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KUWAIT HEALTH MINISTRY ON FULL EMERGENCY READINESS

Lifelines caught in crossfire



Kuwait Army photo
Visit of the Chief of General Staff of the Kuwait Army, Lieutenant General Khaled Al-Shuraian, to wounded personnel of the Kuwaiti Land Force.



MoH photo
Minister of Health Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi chairs a meeting of the Ministry's leaders and the Central Emergency Committee.



MEWRE photo
Minister of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy Dr. Subaih Al-Mukhaizeem briefed on the efforts made by the Ministry's emergency teams.

🔥 Firefighters, oil workers injured battling blazes 🔥 Kuwait works to restore damaged units 🔥 Travel disruptions follow Iranian strikes 🔥 Philippine Embassy urges calm, vigilance 🔥 Regional outcry after strikes on Kuwait 🔥 Tehran suspends interim deal commitments

By Munif Naif and Mohammad Ghanem
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff and Agencies

KUWAIT CITY, July 18: Kuwait's air defenses intercepted a new wave of Iranian ballistic missiles and hostile drones early Saturday as attacks targeted military, security and vital civilian facilities, including oil, electricity and water installations, causing fires, damage and injuries.

Ministry of Defense spokesman Colonel Saud Al-Atwan said the Kuwait Armed Forces detected the incoming threats within Kuwaiti airspace during the early hours of Saturday and successfully intercepted them.

He confirmed that Iranian attacks targeted a number of strategic facilities, including those belonging to the oil, electricity and water sectors, resulting in fires and extensive material damage.

The concerned authorities immediately launched firefighting and emergency response operations, during which several firefighters and oil sector workers were injured while carrying out their duties. The injured were transported for treatment and remain under medical care.

Colonel Al-Atwan said fragments from the intercepted missiles and drones fell in several locations, including residential areas, causing property damage but no reported fatalities.

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Opinion

Ahmed Al-Jarallah

Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

The world must support the Iranian people's revolutions

WHEN the revolution against the Shah of Iran erupted in 1979, all opposition factions united to overthrow his regime.

As soon as the revolutionaries achieved victory, the first action of Khomeini was to eliminate those who supported him. Khomeini established a racist and sectarian regime, while the majority of the Iranians at the time were secular and liberal.

Iran then witnessed numerous assassinations, bombings and killings aimed at consolidating power in the hands of the backward clerics. This ruling class inflicted famine and poverty upon the people, strained relations with other nations, and got deeply involved in terrorism.

The world's political elites at the time overlooked this fact due to the expedient interests that shaped the attitude of many leaders and governments. The Iranian regime exploited this situation by establishing more proxies in the region to serve its sectarian agenda under the guise of "supporting the oppressed around the world," while the truth was the opposite.

Since 1979, the whole world has been suffering from the natural consequence of a short-sighted vision for the global future, particularly in the context of the Cold War, which laid the foundation for many contradictions that caused immense suffering for nations and peoples.

Therefore, the world is now witnessing the culmination of this in the deterioration of regional and global security. The Iranian regime, now despised by majority of its people, continues to perpetrate terrorist attacks against its neighbors, threaten energy security, and exacerbate the losses of the global economy. The Iranian regime is, in one way or another, committing genocide by halting the export of fertilizers, which are essen-

tial for global food security.

The actions of this regime not only undermine the regional security of the Gulf, but also threaten international peace and security, and intensify the poverty and famine among some 90 million Iranians seeking a solution.

It seems the world is repeating the same mistake it made in 1991 when the majority of Iraqis rose up against Saddam Hussein. At the time, the 'international coalition' turned a blind eye to the genocide perpetrated by Saddam's army to crush the uprising, prolonging the suffering of the Iraqi people until 2003.

The international community has also failed to support the nine popular uprisings in Iran since 1979. Any one of these uprisings could have toppled the Iranian regime. The international community's inaction allowed the regime to suppress them and prolong its rule.

Today, the situation is even more dangerous, especially with the Iranian regime's increasing use of economic and political terrorism and its blackmailing of neighboring countries and even the entire world. If this issue is not addressed decisively, it will plunge the world into decades of instability.

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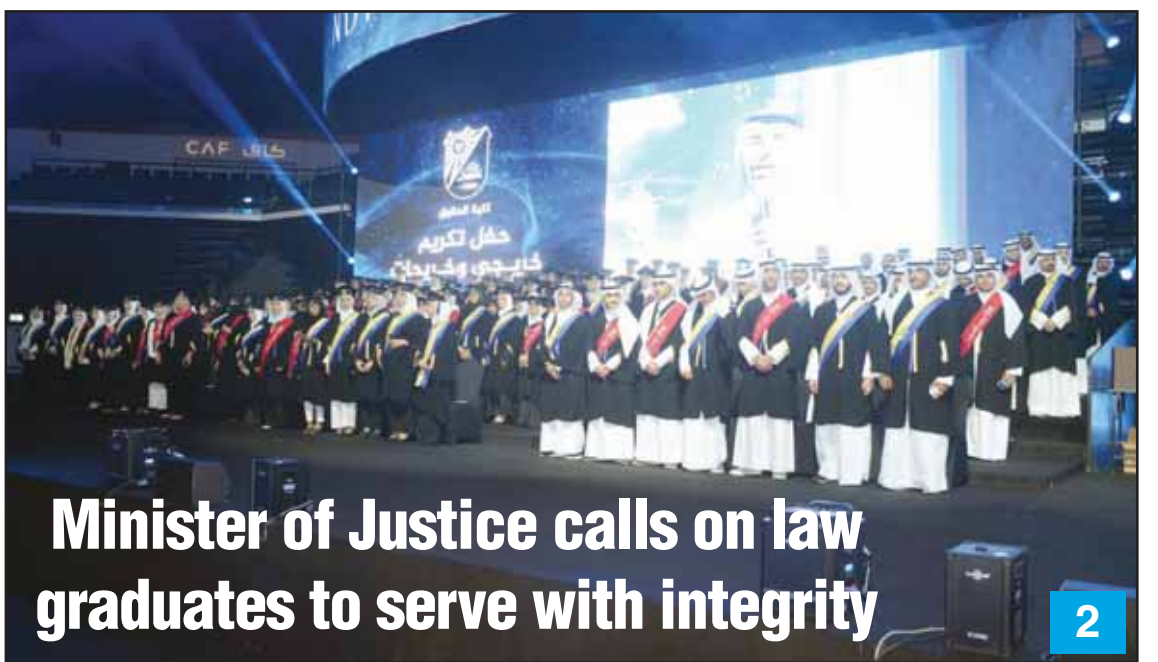
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Minister of Justice calls on law graduates to serve with integrity

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Mol quashes body rumor

KUWAIT CITY, July 18: The Ministry of Interior denied reports circulating on social media claiming that an identified corpse was found during the recent campaign in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

In an official statement, the ministry urged the public not to believe information circulated on social media through unofficial accounts.

It stressed that legal measures will be taken against individuals who publish false news or rumors that mislead public opinion.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry announced the closure of ten violating commercial establishments and the issuance of 152 reports during a joint government campaign carried out by regulatory and security authorities in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Director of the Commercial Control Department Faisal Al-Ansari explained that the campaign uncovered various violations and resulted in legal proceedings against those responsible. The campaign led to the closure of a restaurant and a café for selling counterfeit and expired products, as well as the seizure of gold shops operating in violation of ministerial decisions requiring the provision of electronic payment services.

Inspection teams also identified domestic worker recruitment offices collecting fees in cash in violation of regulations, along with travel agencies operating without valid licenses.

He confirmed that all violators were referred to the Commercial Prosecution for further legal action.

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'Date' with trouble

By Munif Naif

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, July 18: The Air Cargo Customs Department thwarted an attempt to smuggle marijuana, hidden inside a dates parcel from Thailand.

Customs inspectors checked the parcel and discovered 104 pieces of marijuana weighing a total of 549 grams, which were stuffed among the dates.

In coordination with the Drug Control General Department (DCGD) at the Interior Ministry, the customs officers apprehended the Sri Lankan suspect upon receiving the parcel. Legal procedures are being completed in preparation for referring the suspect and the seized items to the DCGD.

This operation is in compliance with the directives of First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef to strengthen customs control, tighten security at the ports of entry, and firmly deal with attempts to smuggle narcotics and psychotropic substances.

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356 site visits confirm full compliance with heat ban

By Fares Ghaleb

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, July 18: The Public Authority for Manpower (PAM) announced the results of implementing Ministerial Resolution No. 3/2026 regarding the ban on outdoor work during the midday hours -- from 11:00 am to 4:00 pm -- in summer (June 1 to Aug 31).

PAM confirmed that zero violations were recorded, proving the commitment of the employers to comply with the abovementioned resolution.

It revealed that the inspection teams conducted 356 field visits to the work sites and monitored the conditions of 373 workers.

According to PAM, it received 25

reports, conducted 56 inspections and re-inspections after the issuance of warnings, and issued 67 notices to rectify violations. It also received six requests for exemption from the resolution, all of which were approved according to the established regulations.

PAM affirmed that these indicators reflect the success of its oversight efforts in raising awareness on the importance of compliance with the resolution in order to guarantee the safety of workers in construction sites and open areas, in addition to establishing a safe and healthy work environment, thanks to the employers' commitment to follow the regulations governing work during summer.

NBK underscores its leadership across diverse areas of banking with five prestigious Euromoney Awards

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National Investments Company Recognized as Best Investment Bank in Kuwait for Equity Capital Markets 2026

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NewsWatch

38 lose citizenship

KUWAIT CITY, July 18: On Thursday, the official gazette "Kuwait Al-Yaum" published Decision No. 11/62/2026 issued by the Higher Committee for Kuwaiti Citizenship Investigation, revoking the Kuwaiti citizenship of 38 individuals, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The decision stated that the revocations were based on Article 11 of Amiri Decree No. 15/1959 concerning the Kuwaiti Nationality Law and its amendments.



KUWAIT CITY: The Public Authority for Civil Information (PACI) announced that the number of beneficiaries of the electronic signature activation service through the "Kuwait Mobile ID" application has reached 7,659 users since its launch, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Kuwait joins high-level US talks

Kuwait's Ambassador to the United States, Sheikha Al-Zain Al-Sabah, participated in the second joint Gulf-Jordanian meeting with Democratic members of the US House Foreign Affairs Committee.

The meeting served as a

pivotal platform to discuss key regional developments and explore avenues to bolster strategic cooperation between the two sides, the Kuwaiti Embassy in Washington said in a press release on Thursday. (KUNA)



KUNA photo
Ambassador of the State of Kuwait to the United States of America Sheikha Al-Zain Al-Sabah participates in the Gulf-Jordan meeting with members of the US House of Representatives.



Prayer Timings

Fajr 03:28 Asr 15:29
Sunrise .. 05:00 Maghrib .. 18:48
Zohr 11:54 Isha 20:17

Uphold integrity, honesty: Al-Sumait

Law must reflect in real life, minister urges graduates



Nasser Al-Sumait



Minister of Justice Counselor Nasser Al-Sumait and Undersecretary of the Ministry of Justice Awatif Al-Sanad.



Male and female graduates came to the ceremony in numbers.

By Jaber Al-Hamoud

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, July 18: Minister of Justice Counselor Nasser Al-Sumait urged graduates of the Faculty of Law at Kuwait University on Friday to uphold honesty, integrity, and trustworthiness throughout their professional careers.

He emphasized that law is not merely a collection of legislative texts to be memorized, but rather a code of conduct that must be practiced and reflected in real life.

Speaking at the Faculty of Law graduation ceremony for the 2025-2026 academic year, held under his patronage and in his presence, Counselor Al-Sumait explained that Kuwait is entering an exceptional phase that requires greater awareness and responsibility. The state is working during this period to develop and modernize its legislative system in line with



A female graduate is honored.

Photos by Samer Shaqir

ongoing changes, while enhancing the efficiency of its institutions.

Addressing the graduates, Minister Al-Sumait said, "You are an essential part of this phase. You possess the knowledge, ambition, and capabilities needed to contribute to building a more just and stable future. The graduation marks the beginning of a new journey filled with various opportunities and career paths, including the judiciary, legal practice, and pursuing postgraduate studies."

He congratulated the graduates on completing their studies at the Faculty of Law after a journey marked by hard work and dedication.

The minister expressed his appreciation to the faculty members for their efforts and contributions in educating and training the students.

In addition, he thanked the parents for their continuous support of their sons and daughters, which helped them achieve this important milestone.

Minister Al-Sumait prayed to God Almighty to grant the graduates success and to protect Kuwait under the leadership of His Highness the Amir, Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad, and His Highness the Crown Prince, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled.

Partnership blooms over decades

Kuwait, China trade ties spiral, hitting KD22.39 billion in 2026

By Bassam Al-Qassab

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, July 18: The Kuwaiti-Chinese relations are among the successful models of bilateral relations between Arab states and major global economic powers.

For more than five decades, the two countries have built a strong strategic partnership based on mutual respect, political trust, and economic and developmental cooperation.

This exceptional relationship began in the early 1970s, specifically when Kuwait became the first Gulf state to establish diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China in 1971.

This step reflected the perceptive vision of the then Kuwaiti leadership. Being the first country to establish diplomatic relations with China was preceded by the historic visit of HH the late Amir Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to China in 1965, which led to the long history of cooperation and friendship between the two countries.

Over the past decades, bilateral relations have developed at an accelerated pace. China has been Kuwait's largest trading partner for several years.

The volume of trade between the two countries reached about \$22.39 billion in 2026. China accounts for 10 percent of Kuwaiti imports. It is the largest destination for Kuwaiti crude oil, which accounts for 90 percent of Kuwait's exports. Trade relations between the two countries continue to grow despite the global economic challenges.

The energy sector serves as the backbone of economic relations between the two countries. Kuwait is one of the important suppliers of crude oil to China. The Chinese market is one of the vital strategic destinations for Kuwaiti oil exports, while Chinese products have a strong presence in the Kuwaiti market, including industrial equipment, technological products, automobiles and smart devices.

Cooperation extends to major infrastructure and development projects. Dozens of Chinese companies are involved in the implementation of vital projects in Kuwait. Around 60 to 70 Chinese companies are operating in the Kuwaiti market, contributing to the implementation

of more than 80 projects in the housing, roads, energy and telecommunications sectors.

The Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port is one of the strategic projects that reflects the depth of cooperation between the two countries, in line with the Belt and Road Initiative of China and the Vision 2035 of Kuwait.

The Kuwaiti-Chinese relations witnessed a significant boost during the reign of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. His Highness the Amir held important summits with Chinese President Xi Jinping, which resulted in strengthening the strategic partnership between the two countries, and the signing of several agreements and memoranda of understanding in the fields of energy, infrastructure, environment, housing and sustainable development.

The political leaderships of both countries affirmed on more than one occasion their commitment to develop bilateral relations to broader and more comprehensive levels.

In the cultural and humanitarian fields, China and Kuwait continue to build bridges of communication between their peoples. The first Chinese cultural center in the Gulf region was established in Kuwait.

The Chinese medical team has been providing medical services to the Kuwaiti community for decades, affirming the deep friendship between the two countries. Recent years witnessed a remarkable increase in the number of activities in the fields of education and culture, as well as the exchange of academic and artistic delegations, which strengthened the cultural bond between the two peoples.

With the appointment of the new Chinese Ambassador to Kuwait, Yang Xin, the Kuwaiti-Chinese relations are geared toward a new phase of growth and prosperity, particularly in the areas of digital economy, artificial intelligence, renewable energy and advanced technology.

Experience proved that the Kuwaiti-Chinese relations are not just economic cooperation or a trade partnership, but rather the model of an inclusive relationship built on political trust, mutual respect and shared interests.

More than half a century after its inception, this partnership continues to solidify its position as one of the important bilateral relationships in the region. The Kuwaiti-Chinese relationship is considered a diplomatic and economic successful story poised for even higher levels in the coming years.

dence-based policies, and promoting best practices.

The Ministry described the recognition as a significant milestone that will further support collaboration with global partners to enhance knowledge and expertise in the field of medical responsibility.

Established in 2020, the AMR is an independent government body responsible for medical and allied health professions across both the public and private sectors in Kuwait.

The Authority is mandated to provide expert technical opinions on matters referred to it through complaints, reports, investigations, and legal proceedings involving allegations of medical errors and professional misconduct.

Kuwaiti charities continue to expand global footprint

Chronic ailments, kidney failure patients top list



Around 250 people to benefit from Namaa charity medical donations in Yemen provinces.



KUNA photos

ADEN, July 18, (KUNA): Kuwaiti charitable organizations continue to expand their humanitarian footprint globally, with Namaa Charity, affiliated with the Social Reform Society, implementing a medical aid project targeting patients with chronic illnesses and kidney failure in Yemen.

The initiative has benefited 250 patients across the governorates of Sana'a and Lahj. According to Khaled Al-Shamri, Head of the Development and Relief Sector at Namaa Charity, 150 patients with chronic diseases in Sana'a received treatment support, while an additional 100 kidney failure patients were provided with essential care at Al-Wahat Hospital in Lahj.

Al-Shamri stated in a press release on Saturday

that the project has helped ease both the medical and financial burdens on patients and their families, enabling them to continue necessary treatment plans. He added that the initiative ensured consistent medical care and regular treatment for kidney failure patients, amid ongoing challenges facing Yemen's healthcare system, particularly in securing essential medicines.

He emphasized that supporting patients with chronic conditions and kidney failure remains a humanitarian priority due to the severe complications that may threaten their lives. Al-Shamri also expressed gratitude to donors and supporters, noting that their contributions

played a direct role in the project's success and served as a lifeline for many patients unable to afford treatment.

For his part, Majdi bin Harara, Executive Director of the Yemeni Companions Association for Development—the project's implementing partner—affirmed that the initiative successfully reached vulnerable groups struggling to access necessary medications. He extended his appreciation to the State of Kuwait, Namaa Charity, and its supporters for their continued humanitarian efforts, which contribute to alleviating patient suffering and strengthening the response capacity of aid organizations amid growing health needs in Yemen.

Raise awareness among public to save power and water: official

KUWAIT CITY, July 18, (KUNA): The Kuwaiti Ministry of Islamic Affairs has participated in a national campaign aiming to save energy and water that was carried out by the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy.

The step was taken as part of cooperation and integration among government bodies to enhance awareness on controlling the consumption of electricity and water, acting undersecretary of the Ministry of Islamic Affairs Suleiman Al-



Dr. Al-Suwailam

Suwailam told KUNA on Friday.

Participation includes disseminating awareness messages through media platforms affiliated to the Ministry of Islamic Affairs, in addition to Friday's sermon focused on the importance of resource allocation, he added.

The ministry has implemented energy consumption control measures by using energy-saving lights, shutting down water heaters during the summer, and turning off electrical devices in unused rooms at mosques, he noted.

Such procedures came out of the ministry's responsibility of backing national efforts aiming to raise the efficiency of water and electricity usage and maintain national resources, he affirmed.

Court dismisses case in 'outstanding' legal fees

KUWAIT CITY, July 18: Attorney Ismail Dashti secured a final court ruling in favor of his client, resulting in the dismissal of a lawsuit filed by her former lawyer, who demanded KD 170,000 in outstanding legal fees, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The former lawyer filed the lawsuit against his previous client, claiming the remaining fees stipulated in their contract after the agreement had been terminated and the power of attorney revoked.

The plaintiff obtained a ruling in his favor after the defendant failed to appear in court. The ruling became final as the deadline for filing an appeal already ended.

The plaintiff subsequently initiated enforcement procedures and secured the seizure of funds held in his former client's bank accounts. After becoming aware of the ruling and the enforcement measures, the defendant appointed Dashti, who immediately took legal action by filing an objection to suspend the release of the funds.

WHO move vital milestone in Kuwait health sector support

KUWAIT CITY, July 18, (KUNA): Kuwait's Ministry of Health announced on Friday that the World Health Organization (WHO) has designated Kuwait's Medical Responsibility Authority (AMR) as a WHO Collaborating Centre for Medical Responsibility.

In a statement, the Ministry said the designation enables AMR to join the WHO network of collaborating centres and participate in international initiatives focused on training, research, capacity building, and the development of policies and best practices in medical responsibility.

The four-year designation will facilitate international cooperation in strengthening institutional capacity, exchanging expertise, advancing evi-

dence-based policies, and promoting best practices.

The Ministry described the recognition as a significant milestone that will further support collaboration with global partners to enhance knowledge and expertise in the field of medical responsibility.

Established in 2020, the AMR is an independent government body responsible for medical and allied health professions across both the public and private sectors in Kuwait.

The Authority is mandated to provide expert technical opinions on matters referred to it through complaints, reports, investigations, and legal proceedings involving allegations of medical errors and professional misconduct.

107 carrying forged citizenship

KUWAIT CITY, July 18: The Nationality Investigations Department has uncovered a complex citizenship forgery case involving two individuals who obtained Kuwaiti citizenship in 1980 based on false statements, documents, and certificates, with the fraud later confirmed through DNA testing and investigations, reports Al-Rai daily.

According to the investigation findings, 107 individuals had obtained Kuwaiti citizenship through this file, including 76 individuals born in 1945 and 31 individuals born in 1947.

The case began when a Kuwaiti citizen who had obtained citizenship through legal procedures and registered his children on his file submitted a request in 1980, following the issuance of Law No. 100/1980, to add two individuals as his sons.

At the time, DNA testing was not available, so the applicant provided official documents, estimated ages, and witness testimonies to support his claim. Based on the submitted evidence, the two individuals were granted Kuwaiti citizenship

at the ages of 35 and 33.

Months ago, information emerged suggesting that the two individuals were not the sons of the Kuwaiti citizen and that their citizenship had been obtained through fraudulent claims and false statements. The Nationality Investigations Department conducted inquiries and confirmed the accuracy of the information.

A review of the 1975 census, conducted at the request of the Criminal Investigation Department, revealed that two names matched the first names of the individuals who later obtained citizenship, while the remaining details corresponded with those of a Bedoun person. The 1980 census, however, listed the two individuals as Kuwaiti citizens after they had obtained citizenship.

Further examination of the 1980 census records of the Bedoun individual found that the two individuals previously listed as members of his family in the 1975 census were no longer recorded under his file and had instead been registered as sons of the Kuwaiti citizen.

'Citizens, expats rationing helped overcome disaster'

KUWAIT CITY, July 18, (KUNA): The official spokesperson for the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy, Eng. Fatima Jawhar Hayat, affirmed on Saturday that the commitment and cooperation of citizens and residents in rationalizing electricity consumption enabled the ministry to overcome the critical period experienced by the power system yesterday and today.

She explained in a press statement that this collective adherence to conservation measures significantly reduced actual electricity usage from expected levels, which in turn supported the efforts of technical teams in maintaining system stability and ensuring the continuity of service. Hayat expressed her gratitude to citizens, residents, government agencies, state institutions, the media, and the private sector for their cooperation in disseminating awareness messages on rationalizing consumption.

Hayat noted that this positive interaction reflects a high level of societal awareness and an authentic spirit demonstrated through the swift response and solidarity in serving the nation via various social media platforms. She urged everyone to sustain this spirit of shared responsibility and to entrench a culture of conservation as a national and civilized practice that helps protect resources, supports the stability of the electricity and water systems, serves the public interest, and ensures the sustainability of services for all.

For how long can Gulf tolerate Iran atrocities?

"HE made a promise and then broke it, concealing the opposite of what he had declared. As the saying goes, 'If you have no shame, do as you please.' When I warned about the Iranian regime, I was not speculating or speaking without knowledge," columnist Eng. Adel Al-Jarallah Al-Kharafi wrote for Al-Seyassah daily.

"My views were based not only on facts but also on the collective memory of the Gulf. Although diplomacy sometimes requires navigating minefields, those mines do not always explode beneath those who walk through them; sometimes they detonate beneath those who planted them.

"We have known the Iranian regime well since 1979. We understand the nature of its leaders because geography has compelled us to deal with successive Iranian governments.

"I do not speak from a racist perspective, but from the historical experiences and inherited collective memory of the peoples of the Gulf. We know that history is unforgiving and that its judgment can be severe.

"When it comes to defending our land, dignity, existence, and future, we cannot leave matters to chance. This is why nations maintain armies and military strength. The use of force becomes unavoidable when defending existence and sovereignty against an enemy that disregards the principles of good neighborliness and peaceful relations.

"When an enemy repeatedly breaks its promises and violates its agreements, disciplining it becomes a necessity. The Iranian regime has been sending delegations to Muscat and Doha for negotiations while simultaneously launching attacks. If it were to reach agreements with Omani leaders and then bomb Omani territories, would it be acceptable to allow such reckless and unlawful actions to continue?

"When we examine statements issued by Iran's Foreign Ministry, the Revolutionary Guard, or the Khatam al-Anbiya Construction Headquarters, we see multiple voices, conflicting positions, and differing viewpoints. When the self-proclaimed Supreme Leader issues statements while remaining absent from his father's funeral, it leads us to suspect that the Iranian regime is headless and has become a collection of gangs run by individuals pursuing their own interests.

"We will not feel sorry for the fall of the Iranian regime or the fragmentation of Iran into smaller states, because all we have seen from it is repeated hostility and aggression. Tolerance may be appropriate for minor mistakes, but not for crimes against humanity.

"For 47 years, Kuwait has been the target of numerous terrorist attacks and hostile acts attributed either directly to the Iranian regime or to groups aligned with it in some Arab countries, including Iraq.

"The Iraqi government has been unable to control armed groups that act on orders from Tehran. Kuwait has always exercised restraint and wisdom in dealing with this difficult neighbor. That restraint, however, has often been interpreted as weakness, overlooking the fact that circumstances do not remain the same forever.

"Those responsible for political and security crimes should be held accountable without delay. Today, we are witnessing the death throes of the Tehran regime. I affirm that a Gulf confrontation with this rogue regime is imminent, as long as it cares only for its own interests, even at the expense of others.

"Geography is a double-edged sword, and history is unforgiving. It seems the Iranian regime doesn't consider its own people."

Also:

"We all know that working in areas exposed to direct sunlight during the midday hours of the summer months is prohibited. Given the nature of privately owned fuel stations, it is impossible to shut them down. Therefore, companies that own gas stations should be required to provide a suitable working environment that protects workers' rights," Kuwaiti writer **Zaid Al-Jalawi** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

"As an immediate temporary measure, workplaces should be equipped with air conditioning and misting systems until contractors are hired to establish a suitable working environment.

"The majority of fuel station workers are young men from very poor backgrounds, so they are often forced to accept these jobs despite the harsh conditions. They endure extreme heat, high humidity, and continuous exposure to gasoline fumes, all of which can lead to serious respiratory illnesses.

"I suggest requiring cooperative societies and charitable societies to provide fuel stations with fans. This would likely be welcomed by the

shareholders of these cooperative societies, who are concerned about the difficult conditions faced by these workers. Many fuel stations lack even the most basic cooling equipment, such as fans, which can at least improve air circulation, reduce humidity, and help disperse the concentration of harmful fuel fumes.

"Fuel station owners must be required to provide covered, cooled work areas and install proper ventilation systems to protect workers from extreme heat and harmful fuel fumes. These workers should have the right to stop working during the designated midday work ban hours if suitable working conditions are not provided.

"Many people, including myself, have written extensively in the press and on social media to highlight the suffering of this vulnerable group of workers, yet little has changed.

"I have great hope and confidence that the Minister of Social, Family and Childhood Affairs, Amthar Al-Huwaila, will respond and take the appropriate measures to alleviate the suffering of these workers. I urge the ministry to notify fuel station owners that, after a specified grace period, work during the midday ban hours will not be permitted at stations that fail to provide adequate working conditions and suitable rest facilities for their workers."



"Newspapers recently reported statements by some officials concerned with Kuwaiti families, claiming that domestic violence cases have declined and that the government is moving forward with amending laws affecting society. They also indicated that domestic sexual assault crimes have become crimes that victims cannot waive," columnist **Bassam Fahad Thunayan Al-Ghanim** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

"Do these officials believe that the justice needed by Kuwaiti families is limited to this particular crime? Why are they overlooking other family-related issues, most notably the Personal Status Law and its consequences, the weakening of the family system, and the shortcomings of the Supreme Council for Family Affairs, the Family Counseling Department, marital reconciliation centers, and visitation centers?

"Everyone agrees on the importance of increasing penalties for serious family-related crimes and ensuring the protection of victims. However, are statements alone enough to convince people that justice within the family system has improved?

"If the discussion focuses on the success of the domestic violence law, then it is only fair to consider the family file as an integrated system rather than as just a single law or statistical indicator.

"True success is not measured by the number of reports or cases alone, but by family stability, lower divorce rates, and the ability of state institutions to resolve marital disputes before they escalate to the courts.

"If the family reform system is achieving the success claimed by officials, why are the divorce rates so high, and why are family disputes continuing to increase, particularly malicious complaints and juvenile cases?

"Why are courts overwhelmed with large numbers of custody, visitation, alimony, and judgment enforcement cases? One reason is the ease with which complaints can be filed, regardless of how minor the grounds may be.

"The departments of the Supreme Council for Family Affairs, Family Counseling, marital reconciliation centers, visitation centers, juvenile centers, and other related bodies are unable to fully perform their intended roles, despite the significant financial resources allocated to them.

"It is also noteworthy that recent statements have focused on the decline in domestic violence cases, directly attributing this decrease to law enforcement. However, this connection requires careful examination, as changes in figures must be analyzed in light of all surrounding factors, including regional circumstances, the ongoing war, the pressures it has created, and its impact on the work of the Public Prosecution during that period. This includes the possibility that a decline in the number of received reports may have contributed to the reduction in recorded cases.

"Over the past few years, we have followed statements about developing the Personal Status Law, modernizing the family system, and reviewing visitation centers to better serve the best interests of children. However, the complaints remain unchanged, families continue to suffer, and courts and social media platforms are filled with stories of parents and children paying the price for a system that is in urgent need of reform."

— Compiled by Simi K. Kutty

Kuwait, Turkiye to upgrade bilateral relations

KUWAIT CITY, July 18, (KUNA): Chief of the General Staff of the Kuwait Armed Forces Lt. Gen. Khaled Al-Shuraiaan and Turkish Defense Minister Yasar Guler discussed on Thursday ways to develop bilateral cooperation in varied fields and topics of common interest.

The talks came during an official visit paid by Al-Shuraiaan to Turkiye where he met with Guler in Ankara to review cooperation and shared cordial speech which showed close relations between the two friendly countries, Kuwait's General Staff said in a statement.

During the visit, Al-Shuraiaan also met with his Turkish counterpart Selcuk Bayraktaroglu and reviewed military and defensive relations as well as means of upgrading them, it added.

After concluding the visit, Al-Shuraiaan and his accompanying delegation returned home late Thursday, according to the statement.



KUNA photo
Chief of the General Staff of the Kuwait Armed Forces Lt. Gen. Khaled Al-Shuraiaan receives the Turkish Defense Minister Yasar Guler in the accompaniment of Turkiye Army Chief General Selcuk Bayraktaroglu (extreme right).

Reforms boon for legislature

Law fast-tracks 'stuck' cases

KUWAIT CITY, July 18, (KUNA): Kuwait has witnessed a quantum leap towards efforts to establish a "fast-track" national justice system, buoyed by a raft of judicial reforms that aim to build a modern model that combines Artificial Intelligence while keeping judicial safeguards and data confidentiality intact.



Al-Sumait

These reforms have picked up speed since May of last year, primarily focusing on resolving long-standing cases and a backlog of appeals and judicial notifications, while outdated paper-based methods have fallen by the wayside for the launch of electronic litigation and effective legal provisions that keep the justice system afloat.

In July of last year, Kuwait's justice ministry announced that the Court of Cassation, working alongside the Supreme Judicial Council and the Civil Service Council, would establish new judicial circuits to handle the review of appeals and expedite the resolution of case backlogs in court.

In the 2025/2026 judicial year, the Court of Cassation adjudicated on some 17,434 appeals, a figure that represents an increase of 17.7 percent, as compared to the previous judicial year, during which 14,816 appeals were resolved, according to official ministry statistics.

Meanwhile, the Misdemeanor Judicial Appeal Courts adjudicated some 36,093 appeals during the 2025/2026 judicial year, a figure that amounts to a staggering increase of 203 percent when compared to the preceding judicial year, the data showed.

The use of specialized and expedited judicial mechanisms resulted in speeding up the resolution of cases, where hearings to settle these appeals have been instructed not to exceed two months from the date the appeal was filed, a far cry from previous durations that usually went two years.

The Appeals Court resolved 104 percent of the appeals filed during the 2025/2026 judicial year from October of 2025 to April of 2026, which amounted to a total of 31,790 appeals across the court's various circuits, the data showed.

Last month, Kuwait's Justice Minister Nasser Al-Sumait said that the number of cases to have been dismissed as a result of "failure of completion, amounted to roughly 36 percent, citing an electronic link that joins the Ministry of Commerce and Industry with the Public Authority for Civil Information that led to the expedition of case backlog resolution.

The minister went to say that the workflow of judicial notification by way of electronic tools enabled faster and more accurate processing, which includes case details, parties involved and related legal procedures, which was another major shift away from manual judicial databases, he added.

Ministry data went on to show a "record surge" in the number of electronic notifications for criminal cases, amounting to 27,665 notifications between June 7 and July 9, 2026, as compared to a measly 12 during the same period in a year earlier, which illustrates a palpable shift towards the adoption of digital means for criminal proceedings.

Lithium batteries stolen

Municipality continues encroachments 'drive'

KUWAIT CITY, July 18: Kuwait Municipality confirmed on Thursday the continuation of its field campaign, "Kuwait Is More Beautiful Without Encroachments on State Property," targeting residential, investment, and industrial areas, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Head of the Violations Removal Department at the Capital Municipality, Suleiman Al-Ghais, stated in a press release during an inspection tour of Jaber Al-Ahmad residential area that the campaign has achieved its objectives, thanks to the cooperation of many citizens who removed violations voluntarily.

Al-Ghais explained that the campaign, which began more than a month ago, aims to remove and prevent violations such as the construction of green fences around house setbacks and the establishment of diwanis on sidewalks, which pose risks to visitors and increase the possibility of traffic accidents.

The latest inspection tour in Jaber Al-Ahmad resulted in the removal of an illegal diwaniya built between two transformers, one belonging to the Ministry of Communications and the other to the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy.

Al-Ghais noted that the most common violations recorded during the campaign included illegal iron fences, the construction of unauthorized diwanis obstructing government services, and landscaping or planting near electrical transformers and infrastructure facilities.

He stressed that constructing any structure near power transformers is prohibited, with a required distance of at least four meters.

Al-Ghais reiterated that building on passages between houses or using them for storage purposes is not allowed.



Lithium batteries stolen: Criminal Investigation Department officers are investigating the theft of three lithium batteries from a telecommunications company site and are working to identify and apprehend the suspects, reports Al-Anba daily.

The legal representative of the company reported that a technician discovered the theft at the company's site in Ali Sabah Al-Salem.

The complainant suggested that the thieves may have cut through the outer fence, entered the security booth, and stolen several batteries.

Coast Road intersection shut for one week: GTD

KUWAIT CITY, July 18: The General Traffic Department (GTD) announced the full closure of the intersection of Balat Al-Shuhada Street and Sheikh Salem Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah Street (Coastal Road) in Fahheel from all directions, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The closure will begin on Saturday, July 18, and will remain in effect for one week. Vehicles coming from the Marine Club intersection will be diverted onto Balat Al-Shuhada Street.

The department urged road users to exercise caution and comply with traffic instructions during the closure period.

Seafarers must follow safety measures: KFF

KUWAIT CITY, July 18: The Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) urged seafarers to follow safety procedures before embarking on sea trips, emphasizing that proper preparation helps reduce accidents and enhance the safety of everyone onboard, reports Al-Anba daily.

In an awareness video uploaded on its official website, KFF stated that the most important safety measures include checking weather conditions, inspecting the boat's hull to ensure seaworthiness, and verifying the functionality of navigation equipment and lights.

KFF stressed the importance of carrying life jackets, distress equipment, a fire extinguisher, and a first-aid kit, as well as ensuring sufficient fuel, food, and drinking water are available according to the duration of the trip.

It also advised seafarers to avoid restricted areas, be familiar with the trip's coordinates and route, and contact the emergency hotline when necessary.

'Report anyone working during daytime ban hrs'

KUWAIT CITY, July 18: The Public Authority for Manpower (PAM) urged citizens and residents to report violations related to employing workers in open areas during the midday work ban, reports Al-Anba daily.

PAM stated that reports can be submitted through the Occupational Health and Safety Management Team at the No. 24936192. It encouraged everyone to cooperate and report any establishments employing workers in open areas during prohibited hours.

PAM emphasized that violations of the open-area work ban will result in penalties stipulated under Law No. 6/2010, in addition to suspending the employer's file until the violation is corrected and the required procedures are completed.

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Kuwait calls for global efforts to achieve 2030 development goals

Al-Enezi stresses need for stability, partnerships and innovation

NEW YORK, July 18, (KUNA): The State of Kuwait has reiterated that the achievement of the 2030 sustainable development plan requires fair, innovative and coordinated procedures and a safe environment to help countries make their goals.

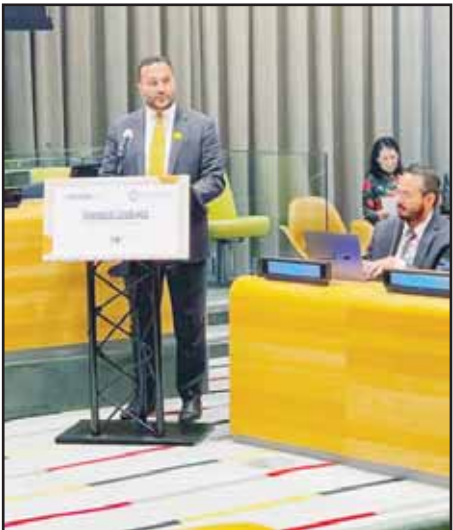
This came in a speech delivered by Minister Plenipotentiary Faisal Al-Enezi, Chargé d’Affaires of Kuwait’s delegation to the United Nations, on Wednesday evening during the general debate of the 2026 High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development at the UN headquarters.

Al-Enezi noted that the forum came in a decisive phase as there are only four years left to achieve the goals of this sustainable development, stressing the need of providing an international stable environment to back development efforts.

He expressed Kuwait’s concern over the negative economic, environment and development of conflicts, mainly the countries which are not involved in them.

He warned against the expanding cycle of conflicts, which deplete national resources, and redirecting funding from education, health and infrastructure to rapid response and rebuilding.

He said that Kuwait continues translating its national priorities into tangible accomplishments, citing the recent launch of the Kuwait



KUNA photo
Kuwait’s Chargé d’Affaires to the UN Faisal Al-Enezi delivers the country’s statement during the General Debate of the 2026 High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development at UN Headquarters.

fund for emergency response of a total capital of USD 100 million.

The fund aims to support of national efforts aiming to address damage caused to national infrastructure due to the Iranian aggression and

to alleviate its impact on affected groups and societies, he pointed out.

He condemned, in the strongest terms, the attacks launched by Iran and its proxies against GCC member states and Jordan.

The last of these drone attacks targeted the offshore drilling platforms belonging to the Kuwait Oil Company in Kuwaiti territorial waters, resulting in material damage and injuries to one of the workers, he stated.

Al-Enezi reiterated Kuwait’s right to its full sovereignty and all measures required to safeguard its national security, in line with international law and the UN Charter.

Kuwait continues enhancing its water security through developing the system of water production and desalination, and water treatment facilities, he affirmed.

Kuwait also goes on boosting its digital infrastructure and developing e-government services in a manner that backs innovation, service efficiency and business environment, he said.

He shed light on the 17th Goal, which focuses on partnerships, as a cornerstone for accelerating the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Al-Enezi indicated that the infrastructure and housing projects carried out by Kuwait demonstrate the importance of unifying the efforts of the government, the private sector, and international partners to bridge financing gaps, transfer technology, build capacities, and reform the international financial system.



Al-Awazem Charitable Foundation Chairman Hamad Zaid Saud Al-Bseis receives the 2026 Arab Award for Responsible Media during the Third Arab Forum for Socially Responsible Media in Bahrain.

Kuwait philanthropy milestone

Al-Awazem Foundation chairman wins responsible media, scientific excellence

KUWAIT CITY, July 18: Kuwait achieved a new milestone in philanthropy and social responsibility through the Chairman of the Board of Directors of Al-Awazem Charitable Foundation, Counselor Hamad Zaid Saud Al-Bseis, who won the 2026 Arab Award for Responsible Media and 2026 Scientific Excellence Award.

These awards were presented during the Third Arab Forum for Socially Responsible Media, organized by the Regional Network for Social Responsibility in Bahrain, with the participation of distinguished Arab leaders, experts and media professionals.

The awards are considered a manifestation of the leading role of the foundation in utilizing responsible media to better serve the community, spread the culture of charitable work, and promote the principles of social responsibility and sustainability.

The activities of the foundation underscore the excellent standing of Kuwait in humanitarian work at the Arab and international levels.

The forum also featured a notable academic presentation by Al-Bseis, who delivered a paper titled, “The Experience of the Al-Awazem Charitable Foundation in the State of Kuwait in Utilizing Media to Build Community Awareness.”

In his presentation, Al-Bseis highlighted the foundation’s experience in developing a purposeful media discourse that promotes the culture of giving, strengthens community partnerships, and transforms media into an effective partner in achieving sustainable development.

Al-Bseis received the 2026 Arab Award for Responsible Media from Second Deputy Speaker of the Bahraini Parliament Ahmed bin Abdulwahid Qarata, in the presence of President of the Regional Network for Social Responsibility Dr. Yousef Abdulghaffar Al-Abbasi.



Al-Awazem Charitable Foundation Chairman Hamad Zaid Saud Al-Bseis receives the 2026 Scientific Excellence Award during the Third Arab Forum for Socially Responsible Media in Bahrain.

He also received the 2026 Scientific Excellence Award in recognition of his intellectual and professional contributions to the fields of responsible media and social responsibility.

He considers these awards a recognition of the Kuwaiti institutional model founded on governance, sustainability, and professional excellence. He also attributed the achievements of the foundation to the unwavering support of Kuwait for charitable work, and its commitment to solidify its position as a regional and international hub for humanitarian action.

He added that the foundation will continue expanding its media and development initiatives, while strengthening its presence at Arab and international forums in a manner that supports the humanitarian mission of Kuwait and reinforces the role of responsible media in fostering community awareness and sustainable development.

Authority sets 90-day deadline

PAHW urges women housing applicants to update records

KUWAIT CITY, July 18: The Public Authority for Housing Welfare (PAHW), represented by its Women’s Housing Affairs Committee, called on registered Kuwaiti women with pending applications for rented housing to update their information within 90 days, starting Sunday, July 19, 2026, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The update process will be available at the Citizen Service Department at PAHW headquarters during morning and evening hours, and during morning hours only at external centers including Liberation Tower, Jahra, Qurain, and The Avenues.

The Women’s Housing Affairs Committee stressed the importance of submitting the required documents, including:

- A copy of the civil ID card.
- A copy of the nationality certificate.
- A copy of the marriage certificate for married women, a divorce certificate for

divorced women, and a husband’s death certificate for widows.

■ School certificates for children for the last two academic years.

■ A certificate from the General Department of Ports for the years 2024, 2025, and 2026.

■ A certificate from the Real Estate Registration Department regarding property ownership for the applicant and her spouse.

■ A certificate from the Commercial Registry Department for the applicant.

■ A recent certificate from the Public Authority for Disabled Affairs, if any family member has a severe or moderate disability.

■ A salary certificate.

For housewives, a certificate from the Public Institution for Social Security (PIFSS) and a certificate from the Ministry of Social Affairs are required.

Admissions follow merit criteria

Abdullah Al-Salem University accepts Kuwaiti 1,146 students for 2026/2027

KUWAIT CITY, July 18: Acting Dean of Admissions and Registration at Abdullah Al-Salem University Dr. Ahmed Tariq Al-Mutawa announced that the university has completed the review of applications and the assignment of eligible Kuwaiti high school graduates to academic programs for the first semester of the 2026/2027 academic year, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Dr. Al-Mutawa stated that 1,146 students have been accepted into the university’s various colleges and academic programs.

He emphasized that the admissions process followed approved academic standards and criteria while remaining within the capacity limits of each college and program.

Dr. Al-Mutawa stressed that students can check their admission status and assigned programs through their email accounts or via the Sahel application.

He urged accepted students to regularly check their email, the university’s official website, and its official social media accounts for instructions and deadlines related to confirming admission and completing the registration process.

Dr. Al-Mutawa highlighted that the selec-

tion process for applicants was conducted according to unified standards based on the highest equivalent scores, while taking into consideration each applicant’s listed preferences and the number of available seats in each academic major.

He emphasized that meeting the minimum application requirements does not guarantee admission to the preferred specialization, as acceptance depends on competition among applicants and the capacity of academic programs.

Dr. Al-Mutawa explained that the equivalent score is calculated according to the criteria approved by each college or academic program, based on students’ high school grades and the results of the required academic tests. For the medical program, the equivalent score calculation includes, in addition to the high school percentage, the results of English and mathematics tests, as well as the results of the multi-station personal interview (MMI).

He urged accepted students to comply with all deadlines and instructions, stressing that failure to complete admission or registration procedures within the announced deadlines may result in the cancellation of their admission.

‘Build Your Future’ campaign draws 1,600 students

KUWAIT CITY, July 18: The first phase of the “Build Your Future” campaign received widespread turnout, with the General Secretariat of the Council of Private Universities’ booth at The Avenues Mall welcoming more than 1,600 students, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The campaign continues its awareness and guidance programs aimed at assisting students with registration for the internal scholarship program for the 2026/2027 academic year.

Secretary-General of the Council of Private Universities Dr. Jassim Al-Ali said the General Secretariat continues to receive students at its visitor center in Sanabel Tower to answer inquiries and provide the necessary information, ahead of the launch of registration for the internal

scholarship program from August 3 to 13, 2026.

He noted that the campaign reflects the General Secretariat’s commitment to supporting students in shaping their educational paths according to their aspirations and ambitions, while aligning with labor market needs and contributing to the development process through qualified national talent.

Dr. Al-Ali expressed his appreciation to the students and their parents for their attendance and engagement, as well as to the Civil Service Commission (CSC), strategic partner Bank Waya, and The Grand Avenues Mall for their cooperation in ensuring the success of the campaign’s first phase.

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One night stay in a Two Bedroom Chalet for 4 persons inclusive of Breakfast	BHD 119.173 / Net

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Kuwait drafts new law to protect children from online exploitation, digital addiction

Al-Huwailah unveils unified 83-initiative strategy to modernize social protection systems

By Fares Ghaleb
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, July 18: In light of the rapid transformations imposed by the digital era on the structure of modern societies, social media has become an integral part of the daily life of a child.

Minister of Social, Family and Childhood Affairs and Head of the Supreme Council for Family Affairs Dr. Amthal Al-Huwailah affirmed that these transformations have become a societal challenge that necessitates the development of social protection tools. She said this aims to balance the use of modern technologies and safeguarding the rights of children, while ensuring their psychological and social well-being.

Al-Huwailah told the newspaper that dealing with these challenges requires a comprehensive national approach based on early prevention, raising digital awareness within families, developing legislative frameworks, and integrating the roles of state institutions.

She pointed out that the Supreme Council for Family Affairs plays a vital role as the national umbrella organization in charge of laying down public strategies for families and children, as well as overseeing the coordination of related government efforts within the framework of the Government Program for Family Protection 2026-2029.

She affirmed that the program is a qualitative leap in managing family affairs, as it shifts efforts from random individual initiatives to an integrated institutional system

based on governance, coordinated roles, unified priorities and impact measurement.

She said the council is making public policies for the social protection system, enhancing psychological counseling services, developing legal, psychological and social consultations, and establishing the concept of community-based prevention through early intervention, media campaigns and institutional partnerships. She confirmed that protecting children in the digital environment is one of the top priorities of the council.

She disclosed that the council organized several lectures and workshops for families and students, most notably the lecture on “Digital Addiction in Schools,” which focused on the psychological, behavioral and educational effects of the excessive use of smart devices.

She added that the council, in coordination with the National Cyber-security Center, conducted awareness and media campaigns through its digital platforms, addressing several topics related to child protection in the digital space, such as building healthy digital habits for children.

She revealed that the efforts of the council extended to specialized awareness programs on the safe use of electronic devices and social media platforms, and raising awareness on the dangers of online exploitation and digital grooming of children.

She pointed out that Kuwait possesses an advanced



Dr. Al-Huwailah

legislative framework that serves as a solid foundation for protecting families and children, particularly Protection from Domestic Violence Law No. 11/2020 and Child Rights Law No. 21/2015.

She said the council has been coordinating with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the preparation of a legislative proposal regarding child protection in the digital environment. “This proposal draws on the best regional and international practices, particularly the pioneering experience of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, in addition to benefiting from the legislative experience of France, Spain and Finland,” she added.

She indicated that the proposal, entitled “Protecting the Psychological and Social Health of the Child in the Digital Environment,” includes adding a new chapter to Child Rights Law No. 21/2015. “The proposal addresses the legal protection for children in the digital environment and strengthens the legislative guarantees related to children’s rights to the safe use of technology,” she disclosed.

She added that the council prepared the regulatory framework for receiving reports on violence against children and the procedures for providing a shelter.

She said the growing global discussion on regulating children’s use of social media platforms and defining a minimum age for users reflects a shift in the philosophy of digital protection at the international level. She indicated that this is being studied within national frameworks, in accordance with the privacy regulation of the Kuwaiti society and in line with global best practices.

She also revealed that the Family Protection Program of the government comprises 83 initiatives implemented by 12 government entities within a unified institutional

framework covering social, legal, educational, health and security aspects.

She added that the program aims to enhance prevention of family disintegration, develop the family, psychological and social counseling system, improve rehabilitation services, and activate mechanisms for responding to domestic violence reports.

According to the minister, the program includes an integrated digital system that allows the provision of services, consultations, documentation and related procedures online, which contributes to accelerating access to services and improving the quality of performance.

She clarified that the program’s success is not measured solely by the number of initiatives implemented, but also by its ability to have an impact on family stability and enhance the quality of life.

She emphasized that developing policies related to family and child protection relies on scientific studies and national indicators that accurately monitor social and behavioral shifts, particularly those concerning the impact of the digital environment and social media on children and adolescents.

She added that the council puts importance on preparing specialized studies and research, and building national databases and indicators for future challenges and measuring social phenomena, thus, providing a scientific basis to support decision-makers.

She affirmed that the next phase will witness an expansion of national programs aimed at protecting children in the digital environment by strengthening institutional partnerships, intensifying awareness initiatives, and improving family, psychological and social counseling services.

Kuwait stands with Algeria over deadly orphanage fire

KUWAITCITY, July 18, (KUNA): The Kuwaiti Foreign Ministry on Thursday expressed sympathy with Algeria following a fire that broke out at an orphanage earlier in the day and claimed multiple casualties.

In a press release, the ministry

extended Kuwait’s sincere condolences and heartfelt sympathy to the government and people of Algeria, as well as to the families of the victims. The ministry also wished the injured a speedy recovery, according to the release.

MoSA steps up safety measures

KUWAIT CITY, July 18, (KUNA): The Minister of Social Affairs, Family and Childhood Affairs, Dr. Amthal Al-Huwailah, affirmed on Saturday that ensuring the safety of persons with disabilities is a top priority for the Ministry, which is working in close coordination with the Public Authority for Disability Affairs to monitor the status of all care homes around the clock, verify their readiness, and ensure the continued

provision of services with regular updates to emergency plans.

This came in a press statement following an inspection visit by Minister Al-Huwailah to the Center for the Care and Rehabilitation of the Disabled in Sabahiya, affiliated with the Public Authority for Persons with Disabilities Affairs, where she checked on the safety of inmates and staff and reviewed the center’s preparedness to deal with any emergency.



Kuwaiti diving team retrieves sunken boat in Marina Sharq.



Part of the salvage operation of a sunken boat.



Kuwaiti diving team salvages sunken boat in East Marina.

Kuwait Dive Team tows sunken boat from Marina Sharq

The Kuwait Dive Team, operating under the Environmental Voluntary Foundation, has salvaged a vessel off Marina Sharq coast, the team’s chief Walid Al-Fadhel said on Friday.

Al-Fadhel urged sea-goers to take precautions and spare them-

selves such accidents, noting that chemical waste left behind at sea is pollutant to marine environment, especially coral reef.

The Kuwaiti Diving Team has carried out such missions since 1986, salvaging 830 various vessels so far. (KUNA)

Continued from Page 1

The world

As I stated previously, the continuation of this situation will lead to a major global economic crisis that could lead to a catastrophic collapse, far worse than the hyperinflation of the 1920s, which paved the way for World War II.

The only solution for global stability is to encourage the Iranian opposition and all of its factions to overthrow the current regime. Otherwise, things will go from bad to worse, which will not lead to world peace.

Is the international community ready for this process or it will prolong the suffering even more? Do some major powers still believe that the time is not yet ripe for decisive action?

‘Date’ with

Meanwhile, the General Department for Ports Affairs, Customs Investigation and Search continues to develop the customs system to uncover and foil smuggling attempts.

Mol quashes

The Public Authority for Food and Nutrition (PAFN) issued 315 citations to food establishments in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh for committing serious violations which included the sale of expired and adulterated food products, as well as operating establishments without valid licenses, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

In a press statement issued Thursday, PAFN explained that it participated in a large-scale security campaign conducted on Wednesday in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh under the direct supervision of First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah. The campaign involved 11 government entities and aimed to enhance security and protect public health.

The violations also included failures to comply with personal and public hygiene requirements and the sale of food products without valid health certificates. Food items deemed unfit for consumption were immediately destroyed, and the violations were referred to the relevant authorities.

PAFN participated in the campaign through inspection teams from the General Directorate of Inspection and Control Affairs, led by

Farwaniya Inspection Department Director Talal Al-Daihani, with the participation of 102 inspectors.

Lifelines caught

He stressed that the Kuwait Armed Forces remain fully prepared and continue to perform their duties with the highest level of efficiency, working in coordination with relevant government agencies to protect the country’s sovereignty, security and stability.

Earlier Attacks

Colonel Al-Atwan had earlier announced that Kuwaiti air defenses intercepted ballistic missiles and hostile drones within national airspace at dawn Friday.

He said drones targeted several Kuwait Army facilities and camps, resulting in injuries to members of the Kuwait Land Forces who were on duty. The injured personnel received medical treatment and their conditions were reported as stable.

Defense Minister Sheikh Abdullah Al-Ali visited the injured soldiers and was briefed by medical teams on their conditions and the care being provided.

Chief of the General Staff Lieutenant General Khaled Al-Shuriaan and Deputy Chief of Staff Major General Sabah Al-Jaber also visited the wounded personnel.

Kuwait Condemns “Systematic” Attacks

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs strongly condemned the renewed Iranian attacks, particularly the targeting of another power and water desalination facility.

The ministry said the repeated strikes against vital infrastructure demonstrate a “systematic and aggressive approach” targeting civilian facilities and endangering lives.

It described the attacks as a blatant violation of international law, the United Nations Charter and Security Council Resolution No. 2817.

Kuwait held Iran fully responsible for the aggression and its consequences, demanding an immediate halt to the attacks.

The ministry reaffirmed Kuwait’s right to take all necessary measures to protect its security, territory and vital facilities in accordance with Article 51 of the UN Charter and international law.

It warned that the continued aggression represents a dangerous escalation threatening regional security and undermining efforts toward peaceful solutions.

Oil Facilities Hit, Firefighting Operations Launched

The Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) confirmed that one of its vital oil facilities was repeatedly targeted Saturday morning, causing major material losses and injuries.

KPC said the injured received medical treatment and the affected site was evacuated, adding that it was coordinating with all relevant authorities to address the aftermath of the attack.

The Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) said several firefighters and one civilian employee were injured while battling fires caused by the attacks.

KFF teams responded to two separate fire incidents in South Kuwait, with five firefighting teams, supported by oil sector firefighting units, handling the first operation, while three teams responded to the second.

KFF spokesman Brigadier General Mohammad Al-Gharib said the fires were brought under control after coordinated efforts involving the Kuwait Armed Forces and Kuwait National Guard firefighting teams.

Power, Water Teams Begin Restoration Work

Minister of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy Dr. Subaih Al-Mukhaizeem inspected affected electricity and water desalination facilities Saturday, reviewing damage assessments and ongoing repair efforts.

The minister was briefed on emergency operations carried out in coordination with the Kuwait Fire Force and security agencies, including a six-hour firefighting operation.

He praised the efforts of firefighters, engineers and technical teams, stressing that repair work would continue until affected units return to service under the highest safety standards.

The ministry said it is operating at full capacity and utilizing all available technical resources to maintain electricity and water supplies and reduce the impact of the attacks.

Health System on Alert

Minister of Health Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi chaired an emergency meeting at the Ministry’s Crisis Center to assess the readiness of Kuwait’s healthcare system.

The meeting reviewed preparedness reports covering hospitals, primary healthcare centers, emergency departments, ambulance services, intensive care units, medical warehouses and strategic reserves of medicines and supplies.

Al-Awadhi emphasized the importance of continuous monitoring, proactive preparedness and coordi-

nation among all ministry sectors to ensure rapid response.

Kuwait Airways Reschedules Flights

Kuwait Airways announced the rescheduling of most flights following the temporary suspension of operations at Kuwait International Airport due to the attacks.

The airline urged passengers to check their flight status and said updates would be sent through text messages.

Passengers requiring assistance may contact customer service at 171 from Kuwait or +965 2434 5555 ext. 171 from abroad, or reach the airline via WhatsApp at +965 180 2050.

The airline reaffirmed its commitment to passenger safety.

Philippine Embassy Issues Advisory

The Philippine Embassy in Kuwait urged Filipino nationals to remain vigilant and maintain situational awareness amid ongoing developments.

The Embassy advised Filipinos to follow instructions from Kuwaiti authorities, monitor official news sources and verified social media accounts, and avoid relying on unconfirmed reports.

It recommended minimizing non-essential travel and outdoor activities, keeping communication devices charged, and avoiding the spread of fake news and speculation.

The Embassy said it continues to closely monitor developments and will issue further advisories when necessary.

Filipinos needing assistance may contact:

- * +965 9403 9063
- * +965 6040 3858
- * +965 6558 5355

For emergencies, they may call Kuwait’s emergency number 112.

Regional Condemnation

The United Arab Emirates strongly condemned the renewed Iranian attacks targeting Kuwait, Bahrain and Jordan, describing them as violations of sovereignty and threats to regional security.

The UAE Ministry of Foreign Affairs expressed full solidarity with the affected countries and support for measures aimed at protecting their security and stability.

GCC Secretary General Jassem Al-Budaiwi also condemned Iran’s continued attacks, describing them as violations of international law and the UN Charter.

He affirmed the GCC’s support for all measures taken by affected countries to safeguard their sovereignty and protect citizens and residents.

The Arab League likewise condemned the attacks targeting Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, Jordan and Iraq’s Kurdistan region, calling them unacceptable violations of sovereignty and international law.

Secretary General Nabil Fahmy expressed solidarity with the affected states and urged Iran to immediately stop actions that fuel instability and threaten regional security.

Tehran freezes deal

In latest development, the United States and Iran exchanged strikes aimed at infrastructure and military targets on Saturday as an Iranian negotiator said Tehran had suspended its commitments under the interim deal with the U.S. - snapping another fragile thread as the war shows no end in sight.

The battle over the Strait of Hormuz intensified in a conflict increasingly focused on control of the essential waterway that previously carried a fifth of the world’s crude oil. The widening strikes threatened civilians and services to them, including desalination plants for drinking water, while the global economy again was on alert.

The U.S. Central Command said early Saturday that its seventh straight night of strikes hit “surveillance sites, military logistics infrastructure, underground weapons storage, and maritime capabilities.”

The U.S. has violated its commitments under the deal that was signed about a month ago and now Iran is “no longer implementing them,” Kazem Gharibabadi, Iran’s deputy foreign minister, told state TV.

There was no new word on mediation efforts.

The most significant damage from Iranian strikes on Saturday occurred in Kuwait, where a water desalination plant and an oil facility were hit, according to the Kuwaiti authorities and the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation. Both declined to provide locations.

Meanwhile, Iraq said it shot down attack drones over the city of Irbil. Jordan’s state-run Petra news agency said the kingdom’s air defense systems had downed Iranian missiles, while air sirens sounded multiple times in Bahrain throughout the day and in Saudi Arabia in the morning, according to their governments.

U.S. airstrikes hit an electricity and desalination plant in Iran’s southern Hormozgan province, Iranian state TV reported. IRNA said the Bonji desalination plant was destroyed, cutting off water supplies to about 10,000 people, and that a desalination plant on strategic Qeshm

Island inside the strait was damaged.

Overnight strikes damaged two tunnels and a bridge, disrupting one of the main highways toward Bandar Abbas, Iran’s main port that sits near the narrowest part of the strait, according to Iran’s state-run news agency. IRNA said three bridges were hit Saturday, including one on a route to Bandar Abbas.

Iran acknowledged “attacks on power infrastructure” during the U.S. airstrikes for the first time Friday when its Energy Ministry issued a call for people to use less power in southern provinces “experiencing extreme heat.” It did not specify what was hit.

The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps stepped up its warning that countries hosting U.S. forces should be “prepared to receive a corresponding response,” according to Iran’s state TV.

Iranian authorities said at least 50 people have been killed and more than 500 wounded in U.S. strikes in the past three weeks, including eight killed in a strike on a bridge Friday.

U.S. officials acknowledged 13 additional U.S. service members - 10 Army soldiers and three Navy sailors - had been injured since Monday, but offered no details. Since the war began, 14 U.S. service members have been killed and 427 wounded.

Iran effectively closed the strait to shipping traffic after the war started with U.S. and Israeli strikes on Feb. 28. That sent the price of oil soaring and has given Tehran significant leverage in negotiations.

Iran has said the strait must be under its sole control and that vessels should pay fees to Tehran, even though the world for decades has considered it an international waterway. It fired on ships on recent days. Crossings through the strait fell to a three-week low, according to an international shipping tracker.

Trump has resumed threats to target power stations and bridges to try to compel Iran to loosen its hold. The U.S. in the past week reimposed a naval blockade on Iranian ports to halt its shipments of crude oil.

A growing amount of the region’s energy is being shipped through pipelines, but not nearly enough to offset the decline in shipping.

Before the war began, the U.S. had been in talks with Iran over its nuclear program. Trump now faces political pressure to end the war and avoid the kind of prolonged Middle East conflict he had campaigned against.

Washington announces visa restrictions on far-left groups

Trump administration caps how long international students can stay in US

WASHINGTON, July 18, (Agencies): The Trump administration has finalized a rule that will prevent international students from staying in the US for more than four years unless they obtain the federal government’s approval, the Department of Homeland Security said, announcing a departure from long-standing practice.

The rule, which goes into effect in September, also puts in place restrictions on when and how students may change their major or academic program.

Current rules give students significantly more flexibility. They are generally admitted to the US for as long as it takes to complete the academic program, many of which are longer than four years by design.

Higher education leaders have opposed the rule, arguing the change creates an administrative burden for schools, universities and the federal government. “This action is unnecessary and duplicative,” said Zuzana Wootson, deputy director of federal policy at the Presidents’ Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration, a nonprofit organization. “International students are already among the most closely monitored nonimmigrant populations in the U.S. and are subject to rigorous oversight by DHS and academic institutions.”

In a statement, DHS Secretary Markwayne Mullin described the rule as cracking down on a loophole that international students were exploiting by extending their studies.

“By implementing clear, finite limits on these visas, the United States is reclaiming its ability to properly screen, vet, and monitor individuals within our borders,” Mullin said. “This final rule ensures that foreign students remain focused on their primary purpose: completing their studies and returning home.”

The rule is the latest in a series of Trump administration crackdowns on international students. Last spring, widespread terminations of students’ legal status sent students scrambling to hide or leave the country out of fear they would be detained for being in the U.S. illegally.

The federal government also imposed a requirement for visa applicants to share their social media handles, subjecting them to increased scrutiny. And travel bans affecting more than a dozen countries across Africa, the Middle



US President Donald Trump speaks in the East Room of the White House on July 16, in Washington. (AP)

East and Asia further limited international students’ ability to obtain a visa and enter the US for school.

The rule comes as international student enrollment is declining. The effects are most acutely felt at schools with small endowments and student bodies that enroll a large percentage of international students, who have been recruited from abroad. International students are not eligible for federal financial aid and, as a result, often pay full-price tuition.

Higher education leaders have warned the growing uncertainty could further drive international students elsewhere, with ripple effects throughout the

workforce and the economy.

“At a time when global competition for talent is intensifying, this policy sends exactly the wrong message,” Fanta Aw, CEO of NAFSA, an association that represents international education, said in a statement. “It tells the world’s brightest students and scholars that the United States is becoming less welcoming, less predictable, and less committed.”

Also:

WASHINGTON: Far-left terrorist and aligned groups often use sophisticated, organized networks to perpetrate violence as a political tool - seeking to implement an extreme political vision through intimidation and coordinated campaigns of terror, **US Secretary of State Marco Rubio** said in a statement.

It is a strategy that explicitly aims to undermine the political foundations of free and self-governing societies, utilizing bombings, assassinations, and other forms of terrorism to silence speech, limit political opposition, change policy outcomes, and sabotage political processes, he added.

“Today, in support of National Security Presidential Memorandum-7 and ongoing US Government efforts to disrupt networks fomenting political violence before they escalate to criminal action, the Department of State is announcing a new visa restriction policy that targets members of Far-Left terrorist and other aligned groups who have supported or incited acts of terrorism; supported violent criminal activity; participated in economic sabotage; financed, recruited, or provided logistical support for violent or criminal actions committed by Far-Left Terrorist and other aligned groups; and/or facilitated the convergence of Far-Left Terrorist and other aligned networks for the purposes of violent action.”

This policy will safeguard the American homeland by restricting entry of foreign nationals who finance, recruit, incite, or otherwise enable terrorist, violent, and criminal Far-Left Terrorist networks - closing the visa pathways that Far-Left Terrorists and other aligned groups exploit to threaten American lives, undermine economic stability, and coordinate violent action on US soil, the statement concluded.

Senate nominee scramble to woo voters

Maine Democrats running to replace Platner

WASHINGTON, July 18, (AP): The tight timeline to replace former Maine Senate nominee Graham Platner has left Democratic hopefuls scrambling to woo his progressive base while trying to turn the focus from the disgraced oysterman to defeating Republican Sen. Susan Collins in November.

It’s a delicate balance for the candidates, who are vying to face Collins in a contest that could decide control of the Senate as Platner’s shadow hangs over the race. In their first debate Thursday night, one of the first questions candidates were asked was: What was Graham Platner’s best idea?

Moving past Platner is just one of the challenges facing Democrats. The never-before-used process to pick a new nominee means candidates have less than three weeks to pull off what typically takes campaigns months or years, from organizing volunteers to raising money and preparing for debates.

The whiplash many of the candidates are facing was on display Thursday.

Asked by debate moderators about President Donald Trump’s decision to capture Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro and his wife earlier



Graham Platner, Democratic candidate for US Senate, and Sen Bernie Sanders, I-Vt, (left), join hands at an event in Orono, Maine on May 24. (AP)

this year, Secretary of State Shenna Bellows gave inaccurate information about Collins not pushing back against Trump, a Republican. When a moderator called her on it, Bellows said she was on vacation on the Kennebec River last week after previously focusing on her unsuccessful gubernatorial campaign and hadn’t expected to be running for the Sen-

ate.

“When I need to know the facts, I will. I’ll do my homework,” said Bellows, who lost to Collins in 2014.

The field of 12 candidates also includes former public health leader Nirav Shah and union-backed logger Troy Jackson, who campaigned alongside Platner in a failed bid for governor.

Burnham declared leader of UK’s Labour Party, vows to restore hope

LONDON, July 18, (AP): Andy Burnham was officially declared leader of Britain’s governing Labour Party on Friday, promising to bring hope to the British people and purpose to the floundering government as he cleared his final hurdle to take office as prime minister next week.

The former mayor of Greater Manchester was the only contender in the center-left party’s leadership contest to replace departing Prime Minister Keir Starmer, who was forced out by a rebellion within his party. Friday’s announcement was a foregone conclusion after Burnham secured nominations from 379 of the 403 Labour lawmakers in the House of Commons.

Burnham pledged to serve “people and places who have been waiting too long for politics to let them hope again.”

“We’re going to give them hope back,” he told an audience of lawmakers, party activists and trade



Andy Burnham, the newly declared leader of Britain's governing Labour Party, leaves after a Labour Party leadership special conference in London on July 17. (AP)

union leaders in his first speech as leader. “I am ready.”

“I have a plan,” he added, in a bid to reassure a party that has seen its popularity nosedive since winning a landslide election victory two years ago. He pledged to end Labour’s factional disputes, saying “we won’t beat Britain’s new right if we are consumed by infighting and pulling in different directions.”

Burnham has been prime minister-in-waiting for weeks, since winning a special election for a seat in Parliament a month ago, but he has revealed little detail about his policy priorities. He will arrive in Number 10 Downing Street largely unknown to voters outside Manchester.

He sketched out some priorities in Friday’s speech, promising to deliver “hope in every heart” and “good growth in every post code,” in part by transferring power from central government in London to local leaders in cities and regions.

8 killed, more than 60 wounded in Ukraine drone attack on Russia regions

KYIV, July 18, (AP): Eight people were killed and more than 60 others were wounded in Russia by overnight Ukrainian drone attacks, Russian officials said Saturday.

Kyiv’s forces are continuing their relentless aerial campaign against energy infrastructure and military targets inside Russia, aiming to undermine Moscow’s war effort and make Russians feel the consequences of the Kremlin’s all-out invasion of Ukraine that is well into its fifth year.

Two sprawling warehouses of Russia’s major online retailer, Wildberries, were hit by Ukrainian drones overnight, according to Russian officials: one in the town of Kotovsk in the Tambov region, some 360 kilometers (roughly 220 miles) from the border with Ukraine, and another one in the city of Elektrostal, about 50 kilometers (some 30 miles) east of Moscow.

Both caught fire, but Wildberries founder Tatyana Kim said later on Saturday morning that the fire in Kotovsk has been put out. Images and footage released by Russian online outlets showed a fire raging at



This photo, released by Moscow Region Governor Andrei Vorobyev’s official telegram channel, shows a building damaged during a Ukrainian drone attack in Elektrostal, Moscow region of Russia, on July 18. (AP)

the Elektrostal facility, with massive plumes of smoke towering over it.

A Ukrainian drone also hit an oil depot in the city of Noginsk, just north of Elektrostal, sparking a

fire and prompting evacuations of a nearby maternity hospital and a residential building, according to the governor of the Moscow region, Andrei Vorobyov.

America

Civil right activist Ester dies: Clara Ester, an activist who as a 20-year-old college student rushed to the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.’s side when he was shot, has died.

Ester, who died on July 9 at the age of 78, was among a few remaining witnesses to King’s assassination and its immediate aftermath in Memphis. With the passing of the Rev. Jesse Jackson Sr. in February and Ester this month, King aide and former U.N. ambassador Andrew Young is believed to be the last surviving eyewitness to the shooting.

Ester Grew up in Memphis attending Centenary United Methodist Church, where her pastor was civil rights leader the Rev. James Lawson.

“We used to joke about colored water being Kool-Aid and the white water just being water, and so that satisfied us as children,” Ester told The Associated Press in 2018, around the 50th anniversary of King’s death. “But until you see the racism, until you see what has been withheld from you because of your color - is what started to really truly anger me. And I knew if there was a movement that could help change any of that, I had to be in it.”

Civil rights issues were often discussed from the pulpit of her church, Ester said. Lawson was very involved in the sanitation workers’ strike, so it was natural for her to become involved too. (AP)

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Nancy Pelosi’s husband charged: Paul Pelosi, husband of former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, was charged Friday with a misdemeanor hit-and-run over a collision with a parked car.

Pelosi, 86, was driving his brown convertible July



Ester

3 in Yountville, California, a town in the heart of wine country, when he struck a legally parked car on the side of the road, the Napa County Sheriff’s Office said in a statement at the time. He briefly stopped and then allegedly drove away. The parked car was unoccupied and no injuries were reported.

Pelosi did not have any alcohol in his system, according to the statement.

State law requires drivers involved in accidents resulting in property damage to stop and provide their vehicle and license information; Pelosi was charged with a misdemeanor violation of that law. In addition, Pelosi was charged with an infraction of making an unlawful turn, Napa County prosecutors said Friday.

No attorney for Paul Pelosi was listed in court records. Nancy Pelosi’s press office did not immediately respond to a call seeking comment. (AP)

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Wildfire smoke pushes farther into US: Millions of people in the Great Lakes, Northeast and Mid-Atlantic states muddled through another day of unhealthy air from uncontrolled wildfires on Friday.

The thick smoke enveloped the nation’s capital in a gloomy, eerie haze and prompted Major League Baseball’s Cleveland Guardians to postpone their game against Pittsburgh Pirates in Ohio.

Warnings of dangerous conditions were expected to remain in effect through Saturday across a wide swath of the U.S., though there’s potential for temporary improvement with storms forecast in some affected areas during the weekend.

D.C. resident Stewart Verdery awoke Friday to take in his usual sunrise view of the city’s famous landmarks from a rooftop, only to be greeted by a darkened horizon and no monuments in sight.

“It’s pretty crazy to wake up at sunrise and not see the sun when it’s not even raining,” he said by phone after posting a video of the surreal scene on X. “And it smells like somebody’s having the world’s largest cookout.” (AP)



Smoke rises over terraced houses on fire in the Krokstadelta village in Drammen, Norway on July 17. (AP)

Massive fire destroys more than 100 homes in Norway

The largest residential fire in modern Norwegian history destroyed more than 100 homes and forced hundreds of people to evacuate, authorities said Saturday.

The fire in southern Norway started in a townhouse in the city of Drammen around 3:30 p.m. Friday, police said. It then spread through

the area and into nearby forests. Firefighters on Saturday morning continued their efforts to bring the blaze under control.

The Norwegian Directorate for Civil Protection said Saturday that it was the largest fire of its kind in modern times.

NRK, Norway’s public broadcast-

er, said hundreds of people went to an evacuation center.

No residents have been reported missing, police said. It was not immediately clear what caused the fire.

Drammen is roughly 34 kilometers (21 miles) southwest of Oslo. (AP)

Europe seeks greater security independence

Germany, France initiate N-cooperation

COLOGNE, Germany, July 18, (AP): The leaders of Germany and France announced on Friday that the German military would participate in a nuclear exercise under a French initiative to deepen European nuclear cooperation.

The move by both countries to deepen nuclear cooperation underscores growing European defense self-reliance amid concerns about the future of US security commitments to the continent.

“We will have German conventional forces participate in a nuclear exercise conducted by the French armed forces before the end of this year,” Chancellor Friedrich Merz announced after talks with French President Emmanuel Macron at Norvenich air base near Cologne in western Germany.

He said that the cooperation with France “complements” the NATO nuclear sharing agreement, to which Germany remains committed. US nuclear bombs are stationed in Ger-



German Chancellor Friedrich Merz and French President Emmanuel Macron shake hands after a press conference following a meeting of the Franco-German Ministerial Council in Brühl, Germany on July 17. (AP)

many as part of NATO’s nuclear deterrent, and German fighter jets have been certified to potentially carry the weapons in case of an emergency.

Previous German leaders have refused offers of nuclear cooperation with France, Merz said, but “the world we live in today requires new answers.”

Germany’s participation in the nuclear exercise will be with conventional means for now, Merz said.

“We are proceeding step by step, it may be that this will result in a new doctrine, but it is far too early to say that today,” he said.

Advanced deterrence is very important for European collective security, Macron said, “because it creates strategic doubt among our adversaries.”

The French president said that Germany would have a “vanguard role” in deterrence efforts and that “diluting the presence of the nuclear deterrent” is what confuses enemies.



Rescuers use a heavy duty machine to clear the rubble to search for trapped victims at the scene of a landslide in Pengshui County in southwestern China's Chongqing on July 18. (AP)

China landslide kills 8 as rescuers race to find survivors in rain

Rescue crews on Saturday raced to find survivors from a landslide in the southwestern Chinese city of Chongqing that killed at least eight people and left 34 missing. The landslide occurred in Pengshui County on Friday morning on the outskirts of

Chongqing municipality, when massive amounts of rocks and soil washed down a slope, burying more than 10 residential buildings, state broadcaster CCTV said. Ten people were rescued and sent to the hospital, while more than 1,100 people have been relocated.

Associated Press photos and videos showed that one of the fallen rocks appeared larger than a multistory building, with ruins scattered across the steep terrain. One of the damaged buildings had its top part crushed and a car was seen half-buried near another building. (AP)

Asia

Suspects held in US marine biologist killing: Three suspects have been arrested in connection with the killing of a distinguished American marine biologist at his home in the central Philippines, police said.

Three men broke into the house of **Kent Carpenter**, 73, in the coastal town of Sibulan in Negros Oriental province during a suspected robbery on Sunday. One of them is alleged to have shot the scientist in the head with a handgun as he sat on a sofa, police officials said. Another suspect forced Carpenter's Filipino companion into a room and raped her.

The suspects took a laptop, an unspecified amount of cash and a backpack before fleeing, national police spokesperson Col. Allen Rae Co said. The third man is being hunted, Co told a news conference, adding that investigators were trying to determine why the suspects shot Carpenter.

A fourth suspect, who acted as a lookout outside the property, was arrested after surrendering to police and allegedly provided crucial details of the crime.

One of those arrested had previously been hired by Carpenter to do some carpentry work in his house, Co said, adding that the arrested suspects include the alleged gunman.

"All indicators as of now point to the fact that the attack was not connected to (the American's) work," Co told reporters. "It was really a planned robbery. So, we are still verifying why they killed the American marine biologist."

Several U.S. and Philippine environment and biodiversity centers and universities have expressed shock over Carpenter's violent death.



Carpenter

Carpenter had testified for the Philippine government when it took China to international arbitration over longstanding disputes in the South China Sea. (AP)

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Vietnam's torrential rains kill 4: Torrential rains triggered flash floods and landslides in northern Vietnam's Lai Chau province, leaving four people dead, seven others injured and four others missing, the Vietnam News Agency reported Saturday.

The disaster destroyed 13 houses in the locality, while nearly 100 other homes remain at risk of landslides, the report said.

The heavy rains also caused damage to housing, crops, transport infrastructure and power facilities, with total economic losses estimated at more than 120 billion Vietnamese dong (about 4.75 million U.S. dollars), the report added.

Local authorities have deployed rescue teams to search for the missing and assist with recovery efforts. (Xinhua)

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5 dead in Indonesia toll road crash: At least five people were killed and four others seriously injured after a sport utility vehicle crashed into a parked truck on a toll road in Indonesia's East Java province late Wednesday, local police said Thursday.

Police told local media that a Honda CR-V was traveling from Malang to Surabaya when it reportedly veered onto the hard shoulder after the driver lost concentration, struck a guardrail and then crashed into the rear of a stationary truck.

Four occupants of the vehicle died at the scene, while another later died in hospital. The four injured passengers were taken to nearby hospitals for treatment.

The truck driver was unharmed. Police are investigating the cause of the accident. Driver fatigue and loss of concentration are among the suspected factors. (Xinhua)

Law should be reviewed: Prime Minister Anutin

Deadly Bangkok bar fire exposes Thailand's safety loopholes for nightlife venues

BANGKOK, July 18, (AP): Debates have stirred over Thailand's safety regulations and the legal loopholes that allow some venues to avoid stricter standards since a deadly fire at a Bangkok music bar killed more than 30 people and injured over 70 earlier this week.

The capital of Thailand is renowned for its vibrant nightlife, with bars and clubs spread across the city. However, gaps in the country's licensing system have left many venues operating under regulations that may not match their activities.

The fire that broke out Sunday night killed at least 33 people and injured dozens, with 27 people still hospitalized on Thursday, Erawan emergency services said. Most of the victims died from smoke inhalation, while a few died from burn injuries, officials said.

The bar claimed on social media to have space to accommodate around 600 people, but it is unclear how many were there Sunday night.

What set off the flash blaze at the Rong Beer Na Ladprao bar in northern Bangkok and why it caused so many casualties is under investigation.

Amorn Pimanmas, president of the Thailand Structural Engineers Association, cited possible causes including overcrowding, combustible materials inside and obstructed exits, an analysis that has been echoed by fire safety and engineering experts.

The tragedy could have been prevented "if proper engineering principles and all relevant laws and regulations had been strictly followed," Amorn said.

The primary law regulating nightlife venues in Thailand, the Entertainment Place Act, was enacted in 1966. The statute was updated in 2012, three years after 67 people were killed and more than 200 injured in a fire during a Jan. 1, 2009, New Year's Eve celebration at the Santika nightclub.

The revised standards include fire-resistant or non-flammable materials for interior decoration and acoustic soundproofing. They also must have smoke ventilation systems, sprinklers and fire escape routes sized appropriately for the number of patrons.

However, those requirements apply only to entertainment venues that are



An official with the Thai Forensic Police examines the back exit of the Rong Beer Na Ladprao bar in Bangkok, Thailand on July 14. (AP)

licensed and operate within designated zones, including three zones in Bangkok. Opposition lawmaker Paramait Vithayaraksun of the People's Party called the law "outdated and unrealistic."

Paramait told Parliament on Monday that although there are clubs and bars across Bangkok, by law the venues outside the three designated zones cannot obtain proper licensing, even if operators are willing to meet the safety standards.

Instead, many operate by registering as restaurants licensed to sell alcohol and host live music, which have less stringent safety regulations, he said.

The Na Ladprao bar where Sunday's fire occurred is located outside Bangkok's entertainment zones and was registered as a restaurant with live music, officials said.

The restricted zoning law for entertainment venues is in effect in 55 provinces throughout Thailand, while 22 other provinces do not provide entertainment venue licenses, according to the Department of Provincial Administration.

The measures as they are written have enabled businesses to circumvent the law, allowing nightlife venues to "evade strict safety standards and face much lighter legal penalties," Paramait said.

Restaurants do not have to meet the same requirements, especially for soundproofing materials, and operators can install cheaper soundproofing foam for live music performances, he said.

Thailand's conservative, Buddhist values also have shaped policymaking decisions, with tight controls reflecting concerns over social impact from nightlife businesses. The venues cannot be within 2 kilometers (1.2 miles) of a temple or school.

Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul acknowledged the shortcomings this week and said the law should be reviewed.

"Times have changed. I've asked officials to study how we should adjust the rules," he said. "We need to look at it from every angle - what society is like today, as well as our culture, customs and traditions."

Wasawat Kitsiriteeraphak, former president of the Building Inspectors Association, said inspections should focus on how structures are actually used rather than solely on their licensed classification.

"The risks to lives and assets of the people depends on the actual use of the building rather than how the business is called," he said in a statement, urging relevant authorities to conduct a sweeping review of similar establishments in Thailand based on their operations to prevent future tragedies.

'Bangladesh ex-PM to be arrested on return'

DHAKA, July 18, (Xinhua): Bangladesh's Home Minister Salahuddin Ahmed said ex-Prime Minister **Sheikh Hasina** would be arrested on her return as she had already been convicted by a court.



Hasina

On her possible return, the minister told journalists in Dhaka that any opportunity to surrender or appeal would be determined by the courts.

He said the government wanted her extradited from India under the bilateral treaty and had sent reminders after the interim government first sought her extradition.

"We want her back, and we want her to face justice," said the minister.

Meanwhile, he said Hasina's Bangladesh Awami League party will also face trial.

Hasina resigned as prime minister amid nationwide political chaos and fled to India on Aug. 5, 2024.

Bangladesh's previous interim government had subsequently sent a diplomatic note to New Delhi requesting the return of the country's former prime minister.

A special tribunal in Bangladesh, in November 2025, sentenced Hasina in absentia to death for crimes against humanity during the country's July uprising in 2024.

Lat/Am

14 killed in Peru minibus crash: At least 14 people were killed and several others injured Thursday after a passenger minibus plunged into a deep ravine in northern Peru's Cajamarca department, local media reported.

The crash occurred on the road toward Chilte, near the Choten sector of San Juan district, when the vehicle, operated by the company La Veloz, veered off the road, said state broadcaster TV Peru.

Children were among those killed, private broadcaster Sol TV reported, citing Edson Roman, commander of the fire department in Banos del Inca.

Rescuers arrived shortly after the crash and began searching through the night to locate and recover victims, as the vehicle was trapped in the ravine. (Xinhua)

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Nicaragua cuts diplomatic ties with Italy: Nicaragua said Thursday it had severed diplomatic relations with Italy, saying the decision had been communicated to the Italian government and Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani.

In a statement, the Nicaraguan government said the move came in response to what it called "unjustified, aggressive and irresponsible statements" by Tajani. (Xinhua)



A bus lies on the side of the road on July 17, after it crashed Thursday night in the Kapchorwa District in eastern Uganda. (AP)

Uganda bus crash kills 21

An elementary school bus returning from an educational trip to a scenic waterfall in Uganda veered off the road and overturned, killing at least 20 children and one adult and leaving at least nine children in critical condition, police and a government official said Friday.

The bus crashed Thursday night in the Kapchorwa District in eastern Uganda on the way back from the region's Sipi Falls, the Uganda Police Force said in a statement posted on X.

Survivors, including three adults and several children, were taken to several hospitals, according to police. More than 28 children were being treated in hospitals, nine of them in critical condition, Ugandan Minister of Local Government Balam Barugahara Ateenyi said on X. (AP)

Pakistan troops kill 24 militants in raids: army

ISLAMABAD, July 18, (AP): Pakistani security forces raided multiple militant hideouts in the country's northwest region, killing Pakistani Taliban and seizing a cache of weapons, the military and local officials said.

The military said Friday it used intelligence sources to target militants in operations carried out over the previous day that killed 24 members of the outlawed Pakistani Taliban and Baloch separatist groups.

The military said in a statement that the raids came in response to a pair of militant attacks on Wednesday, including a suicide bomber who used a vehicle packed with explosives to ram police officers and civilians. A little-known militant group also targeted a police station and wounded several officers in Bannu, a district in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province bordering Afghanistan.

Pakistan's President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister **Shehbaz Sharif** praised the security forces on Friday for what they described as a swift and effective action against those responsible for recent attacks in Bannu.

The two men said in separate statements that eliminating terrorism remained the government's top priority and vowed to bring perpetrators to justice.



Sharif

Indian police forcibly hospitalize Cockroach Party activist on strike

NEW DELHI, July 18, (AP): Police forcibly transferred a prominent activist to a hospital in New Delhi on Saturday after his health deteriorated during a 20-day hunger strike tied to India's viral Cockroach Janta Party movement for education reform.

Authorities tightened security around New Delhi's Jantar Mantar, a designated public protest ground enclosed by police barricades, where activist Sonam Wangchuk has been camped along with students and Cockroach Party activists who demand the resignation of Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, after allegations that exam papers were leaked in advance.

The movement also seeks sweeping reforms to the examination system and compensation for families of students who died by suicide over the leaks or exam results.

The 59-year-old engineer and education reformer's strike has become a rallying point for the party, which 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.

Delhi Police said Wangchuk was taken to hospital after his health worsened during the hunger strike, and that a brief commotion occurred when some protesters tried to block the move.

Sachin Sharma, a deputy commis-



Abhijeet Dipke, founder of the Cockroach Janta Party, (third left), talks to supporters before starting his indefinite hunger strike during a protest demanding the resignation of Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan over alleged examination irregularities and repeated paper leaks in New Delhi, India on July 18. (AP)

sioner of police, said Wangchuk's hospitalization was carried out following medical advice and a court directive.

"Mr. Sonam Wangchuk has been taken from here to an appropriate government hospital, a much-needed medical intervention, under medical supervision," Sharma said.

The Cockroach Party said in a social media post that the government "forcefully abducted" Wangchuk "without his or his family's consent" two days before their planned march to India's Parliament.

Saurav Das, chief spokesperson of the Cockroach Party, disputed the police account, saying the court had not ordered Wangchuk's forcible

removal. He questioned the medical grounds for the move, noting that no doctor had examined him shortly before he was taken away, and alleged that authorities were trying to curb a protest movement that had been gaining momentum.

Shortly after the incident, Abhijeet Dipke, a Boston University student and founder of the Cockroach Party, announced he would begin a hunger strike and called for nationwide protests.

Dipke told The Associated Press at the protest ground that police used force while removing Wangchuk and alleged that he was "kidnapped by the police like criminals and goons" after "covering him in sheets."

7.3 magnitude quake hits Mexico-Guatemala border

APACHULA, México, July 18, (AP): A strong earthquake struck the southern Mexican Pacific coast on Friday, right on the border with Guatemala, and was felt from Mexico City to El Salvador. Authorities did not report any severe damage or casualties in any country. Two people were reported injured in southern Mexico.

The US Geological Survey (USGS) reported that the earthquake had a magnitude of 7.3 with the epicenter 48 kilometers (30 miles) southwest of Aquiles Serdan, near the coast of Chiapas and at a depth of 15 kilometers (9 miles). It was preceded by a smaller quake with an epicenter a bit farther out in the ocean.



Sheinbaum

There were at least 10 aftershocks between magnitude 4.9 and 6, according to USGS.

In Tapachula, the main city on Mexico's southern border, the tremor began mildly but gradually intensified.

"We were upstairs on the second floor when it started shaking; we thought it would pass, but then it got stronger, so we all went downstairs and evacuated in an orderly manner to the front courtyard," Alejandra Mendoza, an administrative employee at a public hospital in the city, explained to The Associated Press.

Mexican President **Claudia Sheinbaum** said that preliminary reports showed no damage. The navy recommended staying away from beaches for six hours because of tsunami risk.

The Meteorological Service of Chiapas alerted that there could be tsunami waves up to 1 meter (3.3 feet) off the coast of Mexico and Guatemala.

In recognition of its exceptional performance & active role in advancing sustainability & CSR initiatives

NBK underscores its leadership across diverse areas of banking with five prestigious Euromoney Awards

KUWAIT CITY, July 18: In a further testament to its market leadership and sustained excellence across local and regional markets, National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) has been honored with five prestigious awards from Euromoney, the globally renowned authority in banking and finance, as part of its Awards for Excellence 2026. The recognition reflects NBK’s exceptional performance across diverse areas of banking and its active role in supporting sustainability and corporate social responsibility initiatives.

NBK received the following awards:

- Kuwait’s Best Bank
- Middle East’s Best Bank for Corporate Responsibility
- Kuwait’s Best Retail Bank
- Kuwait’s Best Bank for Large Corporates
- Kuwait’s Best Bank for ESG

Euromoney’s Awards for Excellence are granted according to a rigorous data-driven methodology, under which participating institutions undergo a comprehensive assessment process based on the analysis of financial performance and achieved results, the level of innovation in products and services, and their impact on customers. The evaluation also compares institutions against their market peers using comparable indicators and criteria. The assessment process further includes in-depth research reviews, analysis of submitted data, and follow-up interviews with executive management to verify results and understand strategic direction.

Best Bank

Winning the Kuwait’s Best Bank award demonstrates NBK’s success in reinforcing a balanced business model that combines strong performance, operational resilience, and the ability to adapt to economic changes. The Bank continued to steadily execute its long-term strategy, leveraging the diversity of its businesses and accumulated expertise, enabling it to continue delivering sustainable value to its customers and shareholders while maintaining its leading position in the Kuwaiti banking sector. The Bank’s continued investments in technology and human capital have also strengthened its ability to keep pace with the rapid transformations shaping the financial sector. NBK continued to develop its services and products and expand its digital solutions, enhancing operational efficiency and improving the customer experience. This approach reaffirms the Bank’s commitment to innovation and to delivering advanced banking services that respond to customers’ evolving needs and meet future requirements.

This recognition also reflects NBK’s success in integrating sustainability principles across various aspects of its business through the expansion of sustainable finance, the development of institutional frameworks related to governance and risk management, and the reinforcement of responsible practices that support long-term growth. At the meantime time, the Bank continued to advance its vision of placing customers at the core of its strategy while balancing technological progress and sustainability, further strengthening its position as a leading financial institution that contributes to economic development and creates sustainable long-term value.

The Bank has also reinforced its position by adopting advanced practices in transparency, disclosure, and engagement with the investment community. NBK is committed to providing accurate and timely information and to developing effective communication channels with investors and analysts, helping to strengthen confidence and reinforce adherence to global best practices in governance and disclosure. This also underscores the Bank’s focus on building sustainable relationships with its various stakeholders.

An Integrated Corporate Social Responsibility Framework

Winning the Middle East’s Best Bank for Corporate Responsibility award reflects NBK’s success in developing a comprehensive corporate responsibility framework. The Bank has evolved beyond the implementation of traditional initiatives toward long-term investment in measurable community programs aligned with national development priorities.

This framework is built on aligning its programs with Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) principles, applying the highest standards of governance and transparency, and focusing on delivering tangible developmental and behavioral outcomes that extend beyond participation in activities alone. This approach further strengthens NBK’s position as a financial institution at the forefront of advancing the concept of corporate responsibility within the banking sector.

In evaluating this award, Euromoney considered a range of factors, including corporate responsibility strategy, governance framework, level of innovation,



NBK Headquarters



■ The accolades reinforce NBK’s standing as a financial institution distinguished by its ability to combine operational excellence with a strong commitment to corporate responsibility

■ This international recognition underscores the Bank’s continued commitment to advancing a business model anchored in sustainability and innovation. The diversity of the awards reflects NBK’s ability to deliver strong performance across a broad range of banking activities and business segments

progress in social investments, and the measurement of the tangible impact and economic value generated by these initiatives, as well as the Bank’s ability to further develop its institutional capabilities in this field.

At the core of this framework is a portfolio of flagship initiatives, led by Bankee, NBK’s financial literacy program for schools. The program has successfully reached more than 50,000 students across over 104 schools throughout Kuwait, with the active participation of more than 12,000 teachers, and an investment exceeding KD 1 million. This reflects the program’s extensive reach, meaningful impact, and role in empowering educators and enhancing their ability to deliver financial literacy concepts through modern and interactive learning approaches.

NBK’s broader community initiatives have further amplified this impact. The NBK Run attracted more than 7,000 participants from various age groups, reflecting an inclusive model that promotes the integration of all segments of society, including people with disabilities. More than 94% of participants indicated their intention to adopt a healthier lifestyle following the event. The Bank’s seasonal initiatives have also played an important role, including the “Doing

Good Deeds” campaign during Ramadan, which benefited more than 6,800 individuals and encompassed food distribution, road safety awareness, and food waste reduction initiatives, alongside efforts to promote cultural engagement and community interaction. Through these initiatives, NBK has demonstrated its ability to build an integrated corporate responsibility framework that generates sustainable economic and social value while contributing to the long-term development of the community.

Best Retail Bank

In retail banking, NBK launched several innovative products to meet customers’ evolving needs, offering exclusive experiences through strategic partnerships with leading global brands, such as The Bicester Collection luxury retail destinations, co-branded credit cards with Harrods, and a prepaid card in partnership with Alshaya Group.

The Bank also continued to invest in upgrading its digital banking services and expanding digital solutions that enable customers to conduct their transactions easily and efficiently. NBK continues to diversify and tailor its offerings to meet the needs of different customer segments by integrating banking products with value-added benefits and services that support everyday use and strengthen customer engagement with the services provided.

Kuwait’s Best Bank for Large Corporates

NBK further strengthened its longstanding position as a trusted financial partner for large corporates, supported by its ability to deliver added value to clients and provide innovative solutions that support their expansion and business sustainability. The Kuwait’s Best Bank for Large Corporates award reflects the Bank’s outstanding performance and its ability to provide integrated banking solutions that meet the evolving needs of large corporate clients.

Moreover, NBK stood out through the provision of innovative financing services and the development of advanced digital products that enhanced the client experience and contributed to attracting a broad segment of leading corporates. The Bank also played a pivotal role in financing major strategic projects in Kuwait, making an effective contribution to supporting economic growth and implementing national development plans. This distinction is underpinned by NBK’s extensive relationship network and deep expertise in transaction structuring and corporate finance.

Best Bank for ESG

The Kuwait’s Best Bank for ESG award reaffirms NBK’s commitment to adopting an integrated approach to sustainability that combines strong financial performance with corporate responsibility. The criteria for this category are based on assessing tangible initiatives undertaken by financial institutions in developing and delivering products and services that address environmental and social considerations, implementing effective governance policies, strengthening institutional capabilities in sustainability, advancing sustainable project financing, and reducing carbon footprint in line with international standards.

NBK distinguished itself through the integration of ESG principles into its business model, alongside the development of impactful initiatives in sustainable finance, reducing environmental impact, promoting diversity and inclusion, and upholding the highest standards of governance. These efforts are supported by an advanced level of disclosure and the provision of measurable data on performance and sustainability, enhancing investors’ ability to assess the resilience of the Bank’s business model and its future prospects.

Sustainability represents a key driver of the Bank’s strategic decisions, from capital allocation and risk management to business development and institutional resilience. This is guided by four core pillars: Governance for Resilience, Responsible Banking, Capitalizing on Our Capabilities, and Investing in Our Communities. NBK has translated this approach into tangible results by expanding sustainable finance, integrating ESG criteria into lending and investment activities, enhancing governance, and developing human capital. These efforts have been reflected in improved assessments by international rating agencies, further reinforcing the Bank’s position as a leading institution in sustainable finance.

The Euromoney Awards for Excellence span more than three decades and attract hundreds of financial institutions annually from over 125 countries, making them a trusted benchmark of leadership and excellence in the global banking industry.

For more details about the winners of the 2026 Euromoney Awards for Excellence, please visit the following website: [Awards for Excellence 2026 results - Euromoney](#)

Other Voices

Kuwait budget: Searching for the fiscal breakeven oil price

By Kamel Al-Harami
Independent Oil Analyst

TODAY, oil prices are at a strong level of around \$89 per barrel, the highest in many years, mainly due to the closure of the Strait of Hormuz and the ongoing war between the United States and Iran. It has led to closures of the Arabian Gulf and halted a significant portion of global oil supplies, affecting around 40 percent of global oil production, or approximately 23 million barrels per day.



Al-Harami

When including major non-OPEC producers such as Russia, global oil supply capacity rises to between 32 million and 34 million barrels per day. The recent surge in oil prices may prove temporary, driven primarily by the current war and disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz. Overall, global crude oil supply is relatively stable, with the United States continuing to hold the top position in oil production, producing between 13.5 million and 14 million barrels per day.

To break even or balance the current year’s budget, we need an oil price of around \$90.5 per barrel, which appears to be a very high and difficult to achieve. Currently, the global oil supplies are in surplus, as producers are constantly seeking new outlets for their production.

Kuwait still has several options to manage its annual budget deficits, including selling portions of its valuable global assets or utilizing international borrowing markets, which would likely welcome Kuwait given its sovereign wealth funds, which are now valued at more than \$1 trillion. This position is further sup-

ported by Kuwait’s significant crude oil reserves, estimated at more than 70 billion barrels. Our choices are numerous, but borrowing from international financial markets may be the simplest and easier option.

Another alternative is to monetize parts of our natural assets, similar to what Saudi Aramco has done. This would not affect Kuwait’s sovereignty or its ability to make independent decisions, as long as ownership structures and governance arrangements preserve national control and strategic independence.

Alternatively, Kuwait could consider selling parts of its natural oil assets, similar to what Saudi Aramco has done. This would not affect our sovereignty or influence our national decisions. We would still have the freedom to make our own sovereign decisions.

We are still far from balancing our budget, especially with the normal increase in the number of fresh graduates and population growth. This requires more infrastructure development and the creation of job opportunities, which further increases our budget requirements as we continue to support the new generation of Kuwait.

Of course, we can invest in improving our oil industry locally and internationally. However, this will still depend on oil revenues, which brings us back to the same challenge of finding alternative sources of income besides oil.

Non-oil sources of income must and should be the answer. Will this happen?

For the time being, we must focus on improving efficiency within our oil industry, strengthening its performance, and maximizing oil revenues in every field and sector.

By doing so, we may be able to improve our financial position and reduce some of our budget deficits.

email: naftikuwaiti@yahoo.com

Maximizing value across everyday spending

NBK elevates KWT Visa Infinite Cardholders’ experience with cashback rewards and exclusive summer benefits

KUWAIT CITY, July 18: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) continues to elevate the experience of NBK KWT Visa Infinite Credit Cardholders through exclusive benefits and valuable rewards that enable them to maximize value from their spending with a selection of leading partners and brands. This reflects the Bank’s commitment to delivering banking solutions that align with customers’ lifestyles and provide genuine added value.

During the summer season, whether customers are renovating their homes, purchasing home appliances and electronics, or preparing for travel and holidays, the card provides greater opportunities to benefit from exclusive offers and rewards that address their diverse needs and deliver tangible savings across various spending categories.

Home Renovations and Furnishing

As part of its commitment to offering benefits that directly address customers’ everyday needs, NBK enables NBK KWT Visa Infinite Credit Cardholders to benefit from 10% cashback at IKEA on eligible purchases, in addition to free delivery and installation services.

This benefit provides customers with the opportunity to achieve tangible savings when furnishing their homes or renovating their living spaces, further enhancing the value they receive when shopping at one of the leading destinations for furniture and home solutions.

Electronics and Home Appliances

The card also offers special benefits at Xcite Alghanim, enabling cardholders to benefit from 10% cashback on eligible purchases, in addition to an instant 2% discount on selected categories.

These benefits provide customers with added value when purchasing a wide range of electronics and home appliances, allowing them to access the latest available products while enjoying meaningful savings and rewarding benefits that enhance the value of their purchases.

Cashback Tailored to Customers’ Lifestyles

Cashback benefits are not limited to shopping, home furnishing, and purchases of home appliances and electronics, but also extend to restaurants, cooperative societies, phone bills, jewelry stores, health clubs, and fuel stations as part of the card’s dedicated benefits program. Customers can also benefit from cashback on their spending at a wide range of preferred dining destinations.

This benefit further enhances the value the card offers to its holders, making it a suitable choice for everyday use across various spend-



■ NBK KWT Visa Infinite Card benefits make it the ideal companion for everyday use

■ NBK’s strategic partnerships enable cardholders to benefit from exclusive offers and tangible savings

■ Exceptional offers at IKEA include 10% cashback, along with free delivery and installation services

■ 10% cashback on electronics and home appliances from X-cite, in addition to an instant 2% discount

■ Rewards and cashback tailored to customers’ lifestyles through the card’s dedicated benefits program

■ Up to 25% cashback on flight bookings with selected airlines

ing activities.

In addition to benefits linked to everyday spending, the NBK KWT Visa Infinite Credit Card enables cardholders to benefit from up to 25% cashback when booking airline tickets with a selected group of leading airlines.

Integrated Experience

NBK is committed to offering banking products that provide its customers with real value beyond the traditional concept of credit cards, delivering tangible benefits that align with their everyday needs and lifestyles. The NBK

KWT Visa Infinite Credit Card is at the forefront of these products, combining cashback, exclusive offers, and rewarding benefits within an integrated experience that makes it the ideal companion for everyday use.

The Bank continues to develop its strategic partnerships with leading brands to deliver exclusive benefits that provide genuine added value to customers. Through its partnerships with leading brands such as IKEA and Xcite Alghanim, NBK enables cardholders to benefit from exclusive offers and tangible savings when furnishing their homes or purchasing home appliances and electronics, further enhancing the value they receive from using the card and enabling them to maximize value from their spending.

NBK continuously works to develop its benefits and rewards programs in line with customers’ needs and evolving spending patterns. The Bank also continues to expand its network of partnerships and enhance its offers on an ongoing basis, ensuring the best possible experience for its customers. The NBK KWT Visa Infinite Credit Card is one of the Bank’s leading cards in terms of exclusive benefits and added value, offering the highest cashback in Kuwait of up to KD 1,000 every month.

NBK views this card as more than just a payment tool. It is a solution that provides customers with real rewards and tangible savings throughout the year, while offering an integrated experience built around quality, flexibility, and added value. This reflects NBK’s continued commitment to enhancing the customer experience and reinforcing its position as a trusted banking partner that keeps pace with customers’ evolving aspirations and needs.

NBK invited customers who do not currently hold the NBK KWT Visa Infinite Credit Card to apply for it easily through the NBK Mobile BankingApp. The application process can be completed digitally through simple steps, with no salary transfer required, enabling a wider segment of customers to benefit from the exclusive advantages and offers provided by the card. During the summer period, the Bank is offering an exclusive issuance fee of KD 25 for the NBK KWT Visa Infinite Card.

In line with its commitment to delivering added value, NBK continues to provide innovative banking solutions and advanced benefits programs that enhance the value customers receive from using their cards, further reinforcing its position as a trusted banking partner.

National Investments Company Recognized as Best Investment Bank in Kuwait for Equity Capital Markets 2026



Bashar Khan

In a new achievement that reflects its leadership and established position in the financial and investment sector, National Investments Company (NIC) has been recognized by Euromoney for the third consecutive time as Best Investment Bank in Kuwait for Equity Capital Markets in the Euromoney Awards for Excellence 2026. The recognition reflects the pivotal role played by the Company in providing advanced investment and financial services, as well as its effective contributions to developing Kuwait's capital market through the management of public offerings and the execution of investment transactions.

Euromoney's awards are based on a comprehensive study and evaluation of a range of quantitative and qualitative criteria, including innovation, service quality, institutional performance, expert views, reports and research. The awards are among the most prominent global awards in the financial sector, drawing on more than 50 years of experience.

Commenting on the recognition, Bashar Khan, Managing Director of the Alternatives and Investment Banking Division at NIC, said: "This recognition reflects the continued strength of NIC's Investment Banking platform and the depth of our Equity Capital Markets expertise. We remain committed to advising issuers through strategically structured offerings, disciplined price discovery and effective investor engagement, while upholding high execution

standards that contribute to successful market outcomes."

A Strong Track Record in Kuwait's Leading Public Offerings

NIC successfully executed several landmark transactions with a combined value exceeding several billion US dollars. Khan stated that the Company continued to strengthen its presence in Kuwait's most prominent Initial Public Offerings, playing a key role across the various stages of each transaction, from structuring and regulatory coordination to subscription management, allocation and listing.

Among the most notable transactions was the Initial Public Offering of Action Energy Company, which achieved subscription coverage of 5.0 times the offering size and generated the total demand of USD 900 million. The Company's performance during the period also reflected the strong momentum across its investment activities.

The transaction also received broad investor interest. These offerings witnessed strong participation from local and international institutional investors, including investors from the United Kingdom, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. This reflects the attractiveness of the Kuwaiti market and its ability to attract foreign capital when supported by clear governance, fair valuation and effective investor communication. Notably, Action Energy Company was listed on Boursa Kuwait on December 17, 2025, and its share price recorded a gain of approximately 13% over ten trading sessions by the end of 2025.

Khan further explained that NIC, through its various Equity Capital Markets transactions, has been committed to raising execution standards in the market by applying more professional pricing mechanisms and organizing in-depth introductory ses-

sions for investors. These practices contribute to enhancing transparency, improving the quality of engagement between issuing companies and investors and achieving more efficient subscription outcomes.

The Company is also distinguished by its strong ability to manage complex, multi-party processes involving regulators, legal advisors, auditors, issuers and market participants, ensuring that transactions are executed in line with regulatory frameworks and approved timelines.

Khan also noted that NIC continues to strengthen its presence in Equity Capital Markets through a diverse range of future transactions across key growth sectors, including retail, consumer, education and technology, in addition to advisory services related to capital increases in the transportation and real estate sectors.

Khan concluded by stating that this achievement also highlights the continued momentum of the Company's Investment Banking services, noting that the high-quality transactions executed by the Company have contributed to reinforcing its position as a distinguished provider of investment advisory services. These achievements also reflect the depth of the Company's Advisory expertise and its commitment to delivering added value to its clients and investors.

As one of the leading investment institutions locally and regionally, NIC reaffirms its continued commitment to delivering integrated and innovative investment solutions based on a deep understanding of markets and client needs, while focusing on achieving sustainable growth and creating long-term value. The Company is committed to upholding the highest standards of governance and transparency, reinforcing its position as a trusted partner in developing the investment sector.



Committing to customer-centric wealth management, sustainable growth

Kuwait Finance House wins 3 Euromoney Awards for Excellence 2026 in Wealth Management & ESG

KUWAIT CITY, July 18: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) has been recognized with three prestigious accolades at the Euromoney Awards for Excellence 2026, winning Middle East's Best Islamic Bank for Wealth Management, Kuwait's Best Islamic Bank for Wealth Management, and Kuwait's Best Islamic Bank for ESG.

The awards highlight KFH's continued success in advancing Islamic wealth management and embedding environmental, social and governance (ESG) principles across its business, reflecting the bank's commitment to innovation, customer excellence and sustainable value creation.

Leadership in Islamic Wealth Management

In awarding KFH the titles of Middle East's Best Islamic Bank for Wealth Management and Kuwait's Best Islamic Bank for Wealth Management, Euromoney highlighted the bank's transformation of its Private Banking and Wealth Management (PBWM) business into a more integrated, advisory-led platform that combines banking, financing and investment solutions under Shariah principles.

According to Euromoney, KFH consolidated its PBWM operations into a unified structure and introduced a new operating model aimed at enhancing client experience, strengthening investment capabilities and delivering more sophisticated Islamic wealth solutions. The transformation was supported by investment in specialist talent, technology and the continued development of KFH Capital, the bank's asset management arm.

Euromoney noted that a key element of KFH's strategy was the redesign of its client coverage model through a specialized advisory framework bringing together relationship managers, investment specialists, financing specialists and account managers, enabling clients to access tailored expertise across their banking, financing and investment needs.

The publication also highlighted KFH's focus on talent development, with PBWM teams completing advanced Moody's training, Chartered Institute for Securities & Investment (CISI) certifications and specialized Islamic wealth advisory programs.

On the investment side, Euromoney pointed to the launch of KFH's global discretionary portfolio management (DPM) service, which is built around the bank's internal house view and asset allocation model and offers clients a diversified multi-asset investment approach through an open-architecture range of Shari-



ah-compliant investment funds.

Digital innovation also played a significant role in KFH's success. Euromoney cited the implementation of a new asset management system by KFH Capital to centralize fund and portfolio management, as well as enhancements to the KFH Wealth App and integrated investment portal, providing clients with improved real-time access to their portfolios. The introduction of the Allfunds platform in Kuwait further expanded access to a broader universe of Shariah-compliant investment opportunities.

Euromoney added that KFH achieved record PBWM profitability and growth in investment assets under management during the review period, reinforcing the bank's position as Kuwait's benchmark for modern, advisory-led Islamic wealth management.

Recognition for ESG Excellence

KFH's award as Kuwait's Best Islamic Bank for ESG reflects the bank's comprehensive approach to sustainability and responsible banking.

According to Euromoney, KFH applied a structured ESG framework across financing, operations and community investment, delivering measurable environmental efficiencies, expanded access to essential services and stronger governance oversight.

The publication noted that ESG considerations were embedded in KFH's core banking activities through increased exposure to green and sustainability-linked sukuk, as well as financing for national infrastructure projects, including wastewater treatment facilities that support water reuse and resource efficiency.

Euromoney also highlighted KFH's efforts to reduce energy consumption across its branch network by replacing conventional lighting with energy-efficient LED systems,

upgrading heating and cooling systems, and introducing automated controls to improve operational efficiency.

In addition, KFH delivered certified green buildings, including assets that achieved GSAS Gold and LEED Gold certifications, demonstrating measurable improvements in energy, water and waste performance while helping establish sustainability benchmarks for commercial real estate in Kuwait.

On the social impact front, Euromoney recognized KFH's Creating Shared Value (CSV) platform, through which more than 200 initiatives were delivered. These included allocating KWD 8 million toward

the reconstruction of Al Mubarakiya, covering 17 buildings, and KWD 18 million in support of a cardiac center.

These initiatives were complemented by more than 3,000 volunteer hours, the distribution of over 18,000 Ramadan meals, and support provided to 1,680 families, contributing to healthcare, heritage preservation and essential community services.

Euromoney further noted that KFH maintained strong governance standards through board-level oversight, comprehensive emissions measurement and the integration of ESG considerations into credit assessment processes, aligning sustainability objectives with risk management and capital allocation decisions.

Commitment to Excellence

The awards reflect the bank's unwavering commitment to innovation, customer-centricity, sustainability, and leadership in Islamic finance. The recognition further strengthens KFH's position as a regional leader delivering world-class Shariah-compliant financial solutions while contributing to sustainable economic and social development.

The three Euromoney Awards for Excellence 2026 underscore KFH's ongoing success in setting new standards for Islamic wealth management and responsible banking, both in Kuwait and across the Middle East.

Euromoney

For over 50 years, Euromoney has been the trusted benchmark for excellence in global banking and finance, recognizing institutions that demonstrate outstanding performance, innovation, and client service.

Euromoney's Awards for Excellence have recognized financial institutions that set the global standard in performance, innovation and client impact.

Award marks 18th Euromoney recognition

Markaz named 'Kuwait's Best Investment Bank' at Euromoney's Awards

KUWAIT CITY, July 18: Kuwait Financial Centre "Markaz" announced that it has been named "Best Investment Bank in Kuwait" at the Euromoney Awards for Excellence 2026, one of the world's leading awards programs in the banking and financial services industry. The awards recognize financial institutions that demonstrate outstanding performance in innovation, client service, transaction execution, and market leadership. Winners are selected through a comprehensive evaluation process that considers institutional performance, market activity, client outcomes, and the ability to deliver effective financial solutions in an evolving operating environment.

This achievement reflects Markaz's position as one of Kuwait's leading financial institutions and highlights its active role in supporting the continued development of Kuwait's capital markets. It also underscores Markaz's strength in investment banking, particularly in structuring and executing complex transactions across equity capital markets, debt capital markets, IPOs and listings, capital structure advisory, restructuring, disposition services, and mergers and acquisitions advisory, reflecting its ability to enable clients and support the achievement of their long-term objectives.

The recognition comes as Kuwait's capital markets continue to evolve, supported by regulatory reforms, rising investor participation, and growing demand for advanced investment banking and corporate advisory solutions. Against this backdrop, Markaz continues to play an active role by supporting companies, institutions, and family-owned businesses, and by executing strategic transactions that contribute to deepening Kuwait's financial ecosystem and facilitating access to capital through comprehensive advisory solutions.

This achievement represents the 18th award Markaz has received from Euromoney, bringing its overall record to nearly 100 accolades from reputable regional



Ahmed Al-Falah

and international institutions and platforms. The continuity of these recognitions reflects Markaz's institutional approach, which is centered on providing customized, value-driven financial solutions built on a deep understanding of clients' needs and strategic objectives.

Commenting on the occasion, Mr. Ahmed Al-Falah, Managing Director, Investment Banking at Markaz, said: "Since its inception over 50 years ago, Markaz has remained committed to supporting innovation in Kuwait's financial sector. This recognition reflects the confidence our clients place in us, particularly in a dynamic market that requires strategic advisory, innovative solutions, and strong execution capabilities, all of which are embodied by the Markaz team in everything we deliver. I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to the members of the team for their dedication, expertise, and spirit of collaboration, all of which played a fundamental role in achieving this milestone. Markaz will continue its commitment to helping clients achieve their strategic ambitions through innovative solutions that contribute to raising industry standards and supporting the growth of Kuwait's capital markets."

New program supports young customers from their first student allowance through graduation & transition to a salary account

Gulf Bank launches ‘red’y to impress’ marketing program with exclusive benefits for young customers

KUWAIT CITY, July 18: For many young people, the journey toward financial independence begins with their first student allowance and continues well beyond graduation. Recognizing the importance of supporting them at every stage, Gulf Bank has launched ‘red’y to impress’, a new marketing program designed to make youth banking more rewarding, relevant and closely connected to their evolving lifestyles.

The program brings together two of Gulf Bank’s internationally recognized propositions: red, winner of the Best Gen Z Product of the Year award, and Gulf Points, winner of the Best Loyalty and Rewards Program award. Together, they provide young customers with savings opportunities, everyday benefits, exclusive rewards and financial planning tools, beginning with the transfer of a student allowance and the issuance of a red Plus prepaid card, and continuing through graduation and the transition to a salary account.

Under the new offer, young customers who transfer their student allowance and obtain a red Plus card will receive the card free of charge for five years, along with 20,000 welcome Gulf Points through Gulf Points (equivalent to KD60), Kuwait’s most rewarding loyalty program. They will also enjoy a KD 10 Trolley voucher and a range of exclusive offers from



Gulf Bank team at the booth in Khiran Mall.

Oula and Trolley.

Existing red customers who issue a red Plus prepaid card will receive 5,000 welcome points, 50% off two cinema tickets every day at VOX Cinemas and Cinescape and starting in August a 50% discount on Talabat every Monday.

The journey continues after graduation. Graduates will receive an immediate gift of 5,000 points when their graduation allowance is credited, followed by a further 20,000 points when they convert their red account into a salary account and obtain a complimentary credit card.

To mark the launch of ‘red’y to impress’, Gulf Bank’s sales team has welcomed visitors at a dedicated booth in Khiran Mall last weekend. The activation brings the program’s youthful spirit to life through competitions, entertainment activities, a photo corner and a dedicated sales area where visitors can learn more about the Bank’s youth-focused products and services. Visitors also have the opportunity to enter a draw to win a red kayak.

Alongside the entertainment, Gulf Bank is placing financial awareness at the heart of the experience. A dedicated section of

the booth is helping visitors better understand the risks of financial fraud, as part of the Bank’s ongoing support for the “Let’s Be Aware” banking awareness campaign.

At the heart of ‘red’y to impress’ is the red plus card, designed specifically for young customers and added to the Gulf Points program at the end of last year. The move positioned it among the most rewarding youth banking cards in Kuwait and reflects Gulf Bank’s continued commitment to developing innovative financial solutions that evolve with the ambitions, needs and lifestyles of a new generation.



Great turnout and interaction from young people at the Gulf Bank booth.

eration.

As part of its continuous support for young Kuwaiti talents, Gulf Bank collaborated with Kuwaiti designer Lama Al-Jalal for all the campaign’s designs, which reflect the identity of Gulf Bank and Kuwaiti society with an attractive youthful touch.

Its inclusion in Gulf Points has also transformed the way young customers experience everyday spending. Cardholders earn five points for every KD 1 spent in Kuwait and ten points for every KD 1, or its equivalent in foreign currency, spent abroad, adding further value to travel, shopping

and daily purchases around the world.

Gulf Points is one of Kuwait’s fastest-growing and most comprehensive loyalty programs. Customers earn points whenever they use their credit cards, including the red Plus prepaid card, and can redeem them easily through the Gulf Bank mobile application. Redemption options include an innovative eStore where customers can purchase a wide range of products with points, share points with family and friends, convert points into cashback, or use them to book flights, hotels and car rentals worldwide.

Warba ranks among top 20 Global Sukuk Bookrunners

KUWAIT CITY, July 18: Warba Bank announced that its Debt Capital Markets division ranked among the world’s top 20 sukuk bookrunners in Bloomberg’s Islamic Capital Markets League Tables for the first half of 2026. These rankings reflect the bank’s growing presence in Islamic capital markets and position it alongside major regional and international financial institutions.

The bank’s continued expansion in the sukuk sector is supported by its delivery of Sharia-compliant financing solutions and debt issuance, structuring, and execution services to governments, financial institutions, and corporate clients.

Rankings Across Key Bloomberg League Tables:

- During the first half of 2026, Warba Bank secured positions across several key Bloomberg global and regional league tables:
- Global Sukuk Bookrunners: Ranked 19th globally.
- International Sukuk Bookrunners: Ranked 13th globally.
- International US Dollar Sukuk Bookrunners: Ranked 12th globally.
- GCC Sukuk Bookrunners: Ranked 16th globally.

These rankings underscore the active role played by Warba Bank’s Debt Capital Markets team in supporting the structuring and execution of sukuk issuances in line with global best practices.

Islamic Capital Markets Strategy: Shaheen Hamad Al-Ghanem, Chief Executive Officer of Warba Bank, stated:

“These rankings reflect Warba Bank’s strategy to strengthen its investment banking and Islamic capital markets capabilities. By investing in specialized talent, expanding our investor network, and delivering in-



■ Shaheen Al-Ghanem: The rankings reflect our growing capabilities in Islamic capital markets and debt capital markets execution

novative solutions, we continue to meet the evolving requirements of local, regional, and international markets.”

Al-Ghanem added that the bank remains committed to responding to developments in the Islamic finance industry and pursuing growth opportunities in the sukuk market. This approach supports clients in diversifying their funding sources while contributing to the overall liquidity and depth of the Islamic debt capital markets.

About Warba Bank:

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

Certification reaffirms the Hotel’s environmental commitment

Four Seasons Kuwait renews Green Key certification for 2026

KUWAIT CITY, July 18: Four Seasons Hotel Kuwait at Burj Alshaya has renewed its Green Key certification for 2026, reaffirming its commitment to responsible hospitality and the continued integration of sustainable practices across the guest experience and daily operations.

The certificate was presented during a visit to the Hotel by Ms Mona El RezBassaj, Consultant for the Environment and National Operator for the Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE); MsHebah Abbas, Head of the Sustainability Committee at the Kuwait Water Association (KWA); and MsIbtissamLamouchi, Assistant to MsBassaj. The delegation presented the certification to Martin Kipping, General Manager, and members of the Hotel Planning Committee.

“Renewing our Green Key certification is particularly meaningful because it recognises the consistency and collective effort behind our environmental commitments,” said Martin Kipping. “At Four Seasons, sustainability is not separate from the guest experience. It is part of how we care for our surroundings, support our community and shape a more responsible future for hospitality in Kuwait.”



Four Seasons Burj Alshaya retains green key status for 2026.

The certification follows a comprehensive assessment of the Hotel’s environmental management and operating practices, including energy and water conservation, waste reduction, responsible purchasing and team engagement.

Led by the Hotel’s Engineering team and supported by colleagues across all departments, these efforts include AI-enhanced food-waste management, on-site water bottling, the continued elimination of single-use plastics, energy and water monitoring systems, and electric vehicle charging stations.

“Green Key certification requires continuous attention, measurement and collaboration across the entire Hotel,” said Ali Al-Zain, Director of Engineering at Four Seasons Hotel Kuwait at Burj Alshaya. “This achievement reflects the discipline of our teams and their commitment to turning environmental objectives into meaningful and measurable action every day.”

The renewed Green Key certification complements the Hotel’s wider sustainability credentials, including

LEED Platinum certification and Forbes Verified Responsible Hospitality, reflecting an approach in which thoughtful luxury and environmental responsibility progress together.

About Four Seasons Hotel Kuwait at Burj Alshaya

Located in the heart of Kuwait City, Four Seasons Hotel Kuwait at Burj Alshaya brings together contemporary design, intuitive Four Seasons service and a thoughtful approach to responsible hospitality. The Hotel features 284 rooms and

suites, distinctive dining experiences, extensive wellness facilities and sophisticated spaces for meetings and celebrations.

About Green Key

Managed internationally by the Foundation for Environmental Education, Green Key is a voluntary eco-certification programme for hotels and other tourism establishments. Certification recognises properties that meet established environmental standards across areas including energy, water, waste, responsible operations and sustainability awareness.

US oil firms sign deals with Iraq to develop alternative shipping routes

WASHINGTON, July 18, (AP): U.S. companies signed roughly \$60 billion in agreements and partnerships with the Iraqi government Friday, including deals intended to create alternative routes for shipping oil out of the Persian Gulf.

The deals, signed at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, also involved other industries, including healthcare, communications and infrastructure.

It’s not clear when the oil deals will be able to create viable alternatives to the Strait of Hormuz, through which about a fifth of the world’s oil flows. Goldman Sachs estimates that pipelines in just one country take at least two and a half years to build, and these pipelines would travel through two or more nations.

Iran has sought to close the Strait repeatedly since the U.S.-Iran war began Feb. 28, causing sharp gyrations in oil and gas prices.

On Friday afternoon, the price of West Texas crude rose nearly 5% to \$88 a barrel, up from about \$67 before the war began. It had topped \$110 in early April before falling back after a truce was reached. It has since risen on renewed conflict between U.S. and Iran.

Thomas Barrack, U.S. Ambassador to Turkey, said the oil pipeline agreements would lead to a program “that will make the Strait of Hormuz an afterthought.”

The signings followed a meeting between Iraqi Prime Minister Ali Falah al-Zaidi Thursday with executives of Chevron in Houston, at which al-Zaidi urged the U.S. energy company to expand and accelerate its investments in Iraq.

In a speech Friday, al-Zaidi said Iraq’s economy is seeking long-term investment and partnerships, not merely contractors to carry out projects.

Al-Zaidi stressed his government’s commitment to communication, dialogue and cooperation with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, describing it as “the place where economic decisions are made.”

On Friday, Chevron signed three agreements with the Iraqi government. Jake Spiering, Chevron’s president



of corporate business development, said two would focus on boosting oil production, while a third would involve “investing in a pipeline that’s going to create another export route out of Iraq to world markets. This is very important for energy security.”

Also Friday, the State Department welcomed an agreement between Iraq and Syria “to advance the rehabilitation and reconstruction of the Iraq-Syria crude oil pipeline as a priority infrastructure project.”

“The United States welcomes the engagement of a

U.S.-led international consortium to execute the technical and financial aspects of this project,” the department said.

The pipeline will connect southern Iraq’s Basra to western Iraq’s Haditha and go from there to the Ceyhan port in Turkey and the port of Baniyas on Syria’s coast, Iraqi officials have said. The pipeline is projected to carry about 2 million barrels of oil per day.

In a note released earlier this week, analysts at Goldman Sachs estimated that seven different pipelines in the region under development could, by the end of 2028, carry about 60% of the oil currently shipped through the Strait.

The pipelines could carry roughly 14 million barrels per day by then, Goldman estimated. Roughly 23 million barrels per day were shipped through Hormuz before the Iran war.

After the U.S. and Israel launched their war on Iran Feb. 28, oil-rich Iraq - which is home to both Iran-backed militias and U.S. bases - found itself in the crosshairs. Syria, meanwhile, has been one of the few regional countries that has managed to stay on the sidelines of the conflict. Damascus has promoted Syria - still grappling with the aftermath of its own 14-year civil war - as a bastion of stability and has offered it as an alternative transit route for energy shipments.

With the war dramatically reducing oil exports through the Strait of Hormuz, some oil shipments have instead been trucked from Iraq into Syria and shipped to European markets via Syria’s Baniyas port, bypassing the Hormuz route. A key border crossing between northern Iraq and Syria reopened in April after being closed for more than a decade, with officials touting it as an additional route for energy exports.

The overland route is less efficient and more expensive than shipping exports through the strait. The pipeline project envisioned would allow for exporting a larger volume of oil from Iraq to Syria and Turkey.

Obituary

Brenda Fricker, first Irish actress to win Oscar dies



'My Left Foot' stars Brenda Fricker, winner of Oscar for best supporting actress, and Daniel Day-Lewis, winner of Oscar for best actor, at the 62nd Annual Academy Awards in Los Angeles, March 26, 1990. (AP)

LONDON, July 18, (AP): Brenda Fricker, who became the first Irish woman to win an Academy Award for her role as Bridget Fagan Brown in the 1989 film "My Left Foot," has died. She was 81.

The Irish character actor died Thursday night in Dublin after a period of ill health, her agent, Phil Belfield said in a statement.

Fricker won the Academy Award in 1990 for best supporting actress for her portrayal of the determined mother of Christy Brown, a writer and painter who was born with cerebral palsy and could control only his left foot. Daniel Day-Lewis, who played Brown, won the award for best actor.

"She was just an amazing actress, amazing character, forceful personality, great writer," the movie's director, Jim Sheridan, told Irish national broadcaster RTE. "She could be obsessive - in everything she did - life, work, love. But no real malice or anything, she was just a very strong personality and a good laugh."

Fricker said she was stunned when she won the Oscar, never thinking it was possible. In her acceptance speech, she thanked Brown "just for being alive" and paid tribute to his mother, saying "anybody who gives birth 22 times deserves one of these."

She later spoke of how the award doomed her to being typecast to forever playing roles as mothers. Later in life, she said she used the weighty statuette to prop open her bathroom door.

Fricker, who appeared in more than 90 films and television shows between 1964 and 2024, was known for her role as the "pigeon lady" in the 1992 film "Home Alone 2: Lost in New York," where she played a

homeless woman who befriended Macaulay Culkin's character in New York's Central Park.

She also featured in the original cast of the BBC medical drama "Casualty" and appeared alongside Cate Blanchett in "Veronica Guerin," the story of an Irish investigative journalist who was murdered in 1996.

"We will never see her like again and the world is lesser for the lack of her," Belfield said. "I was honored to know, love and work with her and she will always have a place in my heart and in the heart of so many film and TV fans the world over."

Born in Dublin in 1945, Fricker received the city's highest honor earlier this year when she was awarded the Freedom of the City.

In her autobiography "She Died Young: A Life in Fragments," Fricker describes both happy childhood escapades with her sister Grania and her struggles to overcome sexual violence and mental health issues, which caused her to be institutionalized several times. Published in September 2025, the book appeared on the Irish Sunday Times best-seller list.

Simon Harris, Ireland's deputy prime minister, said the country had lost a national treasure.

"She truly was among the greatest exports this country has ever produced and an ambassador for Irish talent on the world stage," he said. "Quite simply, we will never see the like of her ever again."

Fricker was married to director Barry Davies from 1979 until they divorced in 1988. She became pregnant several times but suffered miscarriages, which led to severe depression much of her life.

Books

Pandemic novel earns \$10,000 fiction honor

Patricia Lockwood wins Gabe Hudson Prize

NEW YORK, July 18, (AP): Acclaimed author Patricia Lockwood is this year's winner of the Gabe Hudson Prize, a \$10,000 honor named for the late author, educator and editor and given for fiction that demonstrates "humor, pathos, and a deep understanding of contemporary America."

Lockwood was cited for "Will There Ever Be Another You," a dark and comic novel about a woman's breakdown amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.

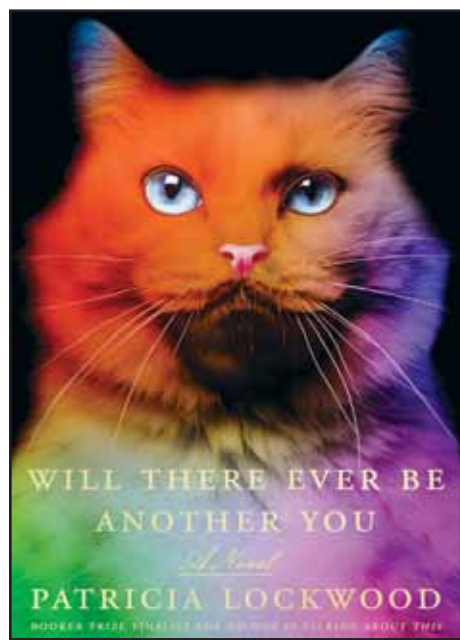
"Sentences and passages flash us with beauty or leave us reeling with laughter," the judges' citation reads in part. "There is so much pain in the book and yet there is no self-pity, instead there is a marvelous self-awareness as to how ridiculous it is to be human."

The Hudson prize was established in 2024 by his mother, Sanchia Semere, and is administered by the publisher McSweeney's.

Hudson, who died in 2023 at age 52, was known and admired for such fiction as "Dear Mr. President," for his work as an editor at large at McSweeney's and for his years as a teacher at Yonsei University in Korea, among other schools.

Lockwood's other books include "Priestdaddy," winner in 2018 of the James Thurber Prize for American Humor, and the novel "No One Is Talking About This," shortlisted for the Booker Prize in 2021. In a statement Thursday, Lockwood noted that she felt a kinship with Hudson, even though they never met.

"He was a truly generous literary citizen with a rich trajectory: a writer of funny, gut-punching stories, an inventive novelist, a cheerleader for others," she said. "He was a Marine, like my brother, and a teacher in South Korea, in the same neighborhood where my husband grew up."



This book cover image released by Riverhead Books shows "Will There Ever Be Another You" by Patricia Lockwood. (AP)

Boyle's film traces Murdoch's rise at The Sun

Tony-winning play adaptation 'Ink' set as Venice Film Festival opener

LOS ANGELES, July 18, (AP): A new film about the rise of media tycoon Rupert Murdoch and "The Sun" editor Larry Lamb has been selected to open the Venice International Film Festival, organizers said Thursday. Directed by "Trainspotting" filmmaker Danny Boyle, "Ink" is an adaptation of James

Graham's acclaimed play, which dramatizes Murdoch's 1969 acquisition of the daily newspaper "The Sun."

Guy Pearce plays Murdoch and Jack O'Connell plays Lamb in the film about how they turned the paper into Britain's most influential tabloid. Claire

Foy also co-stars.

"Long before Fox News, click bait, and Truth Social; decades before Twitter, Facebook, Google (and) Only Fans, these (two) men created a new tabloid which against all the odds became the biggest selling newspaper in the world," Boyle said in a statement. The paper, he added, "challenged the establishment and remade our world for the modern era."

Boyle said it was a huge honor to be selected, noting that, "I've been to the Biennale many times, but this is my baptism at the film festival."

"Ink" will be playing in competition at the 83rd edition of the festival, which kicks off on September 2. The full slate of films vying for the Golden Lion is expected to be revealed next week.

The play opened in London in 2017, and went to Broadway in 2019, where it was nominated for, and won, multiple Tony Awards.

"I started writing this way before Trump, way before Brexit," Graham told The Associated Press in 2017. "But I knew I wanted to capture what was clearly in the air about populism."



This image released by StudioCanal shows Jack O'Connell in a scene from 'INK.' Inset: Director Danny Boyle poses in Beverly Hills, Calif., on March 6, 2017. (AP)

Live coverage meets fact-check challenge

To air or not to air: Networks struggle to find the right balance for Trump speech

WASHINGTON, July 18, (AP): As President Donald Trump threatened sanctions for those who didn't cover his address live Thursday night, the nation's broadcast and cable news operations wrestled with the thorniest of questions: To air or not to air?

Networks and their news operations, broadcast and cable alike, spent the hours leading up to Trump's address debating how to cover it - and struggling to balance delivering the news with handing over their airwaves to potential falsehoods about the 2020 elections.

In the end, a patchwork quilt of coverage was largely united by one common strategy: real-time fact-checking as much as was possible even while the president was still speaking.

The dilemma took place against a backdrop of deep tension between the media and a president working to exert control over it by whatever means he can. Even in his speech itself, Trump excoriated networks that chose not to carry it live, saying that "NBC and ABC fake news" avoided it because they "don't like the topic." He also threatened them with consequences, using the presidential pulpit to suggest they should be sanctioned for their editorial decisions.

"They and others in the media are part of a plot," Trump said, offering no evidence for his assertion. There is also no evidence of fraud in the 2020 elections.

"They want to continue this fraud for whatever reason. They want to keep it going," he said. "Fraud like this should mean a revocation of their licenses. They use our public multibillion-dollar-in-value airwaves for absolutely no money. They pay nothing. All we want is



President Donald Trump is seen speaking from the East Room of the White House on a television screen in the James Brady Press Briefing Room of the White House, Thursday, July 16, 2026, in Washington. (AP)

honesty in our elections and honesty in reporting."

The tension between Trump and the news media during his second term has taken many forms, from sanctions against members of the White House press corps to regulatory actions through the Federal Communications Commission to outright lawsuits.

The media outlets' decision-making - seemingly last-minute, for many, with networks divulging their plans minutes beforehand - produced a variety of coverage scenarios for the 24 minutes of Trump's address.

CNN's Kaitlan Collins anchored her nightly program. "We aren't taking it live," she said of the speech, given the president's "well-documented history" of falsehoods. Panelists were on hand for analysis

and fact-checking. "Sadly, we have no choice to be skeptical when this president talks elections," said the network's veteran correspondent John King.

Fox News and Fox Broadcasting aired the president's speech live. But ABC and NBC did not, sticking with regular programming - "Press Your Luck," in ABC's case, and an animal show featuring alligators in NBC's. But they were ready to cut in as they deemed newsworthy, as well as offering special reports afterwards.

Both ABC and NBC, however, provided live coverage on their streaming channels - NBC News NOW and ABC News Live - as well as ABC News Radio. In the still-young era of streaming, that is increasingly a decision that allows network news to play it both ways.

Shakira, Bocelli, Ricky Martin lead final playlist

10 songs to get hyped for WCup final

NEW YORK, July 18, (AP): Regardless of World Cup allegiances, there is one thing everyone can agree on: There's nothing better than a themed playlist to get pumped for Sunday's big match. The Associated Press has you covered there.

Whether you're hoping Argentina will become the first repeat champion since Brazil in 1958 and 1962, or that young superstar Lamine Yamal will score for Spain, everyone's a winner across these 10 tracks.

Read on below and then stream the full playlist on Spotify, here.

Kick off your World Cup final listening party with this year's official anthem: "Dai Dai" from Colombian superstar Shakira and Afrobeats icon Burna Boy. The song is the perfect intersection of their musical languages, Afrobeats and Latin rhythms, on an undeniably global, multilingual track. After the first chorus, they take turns tackling verses, singing back and forth, before joining in a duet. It's a message of unity and victory. Take it from Shakira herself: "Fútbol is a thing that unites so many cultures and people of different walks of life," she told the AP. "The big responsibility of making a World Cup song is that you've got to make a song that represents people's feelings, emotions, and passion."

You read that artist list correctly. On this World Cup song, tenor Andrea Bocelli, EDM star David Guetta, singer-songwriter EJAE from "KPop Demon Hunters" and rapper Megan Thee Stallion team up for the genre-agnostic "DNA (More Than A Game)." Performed in English, Italian and Korean, it's surprisingly anthemic and has a strong empowerment message. "Cause it's more than just a game/it's our DNA," Bocelli and EJAE



Paco Amoroso, left, and Ca7riel perform during the 2025 Latin Grammys in Las Vegas on Nov. 13, 2025. (AP)



Shakira performs in Baltimore on July 6, 2026, left, and Rosalia appears at the Brit Awards 2026 in Manchester, England, on Feb. 28, 2026. (AP)

harmonize on the chorus.

"It's a kind of music very, very far from the scores that I'm used to performing in general, but sometimes it's very nice to do something different and to discover new atmospheres," Bocelli told the AP. "It's very happy, the song. I think it gives happiness." That it does.

A Spanglish global smash and one of the most addictive World Cup anthems of all time, Puerto Rican superstar Ricky Martin was really onto something when he released "La Copa de la Vida (The Cup of Life)" for the 1998 tournament held in France. It is the standard to which all World Cup anthems should be held - from its unmistakable soccer themes to its multilingual mambo-pop, unyielding horns section and Eurodance-club intensity. Ale, ale, ale!

Supporters of Spain are more than familiar with this up-tempo, merengue-pop tune - it has become a celebratory track for the team upon victory, played after they score and post-match. And now that the 2010 World Cup champions are in the final, it's not unlikely it's played out loud on stadium speakers again. It's a cool pick from a team with swagger - and fitting for this playlist.

The legendary Spanish singer Raphael is central to celebrations in the country this World Cup season. "Mi Gran Noche" is just one gem in his treasure trove of hits - a '60s Latin pop classic with intergenerational appeal, played in clubs, bars, football clubs, on the radio and television specials and beyond. There's a reason it has stood the test of time, with its big band brass and cheerful chorus.

Olympus’ UNESCO effort safeguards history & heritage of Greece’s tallest peak

Greece’s mountain of the gods bids for world heritage status



Sunflowers bloom in Kalyvia Varikou, near Litochoro in northern Greece, backdropped by Mount Olympus, July 15, 2026. (AP)



A visitor approaches a chapel at the Holy Cave of St. Dionysios in the Enipeas Gorge on Mount Olympus in northern Greece, July 14, 2026. (AP)



Theodoris Papaioannou tends his kiwi orchard, backdropped by Mount Olympus, near the village of Dion in northern Greece, July 14, 2026. (AP)

LITochoro, Greece, July 18, (AP): Snow-capped for much of the year, Mount Olympus, mythological home of ancient Greece’s 12 Olympian gods, has captured the imagination through the millennia. Rising to 2,918 meters (9,573 feet) from a base practically at sea level, the ancient Greeks believed the throne of Zeus, king of the gods, stood on the highest of its craggy, often mist-shrouded peaks.

Now, modern-day Greeks hope their tallest mountain will be inducted into UNESCO’s World Heritage List as a mixed cultural and natural site. The nomination is to be discussed when the World Heritage Committee meets in Busan, South Korea from Sunday through July 29.

“Olympus is our life. It is the place we grew up in,” said Evangelos Geroliolios, mayor of Dion-Olympus, based in Litochoro, the mountain’s main town. “It is the place we see every day, but at the same time, it is also a place which carries with it myth, history, biodiversity, extraordinary beauty and a very great cultural weight.”

Few locations are as central to ancient Greek mythology as Mount Olympus. It was here that Zeus was said to

have established his court after overthrowing his father, Cronus, in a 10-year war that ended the reign of the Titans.

Interest in Olympus may receive another boost with the theatrical release this week of Christopher Nolan’s “The Odyssey,” a new adaptation of Homer’s epic, in which the mountain serves as the home of Zeus and the Olympian gods who influence Odysseus’ journey.

On one of Olympus’s lower peaks, excavations have uncovered an open-air sanctuary, with the oldest finds dating to the Hellenistic period, which ran from 323 B.C. to 30 B.C. According to Greece’s original UNESCO nomination, the sanctuary is believed to have been one mentioned by the ancient philosopher and historian Plutarch, who in the 2nd century wrote of processions to one of Olympus’s peaks for animal sacrifices to Zeus.

The mountain retained religious significance into the Christian era. A chapel on the peak of Prophet Elias, at 2,803 meters, is believed to be the highest altitude chapel in the Christian Orthodox world. The mountain’s Enipeas Gorge holds the remains of a monastery founded in 1542,

while a roughly 20-minute walk from there leads to the Holy Cave of St. Dionysios, a chapel built into a cave from where a small spring flows, believed to carry holy water.

The mountain’s slopes, which reach practically to the sea, also host a wealth of flora and fauna, including endemic species. It is this blending of culture, myth, natural beauty and biodiversity that locals hope will see their mountain declared a World Heritage site.

“It is a place we love. It is a place that many people from all over the world visit to see, to live, to experience. We want to protect it,” Geroliolios said. Its inclusion on UNESCO’s list would be “something very big that goes beyond not just local boundaries, but national boundaries. It is something that concerns the entire world. It is very important.”

Greece began the process to have Mount Olympus recognized as a World Heritage site in 2014, inscribing it on its Tentative List - the mandatory first step in any nomination. The Tentative List is where countries include sites they can then formally nominate over the next five

to 10 years.

The nomination process includes a preliminary assessment followed by submission of a full nomination file, which is then evaluated over 14 months by advisory bodies, including the International Council on Monuments and Sites, ICOMOS, and the International Union for Conservation of Nature.

Recommendations by the advisory bodies are then discussed during the World Heritage Committee’s annual meeting, where representatives of 21 countries vote on nominated sites.

Greece’s Mount Olympus nomination is far from certain. A draft of the Busan meeting’s agenda indicates the committee will refer the nomination back to Greece and request further details.

Still, locals hope the mountain’s cultural and natural wonders will secure it a place and will play a role in securing more protection for the mountain.

The mayor, Geroliolios, said inclusion on the World Heritage list “places some greater obligations on our part to protect this environment.”

Tech meets tourism

China’s tech tours become a new global travel trend

BEIJING, July 18, (Xinhua): In a park in the city of Shenzhen, south China’s Guangdong Province, Polish travel influencer Wiktoria gasped and laughed in excitement as a drone carrying her ice cream descended to the pickup point.

That moment, however, was just the beginning of her “mind-blowing” experience. From hailing a driverless taxi to buying a cup of coffee made by a robot, she saw firsthand how technology has been woven into everyday life in this dynamic metropolis.

“I think it’s the most futuristic city,” she said in a video that has since garnered thousands of views on YouTube, drawing comments such as “impressed” and “fascinating.”

Wiktoria is far from alone. As the “China Travel” trend continues to gain momentum, a growing number of international tourists, many visiting under China’s visa-free entry policies, are flocking to the country for an eye-opening tech-focused itinerary.

China currently offers unilateral visa-free entry to nationals of 50 countries and has expanded its 240-hour visa-free transit program to 65 entry ports. In the first quarter of 2026, the country recorded 8.32 million visa-free entries by foreign nationals, up 29.3 percent year on year.

For many travelers, iconic scenic spots and delicious food still top the must-experience list. Meanwhile, they are increasingly gravitating toward hands-on tech experiences at sites that, until recently, were rarely found in traditional tourist guidebooks.

Shenzhen’s Huaqiangbei, one of the world’s largest wholesale markets for electronic products, is a good example. It has become a popular destination for foreign tourists eager to get their hands on advanced digital gadgets, ranging from AI glasses to foldable smartphones, with travelers also sharing their shopping tips on social media platforms.

“I am so excited,” U.S. vlogger Logan posted online after a recent visit to the market. “Being the tech nerd that I am, this is paradise for me.”

Visitors can also feel the pulse of China’s technological advances in Shanghai in the east of the country. Just over a month ago, this metropolis saw Unitree Robotics, a leading humanoid robot maker in China, open its first embodied intelligence experience store in Asia, which takes advanced robotics out of the lab and into a bustling commercial hub.

“The store is incredibly impressive,” Austrian visitor Valerie Hofer, who viewed the products there as a demonstration of China’s pioneering role in terms of robotics and AI, told Xinhua.

Data backs Hofer’s impression. China was home to more than 140 humanoid robot developers in 2025, with shipments reaching 14,400 units -- accounting for 84.7 percent of the global market, according to an industry research report.

Moreover, the number of AI enterprises in China had surpassed 6,000 last year, and the output value of the core AI industry was projected to exceed 1.2 trillion yuan (about 177 billion U.S. dollars) during the same period, representing a year-on-year increase of nearly 30 percent.

All these achievements underpin China’s emerging appeal for global visitors as a burgeoning innovator, with many so curious that they have extended their trips beyond showrooms to visit the places where the country’s high-tech products come to life.

Among such attractions is Xiaomi’s automobile factory in Beijing. Since opening to the public in March 2024, the 718,000-square-meter complex has offered a unique window for worldwide visitors, especially entrepreneurs, keen to catch a glimpse of China’s innovation ecosystem and sustained momentum.

Statistics from this newcomer to the electric vehicle industry revealed that the factory had received more than 400 foreign government and business delegations from roughly 70 countries and regions in 2025.

“Global visitors come with high expectations for Xiaomi’s vehicles, and we hope they can leave with a broader understanding of the capabilities and potential of China’s automotive industry,” said Ma Lan, a manager at this frequently visited factory.

The enthusiasm is not lost on the tourism industry. Fliggy, a Chinese online travel platform, has recently launched a new line of tailor-made inbound tech tours, offering visitors immersive experiences with cutting-edge products and hands-on visits to Chinese tech giants such as Alibaba.

These new tours are now open for inquiries and bookings, the company said, adding that inquiries from international travelers have been surging since the launch.



A Russian tourist interacts with a robot at a store of Unitree Robotics in Beijing, China, April 30, 2026. (Xinhua)



Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, attends the signing ceremony and signs the agreement on establishing the World Artificial Intelligence Cooperation Organization (WAICO) on behalf of the Chinese government in Shanghai, east China, July 16, 2026. (Xinhua)

Moving beyond technological breakthroughs

Experts hail AI conference for global collaboration

SHANGHAI, July 18, (Xinhua): As artificial intelligence (AI) rapidly reshapes economies and societies, global attention is shifting beyond technological breakthroughs to how AI can be developed responsibly and inclusively.

For many, the 2026 World Artificial Intelligence Conference (WAIC), being held in Shanghai on July 17-20, represents an important platform for bringing countries together to address shared challenges, strengthen cooperation and ensure that more nations can participate in shaping the future of AI.

“China is playing a very important role in not just being at the table but convening, bringing countries and people together to advance safe and ethical AI, and setting a tone by adopting some safety regulations quite early,” Mark Jay Nitzberg, executive director of UC Berkeley’s Center for Human-Compatible AI and a guest speaker at the main forum of the conference.

“AI is going to constantly change,” Turing Award winner John Edward Hopcroft told Xinhua on the sidelines of the conference. “There are going to be other changes. You have to have a strategy which will be

resilient to changes.”

Noting that every technology has advantages and disadvantages, Hopcroft emphasized the need for global AI governance. “Governments have to regulate technology so that the good parts of the technology are available.”

While AI has brought many positive impacts, its rapid development has also raised several concerns, said Kang Ho-gu, director of the Sino-Korea Economy Society Institute. AI can serve humanity and contribute to the greater good if used properly and responsibly. Still, it could also pose risks to human society if misused or abused, he told Xinhua in an interview.

Against this backdrop, Kang said the WAIC was held at a critical time, providing a valuable platform for stakeholders from around the world to discuss the opportunities, challenges and future direction of the technology.

Xue Lan, dean of the Schwarzman College at Tsinghua University, pointed out several AI-related risks, including misuse, potential technical failures or loss of control, as well as social challenges such as job displacement and widening income

inequality.

Highlighting the global AI divide as a key challenge, Xue said China’s focus on capacity building and inclusive development addresses the concerns of many developing countries.

China’s efforts aim not only to share technologies and applications, but also to help countries build their own capabilities so they can develop and apply AI based on their own needs and conditions, the expert said.

In a similar view, Kang noted the growing AI divide between developed and developing countries, saying technological gaps and limited resources could deepen existing economic and knowledge disparities.

Balew Demissie, senior consultant at the Policy Studies Institute of Ethiopia, said the conference is important because “AI is no longer only a technological issue; it has become a global governance challenge requiring international cooperation on ethics, safety, inclusiveness, and equitable access.”

The conference “provides an important platform for engagement, learning, and partnership-building” and “an opportunity for developing countries to move beyond be-

ing consumers of technology and become active participants in AI innovation through capacity building, knowledge sharing and partnerships,” Demissie told Xinhua.

Cavince Adhere, a Kenyan international relations scholar, noted that Africa, with its youthful population and rapid digital adoption, stands at a critical juncture. Without active participation in the AI revolution, the continent risks widening the global AI divide, he said.

Against this backdrop, the WAIC marks an important opportunity to promote more balanced AI development worldwide, Adhere said.

Pravate Tantisajjatham, president of Thai Blockchain Association, also said that the conference has provided Thailand with a valuable platform to learn from international experience and strengthen its capabilities in developing AI technologies and digital infrastructure.

The WAIC, said the Thai expert, demonstrates China’s role as a major technology power in supporting the development of other countries, promoting openness and cooperation rather than technological isolation, and helping developing countries not be left behind.

Simple exercise to relieve thumb pain from texting

NEW YORK, July 18, (AP): Do your hands hurt when you use your phone? All that texting and scrolling might be stressing out your fingers.

The term texting thumb can describe a wide range of phone-related pains caused by tired-out tendons and achy joints - like general stiffness, throbbing near the knuckle and a clicking sensation when bending the thumb. If left untreated, repetitive typing and swiping can lead to more serious issues like carpal tunnel and arthritis.

People have pecked away at devices for decades with warnings about overuse injuries - think BlackBerry thumb. Today’s smartphones have gotten larger and heavier, and the way we use them has also shifted: Beyond talking and texting, it’s common to doomscroll for hours, pay medical bills and even watch full-length movies and TV shows.

“Mobile devices are here to stay. So rather than saying ‘you can’t be on your device,’ we really just need to learn and think about ways to make the devices compatible with modern life,” said Dr. Maureen O’Shaughnessy with the University of Kentucky HealthCare Hand Center.

Locking wrists and elbows in the same position for hours can lead to soreness in places like the base of the thumb or wrist. Holding phones upright for long periods can also tire other fin-



A person uses a smart phone in Chicago, Sept. 16, 2017. (AP)

gers.

O’Shaughnessy said people tend to realize the painful effects when they’re not on their device as much, such as being on vacation. That is when phone-related irritation or dull aches go away.

The simplest way to ease this pain is to go touch grass - that is, limit phone time or take short breaks in between scrolling spurts. But that’s easier said than done. If a detox feels difficult, try to mix up postures, switch hands to type and use the index or other fingers.

Built-in accessibility features can also minimize thumb overuse. Try sending messages using

the voice-to-text feature and enlarge the text size so you don’t have to hold the phone so close.

There are also circle and ring-shaped grip accessories that attach to the back of the phone and more evenly distribute the weight across the hand. They can also double as a stand to prop up your phone to watch videos and TV.

If your hands are throbbing after a long day of screen time, stretch them out daily. Flex the wrist by tilting your palm toward and away from you, pulling and pushing down with the other hand. O’Shaughnessy also recommended flexing each of the fingers and making small circles with your thumbs.

For pain at the base of the thumb, you can place your hand on a flat surface and pull the thumb away from the other fingers, holding that for about 30 seconds.

If the aches, numbing or tingling persist even after limiting screen time and using remedies like ibuprofen or ice, see a doctor to see if it could be something more serious.

Constant phone use can exacerbate thumb arthritis or cause De Quervain’s tenosynovitis - sharp pain or swelling at the base of the thumb and wrist. It can also lead to carpal tunnel, caused by a pinched nerve. Trigger thumb, a painful catching in the thumb when you bend it, is caused by an inflamed tendon.

Taco Bell lettuce in 5 states confirmed as source of diarrhea-causing parasite

Foodborne illnesses at restaurant chains rare but can sicken customers

NEW YORK, July 18, (AP): Big US restaurant chains don't get linked to foodborne illness outbreaks often, but the number of meals they serve causes a lot of concern when contamination of some kind sickens customers.

Federal health officials identified iceberg lettuce from Mexico served at Taco Bell locations in five states as a source of widespread infections from the diarrhea-causing parasite cyclospora. A US Food and Drug Administration investigation identified a single supplier as the source of the suspect lettuce.

Taco Bell issued a statement on Thursday saying that "the affected ingredient from our supplier is being indefinitely removed from our supply chain nationwide and will be replaced within 24 hours in select states." The company described the move as precautionary.

A federal official who was briefed on the outbreak investigation and not authorized to discuss it identified the supplier as Taylor Farms, a company based in Salinas, California, that produces fresh vegetables for commercial use and meal kits and bagged lettuce products sold at supermarkets.

Federal health officials stressed that other "brands, restaurants, retailers, or distribution channels" could be identified as the investigation continues.

Here's a brief history of some other recent outbreaks that roiled restaurant companies and sometimes changed how food safety is regulated in the US.

E. coli bacteria caused a 2024 food poisoning outbreak tied to raw onions on McDonald's Quarter Pounder hamburgers. The outbreak sickened at least 104 people in 14 states, including 34 who were hospitalized, according to the FDA. One person in Colorado died.

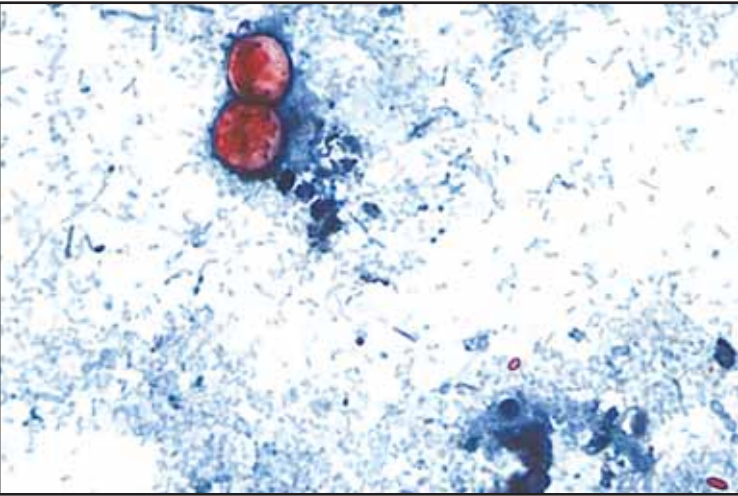
McDonald's said the onions came from Taylor Farms and temporarily pulled the Quarter Pounder off its menu in the affected states. Other national restaurant chains temporarily stopped using fresh onions in some of their locations.

Wendy's pulled lettuce from sandwiches in its restaurants in Michigan, Ohio and Pennsylvania in August 2022 after some people reported falling ill.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said at the time that it was trying to determine whether romaine lettuce was the source of an E. coli outbreak that sickened at least 37 people and whether romaine used at Wendy's was also served or sold at other businesses.

One person was also sickened in Indiana, according to the CDC.

In 2015, Chipotle was hit by an E. coli outbreak that sickened more than 50



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

people and it temporarily shut down dozens of restaurants on the West Coast, but that was just the beginning. A month later, 30 Boston College students, including at least eight members of the men's basketball team, complained of gastrointestinal symptoms after eating at a Chipotle restaurant.

Federal officials declared the outbreak over by February 2016, but the chain shut down every one of its restaurants to retrain employees and allow them to regroup.

By the end of the year, however, Chipotle Co-CEO Montgomery Moran stepped down as sales plunged.

In 2020 Chipotle Mexican Grille agreed to pay a record \$25 million fine to

resolve criminal charges that it served tainted food that sickened more than 1,100 people in the U.S. between 2015 and 2018.

The company admitted that poor safety practices, such as not keeping food at proper temperatures to prevent pathogen growth, sickened customers in Los Angeles and nearby Simi Valley, as well as Boston, Sterling, Virginia, and Powell, Ohio.

In December 2006, Taco Bell ordered the removal of green onions from its 5,800 restaurants nationwide after samples taken by investigators appeared to contain a harsh strain of E. coli. The outbreak sickened at least 71 people in New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania and Delaware, with most of them hospitalized, according to the CDC.

Eight people developed a type of kidney failure called hemolytic-uremic syndrome.

Eventually, it was determined that contaminated lettuce was the probable cause, with the vegetable used in numerous dishes on the menu.

Almost immediately, Taco Bell launched a newspaper ad blitz and sent its president on a string of media interviews to assure customers that its food was safe.

Four deaths and more than 700 illnesses in Washington, Idaho, California, and Nevada between 1992 and 1993 eventually were traced to undercooked Jack in the Box restaurant hamburgers contaminated with E. coli.

The ensuing investigation by federal regulators changed regulatory practices in the U.S., experts say.

An investigation by the CDC identified five slaughter plants in the U.S. and one in Canada as the likely sources of animals used in the contaminated lots of meat and identified potential control points for reducing the likelihood of contamination. The animals slaughtered in domestic slaughter plants were traced to farms and auctions in six western states. No one slaughter plant or farm was identified as the source.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture mandated a Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point system, which helps identify and control hazards within the system of food production. The system provided for more monitoring and controls to rapidly limit the spread of outbreaks.

Jack in the Box lost more than \$44 million in 1993 and did not post another annual profit for another three years.

UN humanitarianists step up Ebola response amid growing violence in DR Congo

UNITED NATIONS, July 18, (Agencies): UN humanitarianists said Friday that they are scaling up efforts with partners to combat the Ebola outbreak in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), despite escalating violence and insecurity.

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said that partners, working with the DRC government, continue to increase surveillance, laboratory testing, treatment and community engagement efforts to contain the disease, which was declared on Thursday to be the third-largest Ebola outbreak on record. Priorities include speeding up case alerts, expanding isolation capacity, and ensuring safe and dignified burials.

OCHA said national authorities tallied 2,124 confirmed Ebola cases across the provinces of Ituri, North Kivu, South Kivu, Haut-Uele and Tshopo as of Wednesday. In Ituri, the areas of Bunia and Rwampara remain the epicenter of the outbreak, with transmission continuing at a very high level and evidence that many cases are still going undetected in the community.

Ten ambulances provided by the DRC government arrived in Ituri on Thursday to strengthen response operations, including patient transport and case management, the office said.

In the latest example of insecurity challenging the Ebola response, OCHA said local authorities in North Kivu reported that at least 10 people were killed, seven others injured during an attack in the Beni territory on Wednesday.

The attack followed a series of deadly incidents in the area that have reportedly claimed at least 22 lives since Sunday, OCHA said, noting that the "surge in violence has displaced civilians and further complicates humanitarian access in an area already grappling with the outbreak."

The office called on all parties to protect civilians, facilitate safe and sustained humanitarian access, and ensure the safety of health workers and response teams. "These conditions are essential for containing the outbreak and

delivering life-saving assistance to those most in need," OCHA said.

Legionnaires: A Legionnaires' disease outbreak that has sickened dozens of people in New York City has claimed its first life, health officials said Friday.

Officials didn't release additional information about the person's identity, age or details on when and how they fell ill.

Investigators are still trying to pinpoint the source of the outbreak on Manhattan's Upper East Side that has infected at least 67 people and hospitalized dozens, according to city Health Department data. Much of the scrutiny has focused on the air conditioning systems atop many large buildings, which can release water vapor carrying the bacteria.

Legionnaires' disease, a form of pneumonia, is treatable but kills about 10% of patients, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Last year, seven people died and more than 100 were sickened during an outbreak in New York's Harlem neighborhood. City officials began tracking the current outbreak July 2, after two people were infected in the area.

The city says tests have identified either living or dead Legionella bacteria - the micro-organisms that cause the disease - in cooling towers on more than 75 Upper East Side buildings. They include prominent museums, private schools and pricey apartment houses.

It's not yet clear which, if any, of them contributed to the outbreak, but all the buildings were ordered to clean, drain and disinfect the cooling towers. They are devices sometimes used to cool large buildings.

Legionella bacteria grow in warm water and can spread in cooling towers, hot tubs and showerheads. In many cases, people contract the disease by inhaling tiny droplets of contaminated water. Legionnaires' disease doesn't spread person-to-person.



Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director General of the World Health Organization (WHO), speaks to the media regarding the epidemic of Ebola and global health issues during a press conference, at the World Health Organization (WHO) headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland on July 16. (AP)



SpaceX's mega rocket Starship begins its take off but is aborted, in Starbase, Texas, on July 16. (AP)

SpaceX Starship launch aborted on the pad at the last moment

WASHINGTON, July 18, (Agencies): SpaceX's mega Starship rocket came within a second or so from blasting off on a test flight Thursday, but some of the engines failed to ignite, triggering a launch abort amid billowing clouds of smoke and vapor.

Elon Musk, the company's founder and CEO, said two engines will be replaced "to be confident of a good flight" before sending Starship from Texas on a space-skimming journey halfway around the world. It will be the 13th flight for Starship, which at 407 feet (124 meters) tall with 33 main engines is the world's biggest and most powerful rocket.

SpaceX's launch webcast showed the start of engine ignition three seconds before the planned liftoff, viewed from a drone high above the pad. Although the company did not elaborate, onscreen data showed four engines not firing, with the remaining 29 engines immediately shutting down and keeping the rocket anchored to the pad. It was the first time a full-scale Starship experienced a last-second abort like this.

The launch team immediately be-

gan draining the fuel from the rocket.

"Most probable launch timing is early next week," Musk said via X.

Everything was going SpaceX's way, even the weather, until the partial engine ignition. In the end, the rocket's automatic launch system worked as planned by halting everything. Too few operating engines could have doomed the launch. Some earlier Starship flights ended in explosive fireballs.

Twenty of SpaceX's newest and most advanced Starlinks were on board Starship for release during the planned hourlong flight from Starbase, the company's hub near the Texas-Mexico border. The internet satellites were going to try communicating with Starlinks already in orbit while taking photos of Starship's heat shield.

Neither the first-stage booster nor spacecraft were meant to be recovered, with both ending up in the sea.

The rocket's automatic launch system worked as planned by halting everything. Too few operating engines could have resulted in a failed launch. Some earlier Starship flights, for example, ended in explosive fireballs.

NASA is counting on Starship to land its astronauts on the moon in the next few years. The space agency has hired SpaceX and Jeff Bezos' Blue Origin to build and fly the lunar landers that will return humanity to the surface of the moon after an absence of more than half a century.

Also:

LONDON: The cost of sending cargo into low Earth orbit could fall by more than 90 percent by 2040, potentially opening the way for new industries ranging from zero-gravity research to manufacturing in space, according to a study released Tuesday by the University of Cambridge.

Researchers said the average cost of launching one kilogram of payload into low Earth orbit was 3,868 U.S. dollars in 2025. That could fall by more than 58 percent to 1,569 dollars by 2030 and to as low as 273 dollars by 2040.

The study, published in the journal PNAS Nexus, analyzed more than 4,400 launches conducted by various countries between 1960 and 2025, which the researchers described as the largest global dataset of rocket launches assembled to date.

Battery bank or generator? How to choose best backup power for home during outage

WASHINGTON, July 18, (AP): From portable battery banks and generators to whole-house systems, there are many backup power choices to consider as extreme weather ramps up and outages happen more often and last longer.

People need solutions to keep medical devices, cellphones and other important appliances powered up.

"If you're deciding between different backup power options for what you need, different conditions are going to require different elements, like a heat wave versus a hurricane," said Noah Kittner, associate professor at the University of North Carolina's Gillings School of Global Public Health.

Experts offer tips for finding the right backup to keep your home running when electricity is out in your area during a storm, heat wave or other conditions.

If you just need to charge a few small items for short periods, portable battery banks might be the best bet.

Power banks that can recharge a phone a few times - and are often about the same size as one - typically cost less than \$100. Many have built-in USB ports. Between uses, they can be recharged by plugging them into an electric outlet. Larger and more powerful ones can be a few hundred dollars and have traditional sockets for plugging in multiple items.

They're extremely portable and typically work best for the basics: phones, computers, flashlights and small lights - but not for larger appliances such as dishwashers or air conditioning, experts say.

Traditional, portable generators are fueled by diesel, propane or gasoline. They're about the size of a microwave oven or a mini fridge, and are typically on wheels so they can be moved around. They must be used outdoors and away from your home because they emit carbon monoxide and other gases harmful to humans and the planet.

These options, depending on their wattage, can power larger items such as refrigerators and freezers, window air-conditioning units, fans and televisions, but they typically can't power an entire house.

Conventional generators can run 6 to 12 hours at a time or longer, depending on what they're powering and how much fuel is consumed.

Their prices can range from several hundred dollars to \$1,000 or more, but keep in mind any maintenance and fluctuating fuel costs as well.

"The standard designs for fuel tank capacity are no longer sufficient to deal with multiday outages, which we're



Sonam Velani and Yan Sim plug in a battery from Every Electric to power an air conditioner as part of a pilot program with the city's energy company Con Edison to reduce pressure on the electrical grid on April 27, 2026, in the Brooklyn borough of New York. (AP)

increasingly seeing due to extreme weather," said Mark Dyson, a managing director at energy nonprofit RMI.

"That's a really important consideration as folks think about the trade-offs between a traditional fuel-based backup, where increasingly you have to buy a lot of fuel storage to cover yourself for a really extended outage, which are becoming more common and more likely."

Whole-house systems may make sense in areas with frequent or long-lasting outages, or for people with life-saving medical devices that cannot experience a disruption. The systems are hard-wired to the home's electrical system, often with a connection to natural gas or propane tanks.

When power goes out, these detect the outage and use an automatic transfer switch to shift the home from the grid to generator power.

These units can cost \$5,000 to \$20,000 or more, depending on the size of your home, the system and installation costs. If your home system is a medical necessity, check to see if it can qualify as tax-deductible, or if there are programs that can cover some of the expense. Installation typically requires days or weeks of lead time.

Integrated home battery systems that provide electricity on a similar scale by using rooftop solar or grid energy, instead of liquid fuel, could cost even more.

Portable power stations that operate without fossil fuels are becoming more popular. They use small solar panels or wall outlets to store energy for when it's needed. Consumers can find smaller, less expensive options about the size of a lunchbox for a few hundred dollars, or heavy-duty options the size of a suitcase for \$3,500 or more.

They can power computers, modems, televisions, fans, freezers and other medium-sized devices.

"Our solutions now rival that of traditional gas generators," said Rachel Stotts, communications head at Jackery, which sells power stations.

"Maybe a decade ago, it was a camping solution, it was portable power on the go that you stuck in your car and you could run all your basic equipment ... But now you could run 99.9% of anything you want in your house - and need."

Other power station manufacturers include EcoFlow and Anker.

The next step up: People who have rooftop solar can pair it with large battery systems that store power from the sun for later use.

"Having solar electricity that's coupled with the battery system is quite unique, especially in an extended outage, because you have the capability to replenish your battery over time as the days go by," Kittner said.

Installation of a solar-and-battery system could cost at least \$20,000, but the added costs can be offset by other benefits in the long run, experts say.

"I would look beyond just the upfront cost of providing power during those outages," Kittner added, "but also other benefits you might get year-round from having a battery even when electricity is in service."

Obituary

First player to score 8,000 test runs and six sixes in over

West Indies cricketing great Garry Sobers dies at age 89

BRIDGETOWN, Barbados, July 18, (AP): Garry Sobers, the graceful West Indian cricketer whose world-record test innings of 365 not out as a 21-year-old set him on the path to becoming arguably the sport's greatest allrounder, has died. He was 89.

West Indies' cricket federation announced his death on Friday without providing a cause.

"In the story of cricket, there are great players. There are champions. Then, there are those rare individuals who redefine the very meaning of greatness," said Kishore Shallow, president of Cricket West Indies.

"Sir Garfield Sobers was the greatest cricketer the world has ever seen. His mastery of batting, bowling and fielding was unparalleled, but his true significance reached far beyond the boundary ropes."

Born in Bridgetown, Barbados, with an extra finger on each hand, Sobers hit 26 test centuries and had a test average of 57.78 from batting that was both elegant and powerful. He was also a versatile bowler, dangerous with both wrist-spin and fast-medium deliveries.

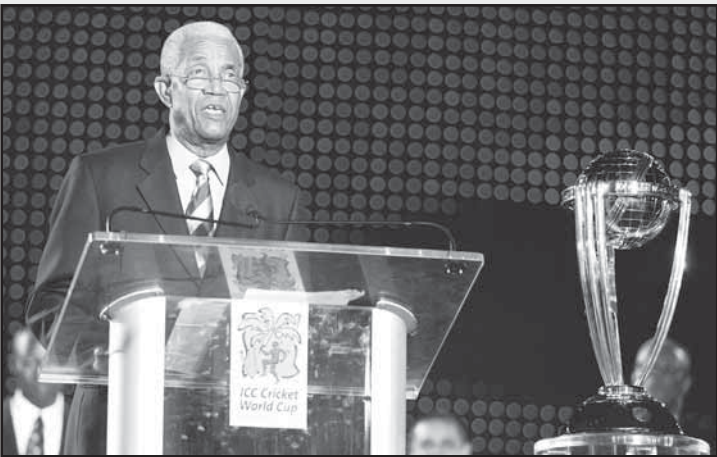
Sobers held a slew of records. His unbeaten 365 against Pakistan in 1958 - remarkably his first test century - was the record score for 36 years, before countryman Brian Lara bettered it. He also was the first player to reach 8,000 runs in test cricket and to hit six sixes in one over in a first-class game, for Nottinghamshire against Glamorgan in English county cricket in 1968.

All this achieved while maintaining a party lifestyle.

"Well, it's an exaggeration to say I was partying every night. Just every other," Sobers told The Guardian newspaper in 2002.

"The night before a test match, I'd always be out and about all night. Sometimes I didn't sleep at all before a big game."

Sobers played 93 tests for the West Indies from 1954-74, making his



In this file photo, West Indies' cricket legend Sir Garfield Sobers speaks during the opening ceremony of the ICC Cricket World Cup at Trelawny Stadium, Jamaica. (AP)

debut at age 17 and retiring at 38 with 8,032 runs, 235 wickets and 109 catches. He captained his country a then-record 39 times. He was the best fielder of his generation, so alert at slip with his quick hands.

Wisden rated him as one of the five best cricketers of the 20th century alongside Don Bradman, Jack Hobbs, Viv Richards and Shane Warne. For

Bradman - widely recognized as the best cricketer of all time - Sobers was cricket's greatest allrounder. Queen Elizabeth II knighted him in 1975 for services to cricket.

Born July 28, 1936, Garfield St. Aubrun Sobers was raised in a poor family which lived in a one-story wooden house. One of seven children, he was age 5 when his father, a merchant seaman, died at sea.

Sobers played golf, football and basketball for Barbados but devoted himself to cricket, learning the game on the beach with bats made of palm leaves and balls of rolled-up tar.

Within a year of making his first-class debut at 16 and without ever being properly coached, Sobers was playing international cricket - initially as a left-arm slow bowler. He soon became known for his timing as a batter, the variety of his strokes and his ability to excel in all departments of the game.

"He could do anything," former Australia captain and legendary commentator Richie Benaud said. It took him 29 test innings to reach three figures, against Pakistan in Kingston in February 1958. It was in that innings that he went on to become the youngest triple-centurion and then break Len Hutton's world-record mark of 364, which had stood for nearly 20 years.

Sobers was present when Lara broke his record against England in Antigua in April 1994, eventually getting out for 375.

"There was a lot of pressure on him, people telling him not to break the record, to preserve it for the legend," Sobers recalled. "So I spoke to him in the dressing room during his innings and said, 'Go out and do it, man.'"

Sobers is arguably most famous for smashing six sixes in one over, off spinner Malcolm Nash in a match at Swansea as Sobers pushed Nottinghamshire toward a declaration. He was caught on the fifth delivery, but the fielder fell back over the boundary.

New Zealand routs Ireland, keeps winning streak alive

France runs riot against Japan in Tokyo

AUCKLAND, New Zealand, July 18, (AP): The "fast and fearless" style New Zealand rehearsed in Nations Championship wins over France and Italy bore fruit against Ireland in a 40-21 victory that extended the All Blacks' winning streak at Eden Park to 53 matches over 32 years.

This was the toughest test of Dave Rennie's young tenure as All Blacks head coach and he was vindicated in his efforts to establish a bold, ball-in-hand game in a six tries-to-three win.

In its early matches in the Championship, New Zealand's efforts to play that style were successful in fits and starts, let down by poor execution or lack of discipline.

On Saturday, the All Blacks were more precise, more decisive and mostly in control against an Ireland team that came to Eden Park high on confidence.

New Zealand's set pieces were good, it was physical at the breakdown and won front-foot ball which fueled a sprawling attacking game. The backs also were more accurate while Ireland was harried into errors in the first half.

Ireland sought to slow down the match but New Zealand subverted that tactic, forcing turnovers and kicking only sparingly. The All Blacks led 28-7 after a four-try first half that left Ireland chasing the match.

Quinn Tupaea was a dynamo in midfield for New Zealand and Damian McKenzie was dangerous both from fullback and from flyhalf later in the game.

The All Blacks conceded early tries against both France and Italy and were determined to avoid the need to play from behind Saturday. Ireland's first venture into the New Zealand 22 didn't come until the



New Zealand's Anton Lienert-Brown, right, breaks a tackle from Ireland to score a try during their Nations Championship rugby international test match in Auckland, New Zealand. (AP)

12th minute and went unrewarded when Tadhg Beirne played the ball in an offside position.

New Zealand scored first in the 15th minute when it broke into Ireland's 22 with a strong run by Tupou Vaa'i, who relished his move from lock to the backrow. The All Blacks kept possession, moved the ball toward space and Patrick Tuipulotu scored to mark his first test of the season.

The All Blacks scored again in the 22nd minute, foregoing a kick at goal from a penalty in favor a scrum 10 meters out. With the back-line split, Ireland was indecisive, expecting New Zealand to go to the backs. Instead, Ardie Savea carried strongly from the back of the scrum to score.

After 25 minutes, Ireland already had missed 19 tackles and cracks were showing.

New Zealand had a prime attacking opportunity with a penalty advantage five meters from the Ireland line in the 28th minute. But backrower Luke Jacobson was sinbinned for a dangerous cleanout.

Ireland entered the New Zealand 22 again and Jack Conan handled twice before scoring off a short pass from Jamison Gibson-Park.

New Zealand hit back from the restart. Ireland set up a ruck on its 22-meter line but again lost the ball to a loose pass. Will Jordan swooped to score in the 35th minute for his 51st test try.

Four minutes later, the All Blacks pressed the Ireland line again and

Asafo Aumua touched the ball down on the line with his second carry.

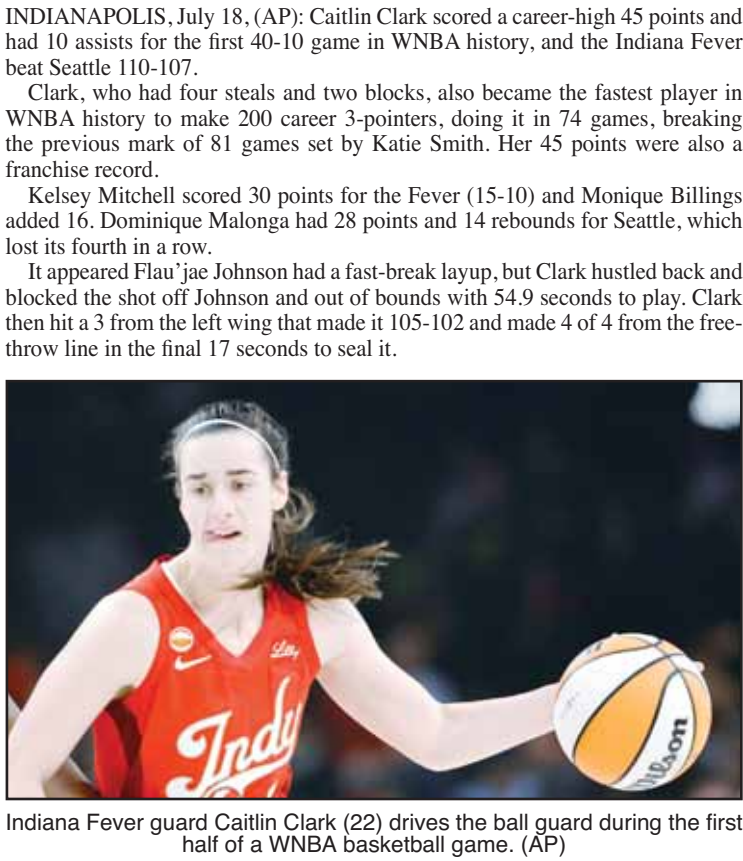
Ireland answered in the 45th minute. Gibson-Park's break carried it inside the 22, Ireland won a penalty and went to a lineup. Joe McCarthy carried the ball strongly and Josh van der Flier went close before McCarthy managed to drive over the line.

Meanwhile, Matthieu Jalibert and hooker Maxime Lamothe scored two tries each and skipper Maxime Lucu tallied 15 points from five conversions and a try in an influential performance to lead France to a 42-15 win over Japan.

Japan matched France physically in the first half and trailed 28-15 at halftime but lost touch on the scoreboard after conceding two tries early in the second.

Lacan scores career-high 26 points, Sun beats Mercury

Clark makes WNBA history with 1st 40-10 game



Indiana Fever guard Caitlin Clark (22) drives the ball guard during the first half of a WNBA basketball game. (AP)

Clark scored 10 points in a 12-4 run and capped the spurt with a 3-pointer that made it 49-32 with 7:28 left before halftime.

Mitchell scored 17 points on 7-of-9 shooting, and Clark added five points, five assists and two steals, as the Fever tied their highest-scoring first quarter this season and took a 37-26 lead after one.

Johnson and Awa Fam had 16 points apiece for Seattle, and Natisha Hiedeman and Jade Melbourne each scored 15.

The Storm (6-21) have lost six of seven.

Alyiah Boston (leg) did not play for Indiana on the first night of a back-to-back. Indiana beat the Storm 89-78 at home on May 17.

Sun 96, Mercury 83

In Phoenix, Leila Lacan scored a career-high 26 points on 10-of-13 shooting from the field to lead the Connecticut Sun to a victory over the Phoenix Mercury in the first of back-to-back meetings between the teams.

The Sun (7-18) have won consecutive games for just the second time this season and are 5-3 in their last eight.

Kennedy Burke had 13 points, Brittney Griner and Aaliyah Edwards scored 12 apiece and Diamond Miller added 11 for the Sun.

Kahleah Copper had 21 points to lead the Mercury (8-18), who have lost five straight. Alyssa Thomas had 15 points, eight rebounds and six assists, Valerieane Ayayi scored 13 points and DeWanna Bonner grabbed 10 rebounds to go with eight points.

Lacan hit a 3-pointer, converted a three-point play and then made a layup that capped an 11-0 run and gave Connecticut a 19-point lead with 4:10 remaining in the second quarter.

The Mercury were scoreless for nearly four minutes, went without a made field goal for almost five and committed eight of their 13 turnovers in the second quarter.

Sky 96, Sparks 82

In Chicago, Sydney Taylor hit four 3-pointers and scored 19 points and the Chicago Sky beat Los Angeles as Nneka Ogumike became the Sparks' career scoring leader.

Ogumike finished with 18 points and 12 rebounds, also moving past Candace Parker (3,467) into third on the WNBA's career rebounds list with 3,472.

Kamilla Cardoso had 13 points, 11 rebounds and two blocks for Chicago (7-16). Natasha Cloud had 15 points and nine rebounds, Jacy Sheldon added 14 points and Azura Stevens scored 12 points.

Volleyball season preps begin

Al Nasr keeps Al-Daihani

By Khaled Al-Enezi
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, July 18: Al Nasr's board of directors has decided to retain Mohammed Al-Daihani as manager of the first-team volleyball squad, rewarding his efforts and contributions over the past years.

The club praised Al-Daihani's important role in advancing volleyball at Al Nasr, pointing to his effective administrative work that has helped raise the team's level and strengthen its competitiveness in domestic tournaments.

The board expressed its confidence in Al-Daihani's ability to continue achieving success with the "Al-Anabi" and wished him the best for the upcoming season.

Al-Daihani thanked the club's board and volleyball department for their continued trust, saying that preparations for the new campaign will be carried out with a different approach. He added that the backing of the club's management and technical staff will help the team make a strong impression.

Meanwhile, action at the second West Asia Men's Volleyball Championship in Muscat, Oman, takes a one-



Mohammed Al-Daihani, manager of the Al Nasr volleyball first-team.

day break today after three rounds of preliminary matches.

Kuwait's national volleyball team made a winning start to the tournament, defeating Syria 3-0 in Group A before taking on Qatar yesterday.

The competition resumes tomorrow with the fifth-place playoff and semi-final matches, while the championship final is scheduled for July 21.

Turkish move on the horizon

Besiktas enters race for Salah



Mohammed Salah

ISTANBUL, July 18: Turkish club Besiktas has reportedly made an approach for Egyptian superstar Mohamed Salah, with speculation growing that a surprise move to Istanbul could be nearing completion.

Turkish journalist Yagiz Sabuncuoğlu reported that Besiktas has submitted an offer for the Liverpool forward, adding that Salah is open to reducing his financial demands to make the potential transfer happen.

According to the reports, Salah initially asked for an annual salary of €15 million, but lowered his demands during the first round of talks with Besiktas officials.

The latest indication that negotiations are progressing came with the arrival of Salah's lawyer in Istanbul, suggesting that discussions over the contractual and legal details of a possible deal are under way.

Salah, widely regarded as one of the Premier League's greatest players, had been strongly linked with a move to Saudi Arabia, with reports claiming he received major offers from clubs in the Saudi Pro League over the past two years.

Many had expected Saudi Arabia to be his next destination after his successful nine-year run with Liverpool, where he established himself as a club legend.

However, Salah's future remains undecided, with his agent Ramy Abbas saying: "We still don't know where Salah will play next season, but we may find out very soon."

Son scores first goal of season

CARSON, Calif., July 17, (AP): Son Heung-min scored his first goal of the season, Denis Bouanga continued his scoring streak in El Tráfico and LAFC beat the LA Galaxy 3-0 on Friday night following an international break for the FIFA World Cup.

LAFC (8-5-3) evened the all-time series with Galaxy at 10-10-7. LA (5-6-5) entered unbeaten in the last three meetings with LAFC.

Mark Delgado, who played for the Galaxy from 2022-24, opened the scoring in the 26th minute. Delgado's initial header was blocked but it came right back to him for a shot past goalkeeper Novak Micovic.

Bouanga made it 2-0 in first-half stoppage time on a penalty kick that goalkeeper Novak Micovic got a hand on. Meanwhile, Shak Mohammed scored in the 79th minute, Brian Schwake made five saves for his seventh clean sheet of the season, and Nashville beat Atlanta United 1-0 on Friday night for its fourth straight victory.

Nashville (11-1-3) moved five points ahead of second-place Inter Miami in the Eastern Conference standings and four points in front of Vancouver in the Supporters' Shield race. Nashville is unbeaten in nine-straight games.

Atlanta (3-10-2) is on a four-game winless streak. Mohammed headed in Alex Muyl's cross for his second goal with Nashville - both coming against Atlanta. Muyl entered as a substitute in the 74th.



World Cup Diary

Spanish PM to attend World Cup final: Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez plans to attend Sunday’s World Cup final against Argentina, his office said.

Spanish King Felipe VI is also expected to watch the game in East Rutherford, New Jersey.

U.S. President Donald Trump will also be at the final. Sánchez and Trump have repeatedly clashed on the world diplomatic stage, including over the Iran war, Spain’s spending on NATO, and U.S. support for Israel’s military response in Gaza to the 2023 Hamas attacks.

Argentine President Javier Milei, an ally of Trump, is not going to attend the final, citing superstition. Milei said he will watch from home as three-time winner Argentina tries to defend its world crown against 2010 champion Spain. (AP)



Vincic to referee World Cup final: The World Cup final between Argentina and Spain on Sunday will be refereed by Slavko Vinčić of Slovenia, two years after he was in charge of a Champions League final.

It’s the second straight World Cup final where Argentina, now the defending champion, will have a European referee to face a European opponent.

FIFA has faced criticism during the current World Cup for Argentina seeming to get the benefit of some refereeing decisions - including when soccer great Lionel Messi escaped a red card for a rough challenge on an Algeria opponent - with the coaches of Egypt and South Africa claiming inconsistencies.

After Egypt formally alleged bias in decisions during its 3-2 loss to Argentina, FIFA director of referees Pierluigi Collina said: “Nobody can question the integrity of the FIFA World Cup match officials.”

In his three games so far at the 2026 World Cup, Vinčić has shown seven yellow cards and one red card, and awarded no penalty kicks.

In the most recent of his games, in the round of 32 more than two weeks ago, Vinčić sent off Ecuador’s Piero Hincapié after a video review for covering his mouth in a confrontation with a Mexico opponent.

Vinčić also worked two group-stage games, when Brazil and Morocco drew 1-1 and Algeria beat Jordan 2-1. (AP)

‘Better than any film script’

World Cup destiny: Messi bathed Yamal as baby, now they face off for soccer’s top title

BARCELONA, Spain, July 18, (AP): Almost two decades ago, photographer Joan Monfort didn’t think much of his photo shoot of a teenage Lionel Messi bathing a cute baby boy in a plastic bathtub. Not until the remarkable twist of fate became clear years later, when that infant blossomed into Lamine Yamal.

Now those images of the long-haired Messi, his hands covered in soap suds as if anointing Yamal as soccer’s Next Big Thing, have become the most talked about - and gawked about - in the runup to Sunday’s World Cup final, when Messi’s Argentina will play Yamal’s Spain for the biggest trophy in the sport.

“I have never been a believer or thought that anything was destined to occur, but I am beginning to have my doubts. This is beyond all reasonable explanations,” Monfort told The Associated Press from his home in Barcelona on Friday.

Monfort, who works as a freelance photojournalist for the AP, took the photos in 2007 as part of a charity calendar produced by local newspaper Sport and UNICEF.



20-year-old soccer star Lionel Messi helps to bathe Lamine Yamal, who was merely six months old at the time, during a photo session in the dressing room of the Camp Nou stadium in Barcelona, Spain. (AP)

Luck dictated that Yamal’s mother, who appears in the calendar photo, won a raffle of families in the city of Mataró, near Barcelona, who wanted to participate. Soccer destiny then deemed that her baby boy,

trouble. Yamal erupted at the club two years later. The journey is now complete, from bathtub to World Cup final, when the 19-year-old Yamal will face a Messi who is 20 years his senior.

Monfort had no recollection of the photos until Yamal’s father posted one on social media during the 2024 European Championship, when a teenage Yamal was enjoying his international breakout and led Spain to the title.

The photo went viral then. But now, with the World Cup final looming, Monfort said, interest in his photos has skyrocketed.

“This has exploded all over the world, and the fact that the final is in the U.S. has given it the extra push,” Monfort said. “And now this has culminated with the final between Messi and Yamal. It is better than any film script.”

Monfort said that he has been bombarded by queries for the photos by professional media outlets, while also seeing his images reproduced countless times on social media and the internet without any credit or compensation.

Trump, Infantino give World Cup high praise, calling tournament a success

‘American dream came to reality’

NEW YORK, July 18: (AP): FIFA President Gianni Infantino deemed the World Cup a success on Friday, again lauding President Donald Trump for his role in the event and saying the tournament achieved its mission of uniting people from all corners of the globe.

Infantino pointed to many numbers - sold-out stadiums and big television ratings - as proof that the biggest World Cup ever met expectations, as Trump nodded in approval.

“The American dream, Mr. President, came to reality,” Infantino said as he stood alongside Trump in New York on Friday. “We united the world.”

Trump hosted a reception at Trump Tower in Manhattan for Infantino and international soccer stars. Trump and Infantino spoke next to the golden trophy Trump plans to award to the winner of Sunday’s final between Argentina and Spain.

As he often does in Trump’s presence, Infantino was effusive in his praise: “You don’t need people to compliment you, Mr. President, but this World Cup would not have been such an incredible success without you.”

Trump called this World Cup “one of the all-time greatest sporting events in history,” adding that the tournament galvanized more than just the sporting world.

“So good luck to Spain and Argentina on Sunday and may the best team win,” Trump said.

Earlier Friday, Infantino spoke at the United Nations as part of a daylong session there about how the game can be a catalyst for youth mental health. He brought one of the official game balls that are to be used in Sunday’s World Cup final between Argentina and Spain to



President Donald Trump listens as FIFA President Gianni Infantino speaks at a reception at Trump Tower in New York. (AP)

the stage, calling it “a magic object which has the power to unite the world.”

“We hear it many times, don’t we, that we live in a divided world, that we live in an aggressive world, that there are so many things that divide us, that create us problems,” Infantino said. “But we know as well, and if there is one thing, if there is one thing that this World Cup has shown us and is showing us, we know that there are many more things that bring us together than things that divide us.”

This was the largest World Cup in history, with 48 teams qualifying and matches spread out over the U.S., Canada and Mexico. FIFA has said stadiums have been basically full for each of the 102 matches played to date - there are two remaining, the France-England game for third place in Miami Gardens, Florida, on Saturday, and then Sunday’s final in East Rutherford, New Jersey.

Total attendance for the tournament will end up somewhere around 6.7 million - a World Cup record, despite concerns months ago that high ticket prices and immigration issues would deter fans from coming to North America for the matches.

“We have seen millions of people coming together in the last month and a half to the United States, to Canada and to Mexico, but in every corner of the world, coming together in a peaceful way, in a joyful way, wanting to spend time together and wanting to celebrate a moment of community,” Infantino said. “This is the strongest message ever and this is the message on which we have to build our future - a future of community and a future of unity.”

The tournament has not had any major security incidents, which some feared, but has featured geopolitical discomfort and controversy. The Iranian team had a tumultuous experience, narrowly being knocked out in the group stage while facing what it said were onerous travel restrictions as its country was at war with the U.S. Infantino was criticized globally after lifting U.S. star Folarin Balogun’s red-card suspension following urging from Trump - who described his role in that saga as “making a recommendation.”

“Gianni made yet another of his good decisions,” Trump said.

And the British government has urged FIFA to investigate Argentina’s soccer team after players posed with a banner claiming sovereignty over the Falkland Islands after their semifinal win against England.

Caught between rock and hard place

Argentines and Spaniards face divided loyalties ahead of final

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina, July 18, (AP): Cervantes and Borges. Tortilla and asado. Flamenco and tango.

Argentines and Spaniards have long been united by blood ties and a relationship of mutual admiration, but the World Cup final between these two Spanish-speaking nations has placed many of them at a crossroads: Should they support La Furia or La Albiceleste on Sunday?

“It feels like being caught between a rock and a hard place,” admitted Juan Manuel Posada, a 75-year-old Spaniard originally from Asturias who settled in Buenos Aires in 1968.

The clash in New Jersey will mark the first All-Spanish-speaking World Cup final since the inaugural 1930 tournament, when host Uruguay defeated Argentina 4-2 in Montevideo.

It was a Spaniard, Pedro de Mendoza, who founded Buenos Aires in the mid-16th century. The battles for independence did not alter the strong cultural influence of the Iberian Peninsula on the young nation - an influence that deepened with the waves of Spanish migration in the first half of the 20th century.

“It’s as if I’d arrived just yesterday. My heart is in Asturias, in Spain, and with the Spanish national team. Without a doubt,” said Posada, a fan of the Spanish club Sporting de Gijón who, in his adopted country, became a supporter of Independiente de Avellaneda. “If Spain wins, great, but if Argentina wins, I won’t be upset at all,” he added in the Asturian accent he still retains.

Manuel Fernández Acevedo is 81 years old; he left Baiona, in Vigo, with his family when he was very young to settle in Argentina, where his daughter and granddaughter were born. Torn between the two countries, he said, “May the best team win. If Spain wins, that’s great, and if it’s Argentina’s turn, that’s fine, too.”

Just as literature, gastronomy, and music were enriched by that bond of brotherhood, football also felt its impact, with Argentina’s Alfredo Di Stéfano and Lionel Messi standing out as the greatest icons at Real Madrid and Barcelona, respectively.

Surprisingly, there is no classic football rivalry between the two countries, partly because, in nearly a century of World Cup history, the Spanish and Argentines have faced each other only once. That encounter was during the group stage of the 1966 World Cup, resulting in a victory for La Albiceleste.

Of course, a final is a different story altogether.

Back to Posada. “I have an Argentine grandson who said to me the other day, ‘Grandpa, if Spain wins, I’ll wear the Spain shirt and carry the flag, and we’ll celebrate. But if Argentina wins, you have to come wearing my country’s shirt and carrying its flag.’ I told him that was fine, but I don’t think we could go out to the Obelisk to celebrate wearing a Spain shirt.” The laughing Posada was referring to the Buenos Aires monument that serves as the epicenter of celebrations for La Albiceleste’s victories.



Fans watch the World Cup semifinal soccer match between England and Argentina in Buenos Aires, Argentina. (AP)

World Cup final will be played on turf with mixed reviews, rain might help

NEW JERSEY, July 18, (AP): Players and coaches have fielded a lot of questions about the pitch in East Rutherford, New Jersey, before and after World Cup games there. Opinions have varied.

Brazil’s Vinicius Junior was not a fan. France coach Didier Deschamps called it special - and not in a good way. Norway’s Ståle Solbakken was asked several times about the surface before coaching his first game on it and came away more pleased about it than he expected.

While entirely different than the turf surface at the stadium that has been maligned by NFL players, the grass field with synthetic fibers stitched in to reduce the risk of divots and tears has drawn mixed reviews through the first seven games of the tournament there. After a nearly two-week break for staff to get it in the best condition possible, the most important game takes place there Sunday when Argentina and Spain meet in the final.

Neither team has played at the Meadowlands stadium yet, adding another element of uncertainty to the matchup.

Before Norway faced Senegal in New Jersey, Solbakken compared the Meadowlands pitch to AstroTurf. He said the short, firm grass could be good for teams who like to possess the ball. Torrential rain fell before and during the game on June 22, changing the complexion of how it played.

“The pitch was much better because of the rain, because the rain made it (so) that the ball doesn’t hang on your foot,” Solbakken said. “It’s going faster, smoother, and that made two good teams could play to their strength, so the pitch, due to the rain, was better. I’m more suspicious if there’s no rain because then it’s dry and short and then it could be more difficult, but with the

rain today it made the pitch much, much better.”

It was dry when England met Panama in each team’s final group play game. England coach Thomas Tuchel also likened it to artificial turf for the shortness



In this file photo, sprinklers water the grass during the pitch installation for FIFA World Cup 2026 at NYNJ Stadium in East Rutherford, N.J. (AP)

of the blades of grass - very different from the field in Foxborough, Massachusetts.

“It’s a very fast pitch,” Tuchel said. “It’s very short and a bit uneven because you see still the different layers of the grass and not fully even. So, it’s quite active. It is quite bouncy. ... This one was very hard and very fast but was good, playable, and no one complained.”

Vinicius after Brazil opened there against Morocco and scoring on June 13 said, “The field is not helping.” Rabiot, who played there against Senegal three days later, called it hard and rigid.

“In Europe, we play on pitches that are in a better condition,” Rabiot said through an interpreter. “The pitch was not in a good condition, in my mind. I saw that there has been also a lot of criticism, so I’m not the only one criticizing the state of it.”

Deschamps called it tough and said the pitch “took a lot out of the players’ muscles.”

By the time France returned to open the knockout stage against Sweden on June 30, Rabiot said he believed there had been a slight improvement and the grass was longer.

FIFA said the preparations included testing and collaboration with turf experts and stadium operators. The pitch, with grass from the Carolina Green Sod Farm, got installed in early May.

After the hybrid fibers were added, workers followed a continuous cycle of top dressing, aeration, mowing and what FIFA called carefully managed irrigation.



French soccer icon Zinedine Zidane is closing in on a deal to become the new head coach of the national team, according to reports from ESPN and Italian transfer expert Fabrizio Romano.

Sports

Spain, Argentina ready for dream World Cup showdown

Messi against Yamal

NEW JERSEY, July 18: The 23rd FIFA World Cup comes to a thrilling conclusion Sunday at the MetLife Stadium in East Rutherford, New Jersey, as Spain face defending champions Argentina in a landmark final.

For the first time in World Cup history, the reigning European champions will meet the current Copa América holder in the tournament decider.

Spain is bidding for its second World Cup triumph, having reached only its second final after lifting the trophy in South Africa in 2010. Argentina, meanwhile, is chasing a fourth title that would match Brazil.

The final will mark Argentina's seventh appearance in the World Cup final. They previously reached the showpiece match in 1930, 1978, 1986, 1990, 2014 and 2022, winning three times – against the Netherlands in 1978, West Germany in 1986 and France in 2022 – while losing to Uruguay in 1930 and Germany in 1990 and 2014.

Argentina will once again look to Captain Lionel Messi, the joint top scorer at the tournament with France's Kylian Mbappé on eight goals and the leading scorer in World Cup history with 21 goals. Spain, however, will hope teenage



Spain's Lamine Yamal controls the ball during a World Cup semifinal soccer match against France in Arlington, Texas, near Dallas. (AP)

star Lamine Yamal can deliver the decisive touch in what could be the biggest match of his young career.

European teams have dominated World Cup history, collecting 12 titles – Germany and Italy with four each, France with two, and Spain and England with one apiece – compared with 10 championships for South America, shared between Brazil (five), Argentina (three) and Uruguay (two).

Spain has been almost flawless defensively, conceding just one goal

during the tournament and never trailing in any match. It became the first team to record six clean sheets in a single World Cup edition.

Its balanced approach has carried them through the competition, with its strength on both ends of the pitch highlighted by a 2-0 semi-final win over France, the 2018 champion and 2022 runner-up.

Despite opening the tournament with a surprise goalless draw against Cape Verde, Spain quickly silenced

doubts by winning six consecutive matches.

Having eliminated Austria, Portugal, Belgium and France in the knockout stages, Spain is now one victory away from a historic achievement. It enters the final unbeaten in 37 matches (27 wins and 10 draws in normal time), with a victory set to give it the longest unbeaten streak ever recorded by a European national team and a sixth major trophy in seven finals.



Argentina's Lionel Messi (10) dribbles the ball during the World Cup quarterfinal soccer match against Switzerland in Kansas City, Mo. (AP)

Argentina, meanwhile, once again demonstrated their resilience by coming from behind to defeat England 2-1 in Atlanta in the semi-finals and secure their place in the final.

Only Germany, with eight appearances, has reached the World Cup final more times than Argentina. The reigning champion has needed either extra time or a late comeback in each of its four knockout matches, but its confidence remains high after winning 14 straight games, matching the

best run achieved by a South American national team.

Argentina's remarkable consistency has taken it to its third final in the last four World Cups, and it is aiming to become only the third nation to successfully defend the trophy, after Italy (1934 and 1938) and Brazil (1958 and 1962).

Standing in its way, however, is history: the last three defending champions to reach the next World Cup final all failed to retain the title.

Kuwait faces Japan challenge at Asian Handball Championship

By Khaled Al-Enezi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

BEIJING, July 18: Kuwait faces a crucial test against Japan today as it continues its campaign at the 19th Asian Youth Handball Championship in China.

A victory would provide the team with a valuable boost in its bid to advance, especially after regaining con-

fidence with a commanding win over India. The coaching staff has also focused on addressing the weaknesses that appeared in the opening defeat against Iran, particularly finishing chances and limiting mistakes in both attack and defense.

Kuwait will look to build on the positive performance from its previous match, relying on the players' high

morale, tactical discipline, and quick transitions between defensive and attacking phases to counter Japan's fast style and organized team play.

The match is expected to be closely contested, with both sides aiming to collect two important points that would improve their qualification hopes before the decisive group-stage fixtures.

Kuwait opened its campaign with a tough loss to Iran but responded strongly by defeating India 47-15 in the previous round, a result that boosted the team's confidence ahead of today's encounter.

Japan, meanwhile, comes into the match after defeats against the UAE and Qatar before securing its first victory of the tournament against India. The result makes the clash with Kuwait a key fixture for both teams as they compete for a place in the next stage.

In the third round of the preliminary phase, Iran and the UAE played out a 25-25 draw, Qatar defeated Japan 29-25, while Kuwait recorded a big win over India.

After a rest day yesterday, the teams return to action today for the fourth round, with Kuwait taking on Japan, China facing Oman, Iran meeting Qatar, Bahrain playing Hong Kong, Korea battling India, and Saudi Arabia going up against Chinese Taipei.



Hassan Rajab is congratulated by his teammates after being named best player in the India match.

Kuwait heads to Canada for World Junior Squash Championships



Kuwait squash delegation preparing for departure.

KUWAIT CITY, July 18: Kuwait's youth squash team has traveled to Canada to take part in the World Junior Squash Championships, which get under way on Monday and continue until July 31.

The tournament will begin with four days of individual competition before the focus shifts to the team event.

The Kuwaiti delegation is led by Kuwait Squash Federation Assistant Secretary-General Hamad Al-Dughaim and includes technical director Sherine Adel, fitness coach Ahmed Al-Sayed, and players Khaled Al-Fawzan, Abdullah Hani, Abdulrahman Al-Sanea and Abdulrahman Al-Kandari.

The team wrapped up its preparations with an intensive training programme featuring twice-daily sessions in Kuwait

before heading to Cairo for a 10-day training camp. During the camp, the players faced top Egyptian opposition in a series of high-level practice matches, allowing the coaching staff to refine tactical and technical aspects while further enhancing the players' physical conditioning.

Al-Dughaim said the Cairo camp had significantly boosted the squad's confidence, adding that the quality of the friendly matches gave the players valuable international experience and strengthened their readiness for the demanding competition ahead.

He expressed hope that Kuwait would deliver a strong performance in Canada and secure positive results in both the individual and team events, highlighting the steady progress of the country's emerging squash talent.

Slovenian increases overall lead

Pogacar attacks in final climb to win Tour 14th stage

LE MARKSTEIN, France, July 18, (AP): Tadej Pogacar launched a trademark attack on the last climb of the day to win the 14th stage of the Tour de France on Saturday and extend his commanding lead as he chases a fifth title.

The Slovenian star raised his arms in the air after clinching his fourth stage of this year's race and 25th overall. Barring injury or mishap, a fifth Tour crown is looking increasingly inevitable. Only Belgian Eddy Merckx, Spaniard Miguel Indurain and Frenchmen Jacques Anquetil and Bernard Hinault have five Tour victories.

Pogacar's UAE Emirates XRG teammate Isaac Del Toro has been impressive so far. The 22-year-old Mexican finished Saturday's stage in second place and French hope Paul Seixas was third ahead of two-time Tour champion Jonas Vingegaard, who is again being dominated by

Pogacar in the big climbs.

Pogacar now leads Vingegaard by 4 minutes, 30 seconds overall in the standings, with Remco Evenepoel 5:04 back in third place and the 19-year-old Seixas improving to fourth at 5:19 behind Pogacar.

Saturday's 155-kilometer (96-mile) route featured three big Category 1 climbs - the second-hardest category in climbing - in the Alsace region and ended at Le Markstein ski resort.

After the first big ascent up Grand Ballon, a group of five were at the front, including Ecuadorian Richard Carapaz, with Pogacar's large yellow jersey group rolling behind as riders tackled the descent in rainy conditions.

After the second big climb, nine kilometers up Ballon d'Alsace, the gap to the yellow jersey group was about two minutes. But with Pogacar's teammates setting a fast pace



Slovenia's Tadej Pogacar, wearing the overall leader's yellow jersey, celebrates as he crosses the finish line to win the fourteenth stage of the Tour de France cycling race with start in Mulhouse and finish in Le Markstein Felling, France. (AP)

in the peloton, it was just over one minute ahead of the day's final big climb up Col du Haag, leading to the finish.

With Pogacar poised to attack at any moment, Vingegaard sat on his wheel as Carapaz surged ahead alone. After Carapaz was caught, Pogacar attacked with 1.6 kilometers left in the climb and Vingegaard could not follow him.

Seixas closed in on Vingegaard with screaming fans lining the route perilously close to the riders.

Up ahead, there was no such stress for Pogacar as he cruised to another dominant stage victory.

Sunday's 15th stage concludes with a daunting HC (the hardest category) up Plateau de Solaison in the French Alps, where the irrepressible Pogacar could well attack again.

Monday is the second rest day of the race, which concludes with its traditional finish in Paris on July 26.

Sabljić takes charge at Al Arabi as Kuwait Club lands Vinicius

By Hassan Mosa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, July 18: Al Arabi has appointed Croatian Goran Sabljic as head coach of its first soccer team, replacing Nasser Al-Shatti. The 47-year-old has previously managed clubs in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Moldova, with the Al Arabi job marking his first coaching experience in the Gulf.

The club also announced its coaching staff, which includes assistants Goran Grubka and Mohamed Abdelnaby, goalkeeping coach Nikša Putra, fitness coach Khalil Jebabli, and performance analyst Mahfouz Jannad.

Al Arabi also confirmed its administrative team, headed by Bader Ashour as chairman, with Abdullah Al-Hairi as vice-chairman, Essa Ashkanani as team manager, Ahmed Abdulghafour as administrator, Abdulrahman Ibrahim as security coordinator, and Jassim Al-Awad as media coordinator.

Sabljić is expected to link up with the squad at its pre-season training camp in Turkey within the next two days after the camp got under way on Friday.

Meanwhile, reports in Jordan said Saad Al-Rousan, the Al Hussein Irbid defender, has received two transfer offers, including one from Al Arabi.

Elsewhere, Kuwait Club strengthened its midfield by signing Brazilian Carlinhos Vinicius, 32, on a free transfer on a one-year deal.

Vinicius arrives after spending last season with UAE club Dibba Al-Hisn and replaces Ivorian Idrissa Doumbia,



New head coach of Al Arabi Croatia Goran Sabljic.

whose contract expired at the end of the previous campaign.

Al Qadsia, meanwhile, completed the signing of Bader Jamal from Al Salmiya. Bahraini media also reported that the club is interested in bringing back former Al Arabi midfielder Kamil Al Aswad, while separate reports claimed Al Qadsia has opened talks with Moroccan defender Mohamed Saud, 30, of Ittihad Tanger.

The Yellow side begins pre-season training on Sunday as preparations for the new season gather pace.

Al Salmiya announced the return of Mubarak Al-Fanaini after his three-year spell with Al Qadsia and also renewed the contracts of Nayef Zwaid, Ahmed Boumayyoun, Omar Ali, Essa Waleed, Abdulmohsen Al-Turkumani, Ahmed Eidan, and goalkeeper Yousef Al-Kandari.

Kazma added Senegalese forward Amath Ndao to its squad and extended the contract of Algerian Idris Chaabi, while opting not to renew the deal of Sudanese player Amer Abdullah.

Antonelli storms to Belgian Grand Prix pole

SPA-FRANCORCHAMPS, Belgium, July 18, (AP): Kimi Antonelli beat a display of Red Bull formation flying to take pole position for the Belgian Grand Prix in qualifying on Saturday and boost his Formula 1 title charge.

Max Verstappen had set the fastest time after smart coordination with Red Bull teammate Isack Hadjar to give him the strongest possible slipstream on his lap.

Mercedes driver Antonelli found a new level of pace on his lap to beat Verstappen by 0.317 of a second and dedicated the pole position as a birthday present to

his father Marco, who turned 61 on Saturday.

"Let's go, man, let's go," he said over the radio.

With Verstappen starting second and teammate and title rival George Russell third on the grid, Antonelli is hoping he can cling on to the lead in the long run-up into the forested hills on the first lap Sunday and that if there's overtaking, "hopefully it's just off in the distance." Beyond that, he said, he'll just focus on managing his tire wear.