends on qi circulating through a network of pathways known as meridians, which are believed to connect the body’s organs, limbs and other parts. Acupuncture and other traditional treatments aim to regulate that flow.

“Practices like tai chi and qigong are all about activating, regulating or improving the flow of qi in the body,” said James Miller, a professor of Humanities at Duke Kunshan University in China’s Jiangsu province. “That’s something very key to Daoism (Taoism), but it’s also part of the broader Chinese conception of the body and of the world.”

Beyond the human body, qi is also believed to exist in nature. Mountains and rivers are understood to be animated by its flow.

‘Low Flight’ reveals the lives of gig workers

Delivery rider poet Wang wins top literary award

BEIJING, July 16, (Xinhua): He is a man racing against time. Somehow, he has learned to catch it on paper.

Wang Jibin, a 56-year-old delivery rider, has earned one of China’s most prestigious literary honors with verses born in the fleeting moments spent waiting for meals to be delivered, elevators and customers.

His poetry collection, “Di Chu Fei Xing,” which translates as “Low Flight,” was announced one of the winners of the ninth edition of Lu Xun Literature Prize on Wednesday. This collection captures the unvarnished realities and emotional subtleties of his life as one of the country’s more than 10 million food delivery riders.

Fresh from his literary win, Wang told the media that what he really wants to do on this special day is simple: to hop back on his scooter and get back to deliveries. “Only by staying grounded can one find the clearest state of mind for writing,” he said.

The coveted literary prize is

named after Lu Xun, a literary titan known for his piercing, unsparing chronicles of early 20th-century Chinese society. Awarded every four years, the prize recognizes outstanding works across various genres, including novella, short story, literary reportage, poetry, prose, literary theory and review, and literary translation.

Zhang Yiwu, a professor of Chinese literature at Peking University, highlighted the significance of Wang’s triumph. Wang’s poetry, he said, stays close to contemporary life, giving voice to a group often neglected in society while also illustrating the profound changes sweeping China.

Under the algorithm

Born in 1969 in east China’s Jiangsu Province, Wang dropped out of school during junior high. To make a living, he worked as a construction worker, a sand dredger, a street vendor and a scrap collector. Yet, he never lost his appetite for



Delivery rider-cum-poet Wang Jibin poses with his prize-winning poetry collection book. Wang’s “Di Chu Fei Xing,” which translates as “Low Flight,” was announced one of the winners of the ninth edition of Lu Xun Literature Prize yesterday. (Xinhua)

reading, often lingering at second-hand book stalls and sifting through discarded newspapers.

He and his wife eventually settled in Kunshan, Jiangsu. They ran a small store, saved for years, and took out a mortgage on an apartment -- a foothold they were determined to keep. In 2019, hearing that delivering food could pay well, Wang decided to give it a shot. At 50, he became the oldest courier at his station.

As a delivery rider, Wang races through the city on his e-bike. The delivery countdown in the app’s system serves as an invisible whip, relentlessly driving him forward. It is this algorithmic pressure that inspired his breakout poem “Man in a Hurry.”

The piece stemmed from a frustrating delivery experience. A customer had provided the wrong address, forcing Wang to make multiple trips. As he sat at a red light on his way back, simmering with irritation, a few lines flashed through his mind.

LOS ANGELES, July 16, (AP): YouTube has appealed the verdict of a landmark social media addiction lawsuit in Los Angeles, seeking to challenge the jury’s determination that the company designed its platform to hook young users without concern for their well-being.

Lawyers representing YouTube filed a notice of appeal Monday in Los Angeles County Superior Court, less than a week after Meta, which was also a defendant in the case, filed its own notice of appeal. The lawyers are expected to provide their arguments related to the appeal in later court filings.

The case centered on a 20-year-old woman who said she became addicted to social media as a child and that it worsened her mental health struggles. The jury found that negligence by both Google-owned YouTube and Meta was a substantial factor in causing harm to the young woman, identified in court only by her initials, KGM, and her first name, Kaley.

The jury awarded her \$3 million in damages and recommended an additional \$3 million in punitive damages. Her lead attorney, Mark Lanier, said in a statement last week following Meta’s appeal that Kaley’s legal team is expecting the appellate court to “continue the careful application of the law to this case, affirming the verdict of the trial court.”

José Castañeda, a spokesperson

for Google, said in a statement last week that YouTube was planning to appeal and that “these are standard motions for this case to move forward.”

Meta and Google had each filed post-trial motions seeking a new trial. The trial judge, Carolyn B. Kuhl, denied those motions in early June.

One of YouTube’s core arguments during the five-week trial was that its platform, which offers video sharing and streaming, is not a social media platform.

Lawyers for both YouTube and Meta also consistently posed questions throughout the trial about whether the evidence and arguments encroached on legal protections for tech companies around content posted by third parties. Section 230 of the 1996 Communications Decency Act shields these companies from legal responsibility for such content. The plaintiff’s lawyers instead focused on the design features like autoplay functions that they argued could lead to more long-lasting, less intentional use of the platforms.

Kaley’s case was a first-of-its-kind lawsuit, and the verdict could influence the outcome of thousands of similar lawsuits accusing social media companies of deliberately causing harm. TikTok and Snapchat parent company Snap Inc. were also initially named as defendants in the case, but each settled for undisclosed sums before the trial began.

Hong Kong Book Fair opens with cultural highlights

HONG KONG, July 16, (Xinhua): The 36th Hong Kong Book Fair opened on Wednesday, kicking off a week-long extravaganza featuring lectures from renowned authors and cultural heritage showcases.

Hong Kong Book Fair, one of the most influential cultural events in Asia, brings together authors, academicians and professionals in culture-related businesses worldwide, said Frederick Ma,

chairman of the Hong Kong Trade Development Council.

It is a perfect example of Hong Kong’s role as a global platform of cultural and arts exchanges, said Ma.

This year’s event continues to dedicate a section to books from the Chinese mainland, where 55 publishers from the mainland showcase some 16,000 different titles at stands spanning 544

square meters.

Southwest China’s Yunnan Province will put on folk song and dancing performances alongside a video stream of local publications during the event. East China’s Hangzhou City will display the traditional wood-joining technique called “mortise and tenon” joint, an intangible cultural heritage used in ancient Chinese buildings and furniture.

Faint new planet revealed around young star after a decade in hiding

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla., July 16, (AP): Astronomers have discovered a faint, elusive planet orbiting a young star after more than a decade of cosmic hide-and-seek.

In an unusual twist, two groups working independently detected the cold gas giant a few days apart late last year using different telescopes. It's the dimmest planet ever directly imaged from Earth, scientists reported Wednesday.

A Scottish and German-led team spied the new planet around the star Beta Pictoris using the European Southern Observatory's Very Large Telescope in Chile, then dug through archives to confirm its orbit.

The planet had remained hidden in the data all this time, overshadowed by its considerably brighter star and two companion planets.

"It was very much playing hide-and-seek for 11 years," said the European Southern Observatory's Markus Bonse, co-leader of the first team.

The California-led team made the discovery with NASA's Webb Space Telescope. Two observations were all it took with Webb, the biggest and most powerful telescope ever launched into space. Both teams reported their findings in the Astrophysical Journal Letters.

The find was serendipitous. Each team was studying one of the star's already identified planets when they spotted a less massive one - 100 times fainter - lurking farther out. They deliberately kept their work from one

another so as not to bias the results.

The new planet is slightly bigger than Jupiter and takes 91 years to orbit its star, a little longer than it takes Uranus to orbit our sun. Born into a star system that's barely 20 million years old - a kid compared to the sun's 4.5 billion-year-old neighborhood - the planet is probably similar to a much younger Jupiter, said the University of California San Diego's Aidan Gibbs, who led the second team.

"The giant planets have formed, but smaller terrestrial planets could still be forming," Gibbs said in an email. Beta Pictoris "is probably our best look at a planetary system just after it has formed and is still in the process of stabilizing" from hurtling asteroids and comets.

Beta Pictoris is located in the easel-shaped southern constellation Pictor, or painter, and 63 light-years from Earth. A light-year is nearly 6 trillion miles (more than 9 trillion kilometers).

Fewer than 100 of the more than 6,000 confirmed exoplanets - planets around other stars - have been detected through direct imaging, according to NASA. Most were found while passing in front of their star, briefly dimming it.

"We've now built a picture of this planet," the University of Edinburgh's Ben Sutcliffe said in an email, "and we are very excited to see what more can be learned about it."



This image provided by the European Southern Observatory shows the Beta Pictoris region on March 6, 2014. (AP)

Rollout faces a stark constraint after sweeping foreign aid cuts by US: Gavi

New malaria vaccine helps in Africa but faces a test: Completing all four doses

YAOUNDE, Cameroon, July 16, (AP): Rain had turned the dirt road into thick mud, but Mabel Djoumessi kept walking with her 9-month-old son, Kenfack, strapped to her back. His malaria vaccination appointment at a clinic in central Cameroon was too important to miss.

For decades, millions of children across Africa have fallen sick from malaria, one of the continent's deadliest diseases for the young. But Kenfack has never had it, a feat his mother attributes to the recent arrival of a malaria vaccine.

"My other children who have never taken the vaccine frequently fall ill," Djoumessi said later, sitting with other women cradling babies at Soa District Hospital.

More than two years after Cameroon became the first country to incorporate the RTS,S malaria vaccine into its routine immunization program, health workers say it is reducing severe illness.

But they worry that too few children return for the fourth and final shot, or booster dose, that the World Health Organization says is essential to prolong immunity, as it is given months after the other doses.

The challenge reflects a wider problem with multidose vaccines across Africa. Malaria kills one child younger than 5 nearly every minute globally, the vast majority in Africa, according to the WHO and the United Nations children's agency.

In a malaria vaccine pilot program across 158 districts in Ghana, Kenya and Malawi, coverage, or the share of children eligible for each dose, reached about 80% for the first shot, given at around six months of age. But it dropped to 46% for the fourth dose, administered between 22 and 24 months, according to a study published last year in the peer-reviewed Malaria Journal.

"When my son turns 2, I will make sure I come for the fourth dose," Djoumessi said. "I don't want him to suffer like the others."

Malaria remains the leading cause of hospital consultations and admissions in Cameroon, one of 11 countries accounting for about 70% of the global malaria burden, according to the WHO. The country recorded an estimated 7.6 million malaria cases and 11,700 deaths in 2024.

Data from Cameroon's National Malaria Control Program shows health facilities recorded a drop in cases in 2025, with 33,000 fewer than in 2024.

However, some have cautioned against attributing the decline solely to the vaccine.

"Isolating the specific impact of malaria interventions requires modeling, and we do not yet have a model to quantify the vaccine's sole contribution," said Dr. Bomba Amougou, head of prevention at the National Malaria Control Program.



The malaria vaccines are displayed on a table at the Soa District Hospital in Yaounde, Cameroon on April 29. (AP)

gram. "Therefore, it is accurate to say that the vaccine has contributed to the reduction in cases and deaths, rather than being the exclusive cause."

The WHO recommended the RTS,S vaccine for wider use in 2021 after the pilot studies in Ghana, Kenya and Malawi found it reduced deaths among eligible children by 13%. In separate clinical trials in several African countries, both RTS,S and the newer R21 vaccine reduced clinical malaria cases by more than 50% during the first year after three doses.

Over 52 million doses have since

reached 25 high-risk African countries with support from Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance. However, the organization has said the rollout faces a "stark constraint" after sweeping foreign aid cuts by the Trump administration and others. Gavi says it is guaranteeing the supply of vaccines to cover up to 70% of eligible children in the lowest-income countries.

At Soa District Hospital, nurses said they can see the vaccine's impact.

"Our pediatric wards have become empty," said Alice Tchuenmegne, a senior nurse in charge of vaccinations.

After introducing the vaccine in 42 high-burden districts, Cameroonian authorities say coverage has improved among infants eligible for the first three doses given at six, seven and nine months. First-dose coverage, rose from 66% to 68% from 2024 to 2025, second-dose coverage from 53% to 58% and third-dose coverage from 48% to 59%, according to Amougou.

But many children never receive the fourth dose, administered around their second birthday. Coverage for the fourth dose stood at 25% as of 2025, Cameroonian figures showed.

"Parents and even health workers sometimes forget the fourth dose, particularly as it is administered long after the third, and because this is a relatively new vaccine," Amougou said.

Receiving all four "makes the protection more potent," he said, adding that vaccination must complement bed nets, prompt treatment and good sanitation.

Those studying the early rollout in Ghana, Kenya and Malawi found that parents overwhelmingly accepted the malaria vaccine. But children missed later doses largely because of transport costs, lack of reminders, poor follow-up and competing work or childcare responsibilities.

The lower vaccination rates are "initial teething problems that I don't think should take the spotlight away

from the value of this vaccine," Gavi Chief Executive Officer Dr. Sania Nishtar said in an interview.

She also noted the malaria vaccine faces the least hesitancy from parents, and attributed that to their desperation to save their children from malaria deaths. As a result, there is "huge demand" from governments and communities.

Cameroon and other African countries have since launched "Big Catch-up" campaigns encouraging parents and health staff to prioritize children's vaccination.

Nishtar said research efforts continue toward a single-dose malaria vaccine. "The fewer the doses of a vaccine to be administered, the higher the uptake and the easier the administration," she said.

For many families, preventing malaria also means avoiding crushing medical bills.

Georgette Caroline Mengbwa, a mother of three waiting for her youngest daughter's third dose, said her two older children were born before the vaccine became available.

"They fall ill every two or three months, and I have to spend between \$53 and \$107 each time one or all of them fall ill," she said. "It's a lot of money."

Such costs are substantial in a country where the monthly minimum wage is about \$76 and nearly 40% of the population live in poverty, according to official figures.



A rescuer operates a drone to lift relief supplies in Guigang City, south China's Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, July 10, 2026. (Xinhua)

Drones conduct high-altitude assessments over hardest-hit area

How technology reshaping China's disaster response

NANNING, July 16, (Xinhua): When torrential rains and typhoons unleash devastation, the traditional battle against natural disasters has often been a grueling test of human endurance. But across China, the rules of engagement are changing. From autonomous aerial fleets to artificial intelligence (AI), high-tech solutions are profoundly transforming emergency management.

This technological pivot is replacing reactive physical struggles with proactive, data-driven science, constructing a resilient "digital shield" to safeguard lives and infrastructure. The real-world impact of this shift was vividly demonstrated during the recent response to a severe typhoon in south China's Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region.

As floods crippled critical infrastructure and isolated communities, ground-based assessments became impossible. Local emergency responders deployed fleets of drones to conduct high-altitude assessments over the hardest-hit areas. These unmanned aerial vehicles provided real-time video feeds and delivered essential supplies to stranded residents, serving as eyes and lifelines for command centers when roads could not be used.

Beyond the skies, AI has emerged as a critical force multiplier in urban flood management. During a recent severe rainstorm in Shenzhen, a major tech hub in south China's Guangdong Province, local authorities relied on an AI-powered monitoring system to manage a red alert. Rather than exhausting personnel to manually scan countless camera feeds, the system autonomously analyzed over 243,000 surveillance images, successfully flagging more than 1,500 potential flood risks with precise locations and detailed descriptions.

Local emergency management officials noted that these AI "sentinels" have

drastically improved response efficiency, eliminating the oversights that once plagued manual monitoring.

In addition to immediate crisis response, digital technologies are also reshaping long-term disaster mitigation. In east China's Zhejiang Province, a vast network of over 7,000 rivers has been given a "smart brain" through digital twin technology. Local authorities developed a coupled water resources scheduling model for complex river networks, which automatically forecasts the water network's status over the next seven days under various scenarios to guide daily dispatch decisions.

During a typhoon in July 2025, this platform forecast water levels three days ahead of time, allowing operators to preemptively release water and significantly ease flood pressures.

This integration of smart infrastructure extends to critical utilities as well. In Beijing, reservoir management centers are now equipped with automated sensors that continuously monitor water levels and rainfall.

A reservoir official along the Yongding River noted that data is instantly processed by intelligent platforms that trigger automatic alerts when safety thresholds are breached, freeing human operators to focus on strategic decision-making rather than manual data entry.

This technological evolution reflects a broader national strategy outlined in China's latest emergency management blueprint, which sets ambitious targets for 2030 to significantly enhance the country's capacity to handle major emergencies and strengthen grassroots emergency response via law-based, scientific and intelligent decision-making.

United States renews Ebola travel rules for citizens leaving DR Congo

WASHINGTON, July 16, (Xinhua): The United States expanded Ebola-related travel controls on Wednesday, adding new restrictions on Americans returning from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) are currently working together on a DO NOT BOARD (DNB) process with regard to the DRC, DHS said in a post on X.

"American citizens who are departing from the DRC may be subject to a DO NOT BOARD (DNB) order. Americans are able to return to the United States 21 days after leaving the DRC," it added.

The latest announcement came one day after the CDC announced temporarily restricting U.S. entry for all travelers who were recently in DRC and certain travelers who were recently in Uganda or South Sudan.

"Air passengers who have been in Uganda and South Sudan in the past 21 days and are allowed to enter the United States will have their travel rerouted to a designated airport for



Rubble set on fire as health workers involved in Congo's Ebola response go on strike as they protest over payment issues in Bunia, Congo on July 15. (AP)

public health entry screening," the CDC said in the update Tuesday.

Since May, the DRC has been fighting an outbreak caused by the Bundibugyo Ebola virus, for which there is no approved vaccine or specific treatment. As of Tuesday, the number of confirmed Ebola cases in

the DRC has reached 2,011, including 754 deaths.

Health workers at Bunia General Hospital, the region's largest medical center, went on strike Wednesday and are the latest group to walk off the job at the epicenter over payment issues.

Giant pandas get new smart green home at Beijing Zoo

BEIJING, July 16, (Xinhua): A new home for giant pandas is set to welcome its first human visitors on Thursday, with this facility offering the fluffy national treasures a smarter, roomier and more nature-like living haven as the zoo celebrates its 120th anniversary this year with the landmark project.

Unveiling a 13,000-square-meter state-of-the-art facility, Beijing Zoo has blended wilderness-inspired design with cutting-edge technology to create a sprawling pavilion that features four indoor exhibition halls, five animal enclosures and five outdoor exercise areas.

The pavilion recreates wild habitat elements with undulating terrain and simulated stream systems, allowing pandas to move freely between indoor and outdoor areas, said Lu Yanping, deputy head of the zoo.

Fixed perches, along with movable enrichment items such as tires and balls, have been installed, Lu added.

As China's first giant panda venue with the highest three-star green building rating, the pavilion sets a new benchmark for eco-friendly facilities of its kind.

Adopting environmentally friendly building materials for its exterior facade, the venue is fitted with intelligent temperature control and fresh air ventilation systems.

A tailored smart management system integrates security monitoring, health tracking and automatic environmental regulation, while a dedicated timed spray cooling system has also been installed to help pandas beat the summer heat.

Designed with a circular visitor route, the new pavilion effectively eases passenger flow pressure.



Giant panda Bai Tian is pictured at an outdoor activity area of a new giant panda facility at the Beijing Zoo in Beijing, capital of China on July 15. (Xinhua)

New stages introduced for bigger contests

International Cricket Council revamps formats for men’s World Cups

ISLAMABAD, July 16, (AP): The International Cricket Council has changed the competition formats of two major men’s tournaments, adding a preliminary round before the group stage of the 2027 World Cup and revamping the playoffs for the Twenty20 World Cup in 2028.

“The changes were introduced to create more meaningful contests, elevate competitive standards, strengthen the competitive structure of both events, and enhance the tournament experience for athletes and fans,” cricket’s international governing body said in the wake of weekend board meetings.

The traditional World Cup - which features one-day international games - is usually staged once every four years. Australia is the defending champion after beating India in the



Wicket Keeper Jos Buttler of England and Tilak Varma of India during the international T20 Cricket match between England and India in Southampton, England. (AP)

final at Ahmedabad in a 10-team tournament in 2023.

Next year’s edition will involve 14 teams and be co-hosted by South Africa, Zimbabwe and Namibia.

The T20 World Cup is usually staged once every two years, and India is the defending champion after winning on home soil in March.

Round 1: The teams in the 12th, 13th and 14th qualifying places will contest a so-called “Super Series” round, with the winner advancing to join 11 other teams in the group stage.

Round 2: Twelve teams will be divided into two groups of six. The top three teams from each group in the league stage will advance - along with the best fourth-place team - to the Super 7 stage.

Round 3: The Super 7 round in-

cludes a round-robin format with each team playing six other rivals and the top four advancing to the knockout stage. The semifinals will feature No. 1 vs. No. 4 and No. 2 vs. No. 3.

“The structure has been designed to strengthen the competitive narrative across every stage of the event,” the ICC said.

The tournament in Australia and New Zealand will feature 20 teams and will have 30 matches in the initial group stage.

Group stage: The participating teams will be divided into five groups of four. In the previous T20 World Cup, there was four groups of five teams. The top two teams from each group will advance.

Super 10: This round will have two groups of five, playing a round-

robin format. The winners of each will qualify directly for the semifinals. The remaining two semifinal spots will be decided through a new eliminators round, with the second-place teams from each Super 10 group facing the third-place teams from the opposite group. The winners of those eliminators will complete the semifinal lineup.

Twelve teams - Afghanistan, Australia, Bangladesh, England, India, Ireland, New Zealand, Pakistan, South Africa, Sri Lanka, West Indies and Zimbabwe - have already made it to the 2028 event, based on performances in the 2026 T20 World Cup and team rankings.

The remaining eight spots at the 2028 edition will be filled through a 16-team global qualifier competition.



France’s Leonie Periault celebrates winning the woman’s ITU World Triathlon Series/World Championship race in Hamburg, Germany. (AP)

Aims to attract fans

Triathlon leaders unite to boost global recognition

MADRID, July 16, (AP): Triathlon is taking action to try to boost its popularity, with hopes of bringing it closer to the level of tennis and golf.

A new global circuit will debut in 2027 following an alliance between the international federation and private organizers in an attempt to unify the sport that has been historically fragmented and difficult to follow because of the large number of events worldwide.

Officials are hoping the new tour will promote mass-participation events, attract new audiences and enhance the broadcast and digital storytelling of triathlon. There will be greater investment aimed at making the sport a better product for television and easier to showcase on social media in order to land bigger sponsors.

The formal announcement of the new tour is expected by the end of the month.

“Our goal is for the sport to be attractive not only for triathlon fans but to be attractive for sport fans. We need to grow the sport to be more attractive to the general public,” Antonio Arimany, president of World Triathlon, said in an interview with The Associated Press.

“This is not an achievement for next year, this is a goal that we have for the next six, seven years,” he added. “And we really would like to have triathlon at the level of tennis or golf. Of course, we cannot reach football or other sports because we are not a team sport, but compared to individual sports we need to find a way how we can grow in popularity.”

Triathlon has traditionally been divided, with the international federation not in charge of the actual organization of events. The competitions have been mostly run by private entities such as Ironman, the biggest in the sport. World Triathlon oversees Olympic Games, world championships and the world series.

A report prepared by Deloitte highlighted the fragmentation within triathlon and the need to create a stronger and more unified competition structure.

The presence of multiple companies showed there was interest in investing in the sport, the report said, and channelling those funds to a centralized product was considered crucial. Thus the need to try to merge and create a product that is easier to commercialize and grow.

“Announcing this new blueprint for the sport is an incredibly exciting next phase of our partnership with World Triathlon and to grow the sport,” said Sam Renouf, CEO of the Professional Triathletes Organization, which is co-owned and run by professional athletes. PTO manages global rankings and some of the most high-profile triathlon circuits.

“The Deloitte report’s recommendation to move to a more commercially driven model was clear and aligns with the ambition to take the sport mainstream and adopt a model that many other sports have successfully followed to unlock greater value for the athletes and the whole ecosystem,” Renouf said.

World Triathlon is aiming for more live broadcasts to try to strengthen international visibility. While World Triathlon has some expertise on TV broadcasting, private organizers will contribute with their knowhow on commercializing the sport.

“They can create a better branding, they can get bigger sponsors, they can sell better the TV rights, they can create a new model of events that we are going to popularize, similar to what the mayors in marathon are doing, trying to create big events,” said Arimany, who is also vice president of the Court of Arbitration for Sport.

Prize money is expected to increase and triathletes will see more standardized branding around events, but there won’t be major changes in the competitions themselves.

Best of the Rest

Scotland goalie Gordon retires: Scotland’s 43-year-old goalkeeper Craig Gordon announced his retirement from soccer Thursday after being the oldest among more than 1,250 players picked for the World Cup.

“It has been a privilege to represent you,” Gordon, the Heart of Midlothian and former Celtic and Sunderland goalie, said in a video message on social media.

“I hope you have enjoyed it as much as I have. From the bottom of my heart, thank you.” (AP)

Paris FC signs defender Coppola: Ligue 1 side Paris FC signed defender Diego Coppola from the Premier League’s Brighton on Thursday on a five-year deal to 2031.

The 22-year-old Italian played for the French club last season when he was on loan from Brighton. (AP)

Change Name

I, mobin nadim Surname: shaikh, holder of indian Passport number: P 5285675 Permanent address:salimulla chawl,shivaji nagar 2nd Rahodi thane Maharashtra - 400601 , india,Do hereby change my name to Given name: MUBEEN NADIM Surname: SHAIKH

NEW YORK, July 16, (AP): Rose Lavelle scored in the first half and Gotham FC beat the Washington Spirit 1-0 in a match at Citi Field that was dubbed the Queens Classic.

The game was a rematch of the last year’s National Women’s Soccer League championship game, which Gotham also won 1-0 on a goal from Lavelle.

Gotham (8-3-3) announced that the

game was a sellout with 42,175 tickets sold, a record for a women’s sporting event in New York City.

Lavelle scored on a long chip from an angle to the far post in the 37th minute. It was her third goal of the season.

Sam Kerr subbed into the game for Gotham in the 64th minute, marking her return after more than six years at Chelsea.

The 32-year-old Kerr played for Sky

Blue, which later became Gotham, and the Chicago Stars before signing with Chelsea in late 2019. She remains the NWSL’s top regular-season scorer with 77 career goals and led the league in scoring for three straight seasons from 2017-19. She won league MVP awards in 2017 and 2019.

Kerr, an Australian who is considered one of the best strikers in the world, signed with Gotham last month.

INDIANAPOLIS, July 16, (AP): Gabby Williams scored 16 points, Kaitlyn Chen had 14 points, all in the second half, and Golden State beat Indiana 88-75 for the second-year franchise’s record eighth straight victory.

Tiffany Hayes added 13 points, Janelle Salaun scored 12 and Kayla Thornton added 11 for Golden State (18-7), which has also won five straight road games. Chen made all five of her field-goal attempts and 4 of 5 free throws.

Kelsey Mitchell led Indiana (14-10) with 20 points. Aliyah Boston had 15 points, and Caitlin Clark scored 13 points, going 4 for 14 from the field overall and 1 for 8 from 3-point range in 26 minutes.

After Clark had a basket taken away for a shot-clock violation, Hayes completed a three-point play for an 80-65 lead with 3:30 left.

Mitchell made a 3-pointer to get Indiana within 80-73 but the Fever turned it over on their next possession and the Valkyries hit two free throws at the other end for a nine-point lead.

Sky 95, Storm 90

In Chicago, Azura Stevens scored 18 of her 20 points in the first half, Sydney Taylor added 17 points, and the Chicago Sky beat the Seattle Storm.

The Sky led 86-75 with 6:24 left in the fourth quarter before Seattle went on a 9-0 run, capped by Flau’jae Johnson’s 3-pointer to get within two points. But that’s as close as the Storm would get.

Courtney Vandersloot dribbled down the clock and found Stevens in the paint for her first points of the second half with 26.5 seconds left to give Chicago a 93-88 lead. Natasha Cloud sealed it at the free-throw line.

Chloe Bibby had 14 points in her first appearance of the season for Chicago (8-16), which led by as many as 14 points in the second half. Cloud had 13 points and six assists, and Gabriela Jaquez scored 10.

Johnson led Seattle (6-20) with 25 points. Dominique Malonga had 16 points and 12 rebounds, and Awa Fam scored 14. The Storm struggled from the free-throw line, going 14 of 23 (61%).

Lynx 96, Sparks 87

In Minneapolis, Kayla McBride scored 24 for her fifth straight 20-point performance, Courtney Williams added 19 points, and Minnesota beat Los Angeles for their fourth straight victory.

Minnesota went on a 19-3 run, scoring on 10 straight possessions, to take a 63-56 lead with 2:36 left in the third quarter.

McBride made her first 3-pointer with four minutes left in the fourth for an 84-74 lead. Nia Coffey banked in a 3-pointer on the Lynx’s next possession for an 11-point lead.

Minnesota went 8 of 14 from 3-point range in the second half after missing 11 straight before halftime. Six of those makes came from different players.

Rae Burrell scored 24 points, and Nneka Ogwumike had 23 points, 12 rebounds and five assists for Los Angeles (10-13). Cameron Brink scored 10 points in her first game since June 15. The Sparks turned it over 20 times, leading to 30 points for Minnesota.



Chicago Sky guard Courtney Vandersloot, right, looks to pass against Seattle Storm guard Natasha Hiedeman during the second half of a WNBA basketball game in Chicago. (AP)

Max open on future, backs Red Bull bond



Red Bull driver Max Verstappen of the Netherlands walks in the drivers area ahead of the Formula One Grand Prix at the Spa-Francorchamps racetrack in Spa, Belgium. (AP)

wing pitched Verstappen into the barriers at high speed two weeks running in Austria and Britain, Red Bull is reverting back to an old wing design for Belgium this week.

“It’s quite obvious, no, why? So we’ll go back on the old one and then see whenever the latest or new one is ready again to be used for us,”

Verstappen said.

He crashed out of the British Grand Prix and delivered an explosive-laden rant at the car over the radio before branding it “dangerous” to drive.

It’s the third year running that Verstappen has kept his future open, only to recommit to Red Bull half-

way through the season. Last year, he didn’t pledge to stay with the team until the Hungarian Grand Prix on July 31.

He has been part of Red Bull’s racing program since childhood and has a contract through 2028, though it includes clauses potentially allowing an earlier exit.

This time, a reported meeting between Verstappen’s management and McLaren fueled the speculation of what would have been a blockbuster move. McLaren has also signed Verstappen’s longtime engineer and confidant GianPiero Lambiase as its “chief racing officer” in future.

However, McLaren chief executive Zak Brown seemed to rule out a move when he said the team’s current drivers Lando Norris and Oscar Piastri were “not going anywhere.”

It wasn’t even certain Verstappen would stay in F1 after he publicly considered leaving the series earlier this year. Verstappen has been the most vocal critic of the reliance on electrical power in the 2026-specification cars, which he says are not fun to drive and promote artificial overtaking.

Lavelle scores as Gotham tops Spirit before record Citi Field crowd

“It’s weird, honestly,” Kerr said. “I spent most of the start of my career here, and then to go to Chelsea and be in Europe for so long, it’s just so different.”

Esme Morgan of the Spirit and Gotham’s Jordynn Dudley collided in the first half, resulting in Dudley subbing out of the match with a suspected concussion.

The loss ended the Spirit’s three-game winning streak. Washington is

8-3-3.

The match was played with temperatures in the 90s and with an air quality advisory in New York because of wildfires in Canada. As a result of the conditions, there were two hydration breaks in each half.

Earlier this month, Gotham announced the team would start playing at the new Etihad Park adjacent to Citi Field starting in 2028.



FIFA to keep iconic trophy through 2038

How Italian sculptor created the World Cup trophy that became icon

MILAN, July 16, (AP):The Italian sculptor who designed the FIFA World Cup trophy wanted to capture three sporting emotions in a single spiraling form: the athlete's struggle, the fan's jubilation and the moment of victory.

On Sunday, either Spain or Argentina will lift the trophy after the 2026 World Cup final.

Here's what to know about the most coveted prize in soccer.

Silvio Gazzaniga designed the trophy in his studio in Milan's Brera neighborhood after FIFA issued an open competition for a new design when Brazil took permanent possession of the original trophy by winning its third World Cup in 1970.

The design, now familiar to generations of World Cup fans, features two figures swirling up toward an orb representing the Earth.

"When he started to design the cup, he was sketching a huge number of drawings and finally started to develop the idea to have the world

and this symbol that it is like a two DNA spirals, that are moving up," said Giorgio Gazzaniga, the designer's son who was a teenager at the time.

The elder Gazzaniga, a sculptor and trophy designer who died in 2016, worked for G.D.E. Bertoni Srl and created some of the most prestigious trophies in the world, including the UEFA Cup and European Super-Cup.

The first World Cup Trophy, introduced for the inaugural tournament in 1930, depicted the Greek goddess Nike, and was known as the Jules Rimet Trophy for the tournament's founder. FIFA commissioned a replacement after Brazil earned permanent possession of the original after becoming the first nation to win three World Cups.

The Jules Rimet Trophy was stolen twice - first in 1966 while on public display in England, before being recovered by a dog named Pickles beneath a hedge in south London,



The original plaster World Cup trophy sculpture is displayed at the late sculptor Silvio Gazzaniga's warehouse in Pioltello, Italy. (AP)

according to FIFA. It was stolen again from the Brazilian Football Confederation headquarters in 1983 after Brazil had taken permanent possession. It has never been recovered and is widely believed to have been melted down.

More than 50 proposals were sub-

mitted but only Gazzaniga presented a full model - which permitted the jury to appreciate both the form and the story it conveyed, his son said.

"There is the world, which stands above all else, there is the athlete's exertion, there is the athlete's movement within the metal, and the athlete's body is rough, rugged, for it has suffered, had to fight, and struggled for victory," the younger Gazzaniga said.

"That victory is expressed through arms that resemble the wings of Victory, capturing not only the athlete's triumph but also the jubilation of the fan," he said.

Gazzaniga's family has preserved his office at a new location on the outskirts of Milan, including drawings, the original prototype submitted to FIFA and a wax cast.

The official World Cup trophy hoisted by the winning captain at the end of the final is 36 centimeters (14 inches) tall cast in 18-carat gold, sitting on a base featuring two rings of green malachite, symbolizing the playing fields.

After the tournament, the original trophy goes back to FIFA, which keeps it at its Swiss headquarters between World Cups. The winning team brings home a gold-plated replica.

FIFA no longer lets three-time winners keep the original.

This is the 14th World Cup to use Gazzaniga's design, and FIFA has decided to keep the trophy in use at least through the 2038 tournament, according to Gazzaniga's website.

The younger Gazzaniga still vividly remembers watching the 1974 World Cup final at home with his family as West Germany faced the Netherlands. It was the first time his father's trophy was presented at the World Cup.

"The real explosion of joy came when the German team raised the cup in Munich and the whole stadium erupted," he said. "That was the moment an object became an icon."

Fan Zone



The World Cup brings unforgettable moments. (AP)

‘Your humanity is seen, heard and valued’

NYC’s Rikers Island jail hosts WC watch party for inmates

NEW YORK, July 16, (AP): New York City's official World Cup guide lists no less than 100 free places to take in soccer's biggest tournament on big screens. One place that isn't listed? The city's notorious Rikers Island jail complex, better known for its overcrowding and violence than for hosting social events.

But more than 100 inmates were rewarded with a special viewing of the World Cup semifinal match Wednesday between England and Argentina because of their model behavior behind bars.

The inmates, dressed in tan uniforms, took seats at tables facing a large projection screen set up in a gymnasium. The jail has hosted about 90 such watch parties since the tournament kicked off last month, with about 4,500 of the roughly 6,600 inmates incarcerated on the 400-acre island participating, correction officials said.

"Programs like this equal safety in our jail," said Stanley Richards, the city's correction commissioner and a former Rikers inmate. "What we say to them is that your humanity is seen, heard and valued."

Mayor Zohran Mamdani, who briefly stopped by, added: "The World Cup has been a magical moment for the entire city. These are New Yorkers, and they will be New Yorkers when they get out of Rikers."

The scene Wednesday was in sharp contrast to complaints about Rikers Island that have been so bad in recent years that a federal judge appointed an outside manager to help improve the facility.

On Tuesday, that federal overseer, former Vermont Department of Corrections head Nicholas Deml, submitted a plan for reforms that underscored the continued dysfunction at the facility, which opened in 1935.

The report described one instance

when inspectors arrived at a housing unit to find it filled with smoke from fires set by prisoners, blaring alarms and people pounding on their cell doors. In another incident, prisoners streamed through an unsecured door and brawled after a guard abandoned his post. "Violence remains pervasive, basic correctional practices remain unreliable, and unconstitutional conditions persist," the report said.

Mamdani has vowed to honor a 2019 city law mandating the closure of Rikers, but also conceded the 2027 deadline is likely unrealistic after years of delays.

With his white shirt sleeves rolled up, the Democrat went table-by-table chatting up inmates.

One told the mayor he expected Argentina to prevail over England and go on to face Spain, which had defeated France the day earlier.

"You never know," said Mamdani, a professed Morocco fan.

At another table, an inmate told the mayor he was going home later in the day. "That's amazing," Mamdani said, patting his back.

The jailhouse crowd erupted in a mix of groans and cheers as England struck first with a goal early in the second half.

Ralph Veal was among the minority of England fans who raised his arms in celebration. The 53-year-old Mount Vernon resident, who has been incarcerated since November, said the watch party made him reflect on how he might better approach life after jail.

"I could be doing this with my family, you know?" he said. "My son, he's a big soccer fan, so this would be great for me and him to have that relationship and that bond."

Others simply relished the chance for a rare treat: a freshly catered meal of salad, salmon, penne alla vodka and chicken parmesan, along with Snapple drinks.



Rikers Island inmates watch the World Cup semifinal soccer match between England and Argentina, at the jail complex in New York. (AP)

UK demands FIFA probe into Argentina’s Falklands banner



Argentina fans hold a banner with the words "The Malvinas are Argentinian", referring to the Falkland Islands, at the end of the World Cup semifinal soccer match between England and Argentina in Atlanta. (AP)

Players’ behavior entirely inappropriate

LONDON, July 16, (AP): The British government on Thursday urged FIFA to investigate Argentina’s team after players posed with a banner claiming sovereignty over the contested Falkland Islands.

Argentina beat England 2-1 in a World Cup semifinal on Wednesday in Atlanta.

During post-match celebrations, Argentine players held a banner handed over by fans in the stands, reading “Las Malvinas son Argentinas” - “The Malvinas are Argentine.”

Argentina refers to the Falkland Islands as Islas Malvinas. They were invaded in 1982 under orders from Argentina’s then-military dictatorship, triggering a 10-week war won by Britain.

U.K. Business Secretary Peter Kyle said the players’ behavior was “entirely inappropriate. I expect FIFA to do its investigation thoroughly.”

FIFA can prosecute Argentina’s players and soccer federation because its disciplinary code prohibits

at stadiums any “message that is not appropriate for a sports event” including those of “a political, ideological, religious or offensive nature.”

The FIFA fines for political messaging are \$5,000 to \$20,000.

FIFA was approached for comment Thursday.

A FIFA disciplinary case under previous leadership banned a South Korea player for two 2014 World Cup qualifying games because he held up a similar banner about a territorial claim against Japan at the 2012 London Olympics. Park Jong-woo took a fan banner with the slogan “Dokdo is our territory” after South Korea beat Japan in the men’s bronze medal game.

On Wednesday, Argentina player Lisandro Martínez was asked if the banner could have stirred deep emotions and tears for a veteran of the Malvinas conflict.

“We couldn’t let the Argentine people down” said Martínez, who has played in England for the past four years with Manchester United.

The sporting rivalry between the two countries is heightened by political tensions over the South

Atlantic archipelago. It is a British overseas territory with a population of around 3,500 people located about 8,000 miles (13,000 kilometers) from the U.K. and 300 miles (480 kilometers) from Argentina.

Argentina argues that the islands were illegally taken from it in 1833. Britain, which says its territorial claim dates to 1765, sent a warship to the islands in 1833 to expel Argentine forces who sought to establish sovereignty over the territory.

The war in 1982 killed 649 Argentine troops, 255 British service personnel and three islanders.

That conflict ended during the 1982 World Cup in Spain where Argentina, England, Scotland and Northern Ireland all played. British television networks declined to broadcast Argentina playing in the tournament’s opening game, when the defending champion lost to Belgium.

“Sadly, it is a sad part of our history,” Argentina player Leandro Paredes said in Atlanta about the banner, “for everyone involved in that chapter of, I repeat, our history. And it hurts. We knew we were playing for them, too.”



Belgium's Tim Merlier celebrates as he crosses the finish line to win the twelfth stage of the Tour de France cycling race with start in Circuit Nevers Magny-Cours and finish in Chalon-sur-Saone, France. (AP)

Sports

Kuwait seeks first win against India at Asian Youth Handball Championship

By Khaled Al-Enezi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

BEIJING, July 16: Kuwait will look to bounce back when it faces India today in a crucial second-round clash at the 19th Asian Men's Youth Handball Championship in China.

The Blues are aiming to claim their first victory of the tournament and keep their qualification hopes alive after opening their campaign with a narrow 27-29 defeat to Iran. Despite the loss, Kuwait produced a promising display for long periods, but late errors denied it a positive result.

Today's encounter with India provides Kuwait with a vital opportunity to recover and secure its first two points before taking on stronger opponent Japan, Qatar and the UAE. The remaining group-stage matches are expected to play a key role in deciding the teams that advance to the main round.

Head coach Heine Jansen and assistant coach Musaad Mufreh have used the past two days to correct the mistakes from the opening game, while focusing on improving the team's attacking output, defensive



Kuwaiti player goes for a goal against Iran.

organisation and overall readiness ahead of the important fixture.

Elsewhere in Group Two, Japan will face Qatar today, while Iran takes on the UAE in matches that could significantly affect the group standings and qualification race.

The second day of the championship saw South Korea edge Iran 29-28, Saudi Arabia defeat Bahrain 30-26, the UAE overcome Qatar 29-24, China beat Chinese Taipei 36-29, and Japan secure a commanding 47-14 win over India.

Kuwait and Qatar battle for Group A top spot at West Asia Volleyball Champ'ship

By Khaled Al-Enezi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

MUSCAT, July 16: Kuwait's national volleyball team faces a decisive test on Saturday, when it takes on Qatar in a key Group A clash at the second West Asia Men's Volleyball Championship in Muscat, Oman.

The highly anticipated encounter will determine the group leaders and secure a place in the semi-finals for the top-ranked side. In another Group Two fixture, Iraq will meet host Oman.

The Blues head into the match full of confidence after making a strong start to the tournament, defeating Syria 3-0 in their opening game with an impressive performance that underlined their ambitions of challenging for the title.

Coach Julian Alvarez and his players are determined to continue their positive momentum and claim another victory over Qatar to finish top of the group and enter the knockout stage with a boost in confidence and performance.

The technical staff has spent the past training sessions preparing the squad physically and tactically, fo-



A Kuwaiti player spikes the ball against Syria during the opening match.

cusing on key areas including serving, reception and blocking, while aiming to build on the team's winning start.

The championship continues today, Friday, with Syria facing Qatar in Group One, while Saudi Arabia takes on Lebanon in Group Two.

Resolute Argentina advances to World Cup final

Gutted England collapses

ATLANTA, July 16, (AP): No controversial this time. Argentina didn't need it.

Instead it was the hallowed feet of Lionel Messi and the unbreakable spirit of a team that has repeatedly fought back at this year's World Cup that is now one step away from back-to-back titles.

Trailing 1-0 going into the 85th minute, Argentina rallied for a 2-1 victory over England with goals from Enzo Fernandez and substitute Lautaro Martinez.

"I dreamed it, I swear. I told Alex (Mac Allister) that I was going to score. I told him that I was going to come on and I was going to win it," Martinez said. "I can tell you this team keeps showing what it's made of."

At the final whistle, Messi fell to



Argentina's Lionel Messi celebrates on the shoulders of Enzo Fernandez (24) at the end of the World Cup semifinal soccer match between England and Argentina in Atlanta. (AP)

his knees in celebration while England players collapsed in disbelief - again.

Add 2026 to 1986 and 1998 on the list of games when Argentina has extinguished English hopes at the World Cup.

"I'm gutted for the team, the staff, the fans," England captain Harry Kane said. "We worked so hard to be here. The lads have given every bit of blood, sweat and tears. To fall short like we did is just gutting."

The defending champions will take on European champion Spain in the final on Sunday in East Rutherford, New Jersey. The best that South America has to offer against the best of Europe.

The loss for England will hurt a new generation of fans in a similar way to Diego Maradona's infamous handball goal in the 1986 World Cup quarter-finals and the penalty shootout loss in 1998 when David Beckham was sent off for kicking Diego Simeone.

The difference is there can be no sense of injustice this time, even if England had victory in its sights after Anthony Gordon scored the opening goal in the 55th minute.

The English were hanging on as the game wore on. England goalkeeper Jordan Pickford made vital saves while Mac Allister sent a header off the post as wave after wave of Argentina attacks came.

Messi had largely been kept quiet. But when he's on the field, anything seems possible.

He fed the ball to Fernandez to sweep in the equalizer from outside the box in the 85th minute. And two minutes into stoppage time, Messi sent in a cross for Martinez to head in the winner.

It almost felt inevitable. Especially given the amount of times Argentina has simply refused to give in at this year's World Cup. From Cape Verde to Egypt, Messi and Co. always seem to find a way.

"It is a show of the collectiveness, the brotherhood that we are in, the



England's Nico O'Reilly (3) and Dan Burn (15) battle for the ball against Argentina's Emiliano Martínez (23) and Nicolás Otamendi (19) during the World Cup semifinal soccer match between England and Argentina in Atlanta. (AP)

fight to the very end that we've got," Argentina coach Lionel Scaloni said. "We were ready to go home, sad, knowing that we had left everything on the pitch, but after they scored we really proved ourselves."

England, in contrast, came up short in the World Cup semifinals for the third time after losses to Germany in 1990 and Croatia in 2018. And it's another occasion in recent years when

England's players have squandered a winning position in the later stages of a major tournament.

They led 1-0 against Croatia in the semifinals eight years ago and lost 2-1. They were up 1-0 against Italy in the European Championship final in 2021 and lost on penalties.

On Wednesday, England coach Thomas Tuchel's substitutions seemed to be more intent on holding on, rather

than killing the game off with another goal.

"Argentina played with more risk, played with more rhythm, played with the feeling maybe that they have nothing to lose anymore, which freed them up and held us back because we played suddenly with a feeling that we have a lot to lose," Tuchel said.

Argentina is now one step away from history. Messi, now 39 and likely

playing at his last World Cup, is one win away from further strengthening his case to be considered the greatest soccer player of all time.

"We're going to try to win, we're going to leave everything out there," Scaloni said. "It's very difficult to get people to understand what these players are showing. It's incredible. We are unique, truly, and it's not arrogance, it's from the heart. We are unique."

Pogacar retains overall lead

Merlier wins crash-marred 12th stage

CHALON-SUR-SAONE, France, July 16, (AP): Belgian rider Tim Merlier earned another stage win at the Tour de France while several riders fell as they sprinted to the line Thursday.

Defending champion Tadej Pogacar avoided the crash and kept his significant overall lead over second-place Jonas Vingegaard after 12 stages.

It was Merlier's third stage win on this year's Tour and sixth of his career. Dutch rider Olav Kooij finished second and Jasper Philipsen of Belgium was third.

With riders fighting for position on the home straight, Colombian Fernando Gaviria went down after clipping the wheel of another cyclist and fell to his left, bringing Norwegian rider Soeren Waerenskjold - Wednesday's stage winner - down with him. Just behind them, four other riders had no room to swerve around them and flew over their handlebars.

None of the riders appeared seriously injured and, after a few minutes of recovery, Gaviria crossed the line with the help of a teammate. Gaviria's left knee was heavily bloodied and his left arm appeared hurt as he held it close to his body.

Four-time Tour champion Pogacar

remains 3 minutes, 36 seconds ahead of two-time champion Vingegaard and 4:06 ahead of Remco Evenepoel in third place.

Pogacar had extended his overall lead Tuesday after another trademark attack in the 10th stage.

Stage 12 was a mostly flat 179-kilometer (111-mile) route starting from the Magny-Cours track, which once hosted Formula 1 races, and ending in Chalon-sur-Saône in eastern France.

Frenchman Baptiste Veistroffer forged ahead on his own until he was caught by a group of 14 riders heading into the last 30 kilometers. They were caught by the hard-chasing peloton soon after, and just before the third of three minor climbs.

With teams looking to place their sprinters into the best position to attack it was a nervy approach to the finish line.

Philipsen's Alpecin-Premier Tech team put three riders at the front to help him but they attacked too soon, as they did in previous stages, and Philipsen is still looking for his first victory at this year's race.

Merlier said having his wife and young son at the race "gave me a lot of motivation."

Kuwait Club ends relationship with Dombia

Al-Qadsia signs Al-Qanai as Al-Arabi heads to Turkey camp

By Hassan Mosa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, July 16: Al-Qadsia has signed goalkeeper Saud Al-Qanai on a one-year contract as the club continues its preparations for the new season.

The 32-year-old goalkeeper previously played for Al-Arabi, Al-Tadamon, Al-Salmiya, Al-Shabab and Al-Yarmouk.

Meanwhile, Al-Arabi will leave today for its overseas training camp in Turkey, which will continue until August 6. The team will then travel to Kolkata, India, to prepare for its AFC Champions League Two playoff match against East Bengal on August 12.

The new Al-Arabi coach is expected to join the squad today or tomorrow after the club ended its agreement with national coach Nasser Al-Shatti.

Al-Arabi currently has three foreign players: Brazilian Lucas Chalon, Nigerian Anayo Iwuala and Ethiopian Kenan Malik.

The club confirmed it will not renew the contracts of Bahrain international Kamil Al-Aswad and Moroccan defender Nabil Marmouk, while the situation regarding Palestinian player Zaid Qunbar remains unclear.

Al-Arabi previously signed Talal Al-Qaisi from



Goalkeeper Saud Al-Qanai

Kazma and Ali Al-Dokhi, who has represented Al-Shabab and Al-Fahaheel, while renewing the contracts of Ali Khalaf, Abdullah Ammar and Bader Tariq.

Meanwhile, Kazma announced the renewal of contracts for its foreign players, Yemen international Nasser Mohammedou and Sudanese player Amer Abdullah.

The "Orange" had earlier signed Brazilian Patrick Robson, as well as Fahad Al-Hajri and Ahmed Al-Zanki, while also extending the contract of Nasser Lafi as part of its squad-building plans for the upcoming season.

Kazma will compete in the Gulf Champions League next season after finishing fourth in the Zain Premier League.

Elsewhere, Kuwait Club announced that it will not renew the contract of Ivorian midfielder Idrissa Dombia.

In related news, Bahraini media reports stated that Al-Salmiya has entered negotiations with Bahrain international Abdullah Yusuf to strengthen its squad for the new season.

Al-Salmiya has been coached by Bahrain's Ali Ashoor since last season, with his contract running until June.

Last season, Al-Salmiya featured foreign players including Tunisian Imed Louati, Brazilian Alex Lima, Syrians Amr Midani and Mahmoud Al-Aswad, Bahraini Sayed Diaa, and Gambian player Sang Pierre.