



Amir congratulates newly named UK Prime Minister Page 2



NBK posts KD 324.8 million in Net Profit for the first half of 2026 Page 8



‘License’ era begins for online sellers in Kuwait

KUWAIT CITY, July 20, (KUNA): Kuwait’s Ministry of Commerce and Industry has issued Ministerial Resolution No. 109 of 2026 introducing comprehensive regulations for intermediary electronic platforms and applications, establishing a legal framework for digital commerce while enhancing consumer protection and transparency.

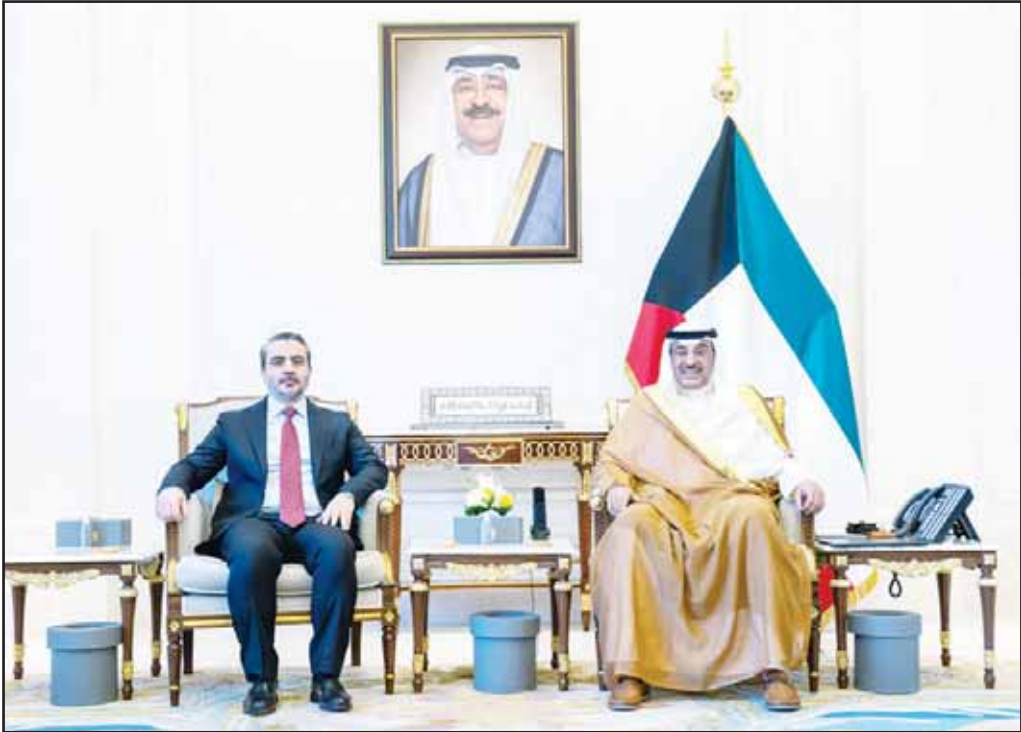
The regulations respond to the rapid expansion of e-commerce in Kuwait by defining the rights and obligations of electronic platforms, merchants, delivery service providers and consumers, while supporting investment and fair competition.

They apply to all intermediary platforms and applications offering, ordering and delivering products in Kuwait and provide unified definitions for key terms, including electronic platform, service provider, customer, delivery provider, commission and delivery fee.

Service providers must obtain the required licenses, comply with applicable laws and regulatory requirements, and implement measures to protect electronic systems and data from misuse and cyberattacks.

Platforms must clearly disclose prices, commissions, delivery charges and any additional fees before orders are completed, display merchant information, publish

Continued on Page 5



HH the Crown Prince receives Syrian Foreign Minister and his accompanying delegation during their official visit to Kuwait.

Crown Prince Diwan photo

HH Crown Prince hosts Syria’s FM for key talks

KUWAIT CITY, July 20, (KUNA): His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah received on Monday Syrian Foreign Minister Asaad Hassan Al-Shaibani and his accompanying delegation during their official visit to Kuwait.

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Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah receives Syrian counterpart.

MoFA photo

U.S.-IRAN ESCALATION SENDS SHOCKWAVES TO KUWAIT



Opinion

Ahmed Al-Jarallah

Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

The Iranian Supreme Leader in hiding is nothing but a scarecrow

FARMERS put scarecrows in their fields to frighten birds and prevent them from damaging the crops.

After the assassination of former Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei and the appointment of his son as his successor, it seems that whoever rules Iran today is merely a scarecrow. The successor of Ali Khamenei has not even appeared till date. He was absent from his father’s funeral, while statements are issued in his name.

It appears that Iran has transitioned from religious fascism to military and security fascism. Clearly, the Revolutionary Guard is in control and it is working to weaken the Iranian presidency, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Parliament.

If we take into consideration that Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf served as an officer and head of the Khatam Al-Anbiya Construction headquarters, this indicates that civilian rule no longer exists.

The absence of the Iranian Supreme Leader from important political and military events while his country is at war means that he is merely a scarecrow used only when needed.

Iran resembles a multi-headed state, each faction exerting its power over the others—its neighbors and the world—through statements attributed to the elusive Supreme Leader.

Consequently, Tehran reneged on the Memorandum of Understanding signed with the United States, provoking the world through the Strait of Hormuz. The Revolutionary Guard continues

to blackmail neighboring countries, hoping to achieve certain objectives. Reality always contradicts dreams, especially those of a midsummer night. The Revolutionary Guard’s attacks will backfire on it sooner, rather than later.

In the past, we were accustomed to the Iranian Supreme Leader appearing in important occasions. Khomeini used to deliver direct public speeches. Khamenei was also keen on addressing his people and the world, even in the most difficult circumstances.

It has been almost five months since the assassination of the previous Supreme Leader, Ali Khamenei, yet his successor remains out of the public eye.

According to reports citing Iranian officials, the Iranian leadership fears that the Supreme Leader will be targeted, hence, his reluctance to appear in person and his reliance on written statements. Information leaked from Iranian officials, however, indicates that the Supreme Leader was injured, his face disfigured, and limbs amputated in the same attack that killed his father. This confirms that the ‘third Supreme Leader’ is nothing more than a ‘scarecrow’.

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Day by Day

A RIGHTEOUS man was once asked about the secret behind his lasting peace.

He replied, “I read God’s words about Himself - ‘It is He who manages all affairs,’ and my heart was filled with peace. I entrusted all my affairs to Him. I also read in the Quran - ‘Indeed, with hardship comes ease,’ and I became certain that difficult times are temporary.

I also read - ‘What do you think of the Lord of the worlds?’ and I became certain that God’s goodness is inevitably on its way.

A person who is greedy will always feel that they have little, no matter how much they possess.

Sometimes forgetfulness is a blessing, especially when a person is able to forgive and let go of an offense. This is how I preserve my lasting peace.”

... Yet tomorrow is another day.

Zahed Matar

Kuwait rolls out global Q8 brand across fuel network

KUWAIT CITY, July 20, (KUNA): Kuwait’s Ministry of Oil on Monday affirmed its support for projects that advance the energy sector, saying the conversion of local fuel stations to the global Q8 brand reflects efforts to modernize services in line with international standards.

Speaking during a virtual panel on the project, the ministry’s Director of Public Relations and Media, Sheikha Tamader Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, said the initiative aims to enhance service quality, improve customer experience and introduce modern technologies and digital solutions.

She said the ministry remains committed to engaging government agencies, national companies and specialists to raise awareness of strategic projects and strengthen transparency and cooperation.

Kuwait Petroleum International Projects and Business Development

Team Head Khaled Al-Bader said the Q8 rebranding is a comprehensive development project that goes beyond visual identity to upgrade customer services while preserving Kuwait’s national identity.

He added the project will unify operational and service standards, introduce digital and non-fuel services, and gradually transform fuel stations into integrated service destinations.

Al-Bader said the initiative responds to growing demand, supports the development of Kuwait’s retail fuel network, enhances state assets and encourages private sector participation.

He added the project aims to improve efficiency, safety and service quality while creating new investment opportunities in vehicle services, retail outlets, cafes and modern technologies.

Continued on Page 5



Sheikha Tamader

Conflict spills across region

Explosions echo as Kuwait repels attack

KUWAIT CITY, July 20, (Agencies): Kuwait’s air defense systems intercepted hostile missile and drone attacks amid the ongoing Iranian aggression, the General Staff of the Kuwaiti Army announced on Monday.

The General Staff said any explosions heard by the public were the result of air defense systems engaging and intercepting incoming aerial threats. It urged citizens and residents to follow safety and security instructions issued by the relevant authorities.

Defense Ministry spokesperson Colonel Saud Al-Atwan said the Kuwaiti Armed Forces had intercepted hostile ballistic missiles and drones detected in the country’s airspace since early Sunday.

He said the continued Iranian aggression had targeted

civilian and vital facilities across Kuwait, including installations belonging to the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy, causing fires and extensive damage to several key facilities.

Al-Atwan affirmed that the Armed Forces continue to perform their duties with a high level of readiness and professionalism, taking all necessary measures in coordination with relevant authorities to protect Kuwait’s sovereignty, security and stability and ensure the safety of citizens and residents.

Meanwhile, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah visited injured Kuwait Fire Force personnel who were wounded while responding to a fire at a site targeted during Saturday’s Iranian aggression.

Continued on Page 5



Guests gather around Turkish Ambassador Tuba Nur Sönmez for a cake-cutting ceremony celebrating her four years of service in Kuwait.

Kuwait inflation hits 2.19%

Rising prices bite into wallets

KUWAIT CITY, July 20, (KUNA): Kuwait’s consumer price index (CPI), a key measure of inflation, increased by 2.19 percent year-on-year at the end of June, driven by higher prices across several main expenditure groups, official data showed on Monday.

The Central Statistical Bureau (CSB) said the annual inflation rate was mainly attributed to increases in the prices of food, healthcare, clothing, education, and miscellaneous goods and services.

According to the data, the food and beverages group recorded the highest annual increase, rising 5.55 percent compared with June 2025, while tobacco and cigarette prices remained unchanged.

The clothing and footwear index rose 0.89 percent year-on-year, while

housing services increased 0.16 percent. Prices for household furnishings and maintenance climbed 1.11 percent, and the healthcare index advanced 1.03 percent.

The transport group posted a notable annual increase of 4.83 percent, while communications prices rose 1.03 percent. Recreation and culture recorded a 1.13 percent increase, and education prices were up 1.02 percent.

The CSB added that restaurant and hotel prices increased by 0.22 percent annually, while miscellaneous goods and services registered a 5.8 percent rise.

Every month, food and beverage prices edged up 0.18 percent in June compared with May, while annual inflation excluding the food and beverages group stood at 1.43 percent.

Farewell filled with gratitude

By Fares Ghaleb

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, July 20: Turkish Ambassador to Kuwait Tuba Nur Sönmez said her four years in the country were among the highlights of her diplomatic career, thanking the Kuwaiti leadership, government and people for the cooperation and warm welcome she received throughout her tenure.

Continued on Page 5



Iran seeks regional destabilization: Yemen envoy



ABK organizes awareness workshop on occupational safety & security systems



Spain dethrones Argentina to win second World Cup

Kuwait building private sector pathway for youth jobs

By Najeh Bilal

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, July 20: A recent government report revealed the most important features of the implementation plan for the “Kuwaiti Youth Employment Centers in the Private Sector” project.

The report highlighted that the project is ex-

pected to be fully completed by 2028, noting that the current completion rate has reached 30 percent, with a total estimated cost of KD 2,507,894.

It explained that the project reflects a development vision aimed at strengthening the role of the private sector as a key partner in employing national workers. The employment

center network currently being developed is designed to serve citizens in various governorates and includes six permanent centers fully equipped to receive visitors and provide continuous support, in addition to 34 temporary centers, including mobile and seasonal platforms, to reach young people in communities, universities, and vital locations.

The project aims to achieve the following objectives annually:

■ Provide guidance and counseling to approximately 2,000 job seekers, including recent graduates and experienced professionals seeking career changes, training opportunities, and further development.

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Prayer Timings

Fajr 03:30 Asr 15:29
Sunrise .. 05:01 Maghrib .. 18:47
Zohr 11:54 Isha 20:16



HH the Amir



UK Prime Minister

Amir congratulates newly named UK Prime Minister

KUWAIT CITY, July 20, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a cable on Monday congratulating UK Prime Minister Andy Burnham on his appointment by King Charles III to form the government.

His Highness wished Prime Minister Burnham good health and success in leading the United Kingdom's progress and prosperity, while reaffirming Kuwait's commitment to strengthening the historic ties and expanding bilateral cooperation between the two friendly countries.

Crown Prince congratulates

His Highness the Crown Prince

Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent a cable on Monday congratulating UK Prime Minister Andy Burnham on his appointment by King Charles III, wishing him abundant health, continued success, and prosperity in his duties.

Kuwait PM congratulates

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah sent a cable on Monday congratulating UK Prime Minister Andy Burnham on his appointment by King Charles III to lead the government, wishing him continued success in office. (See Also Page 6)



KUNA photo
Minister of Defense Sheikh Abdullah Ali Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah receives the outgoing Ambassador of Oman, Saleh Al-Kharousi, wishing him well in his future endeavors.

Defense Minister lauds efforts of outgoing Oman ambassador

KUWAIT CITY, July 20, (KUNA): Minister of Defense Sheikh Abdullah Ali Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah received Omani Ambassador to Kuwait Dr. Saleh Al-Kharousi on Monday on the occasion of the end of his tenure.

The Ministry of Defense said in a statement that Sheikh Abdullah Ali Al-Sabah praised the ambassador's efforts during his tenure, wishing him continued success in his future duties.

Support praised

Kuwait-backed food aid reaches W.Bank families

RAMALLAH, July 20, (KUNA): The Palestine Scientific Center Charity on Monday launched a project to distribute 2,500 food baskets and shopping vouchers across the West Bank with funding from the Kuwait Society for Humanitarian Endowment and Development.

The initiative was launched under the sponsorship of Palestinian Minister of Social Development and Minister of State for Relief Affairs Samah Hamad, with representatives from government institutions and civil society organizations in attendance.

In her address, Hamad said the project reflects the importance of cooperation between the Ministry of Social Development, civil society organizations and donors in strengthening social protection and reaching the most vulnerable families.

She commended Kuwait's humanitarian support for the Palestinian people and its efforts to strengthen their resilience, expressing gratitude to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, government and people, as well as the

Kuwait Society for Humanitarian Endowment and Development, for their continued support.

The assistance reflects the strong fraternal ties between the two brotherly sides and helps ease the hardships faced by Palestinian families while strengthening their resilience, she added.

Meanwhile, the Charity's Director General Mohammad Jumhour thanked Kuwait, its government, people and institutions, particularly Kuwait Society for Humanitarian Endowment and Development, for funding the project.

The charity would continue implementing humanitarian projects with high standards of transparency and efficiency to ensure aid reaches those most in need across the West Bank, he mentioned.

The project is part of joint humanitarian efforts to strengthen food security, ease living conditions for deprived Palestinian families and reinforce the values of solidarity and humanitarian cooperation between Kuwait and Palestine.



KUNA photo
Minister of Health Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi is received by Dr. Saad Al-Fahid.

Kuwait, AGU review prospects of medical education relations

KUWAIT CITY, July 20, (KUNA): The Minister of Health Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi on Monday discussed with a delegation from the Arabian Gulf University (AGU) in the Kingdom of Bahrain, headed by University President Dr. Saad Al-Fahid, ways to strengthen joint cooperation between the Ministry and the University and develop partnerships in health and academic fields of mutual interest.

According to a press release issued

by the Ministry of Health, the meeting reviewed prospects for collaboration in medical education, training, scientific research, capacity building and the development of health professionals, as well as the exchange of expertise to support the quality of health services. The discussions also focused on enhancing integration between academic institutions and health sectors and advancing the health development process in GCC countries.

Kuwait stresses bolstering educational ties with Gulf



KUNA photos
Kuwait's Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research Dr. Nader Al-Jalal is received by the Arabian Gulf University President Dr. Saad Al-Fahid and his delegation.

Need to keep pace with global developments: Dr. Al-Jalal

KUWAIT CITY, July 20, (KUNA): Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research Dr. Nader Al-Jalal stressed that greater integration among higher education institutions in Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries is essential to building an advanced education system capable of keeping pace with global developments.

Speaking Monday after meeting Arabian Gulf University President Dr. Saad Al-Fahid and his delegation, Al-Jalal said the ministry is committed to strengthening cooperation with Gulf universities to advance higher

education and scientific research, expand the exchange of expertise and best practices, and promote academic partnerships that benefit students and improve the quality of educational outcomes.

He emphasized the importance of continuous coordination and knowledge-sharing to support educational development across the region.

During the visit, Al-Jalal also met Kuwaiti scholarship students and several graduates of the Arabian Gulf University, where he listened to their academic experiences and reaffirmed the ministry's

commitment to supporting them in achieving their educational and professional goals.

For his part, Dr. Al-Fahid highlighted the strong ties among Gulf academic institutions and praised the achievements of the university's academic programs, including the work of the His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah Chair in Microbiology.

He expressed the university's desire to further strengthen cooperation with Kuwait's Ministry of Higher Education to advance shared interests and contribute to the continued development of higher education across the GCC.

The meeting was attended by Dr. Bader Al-Basiri, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Higher Education and a member of the university's Board of Trustees, along with senior officials from both sides.



Dr. Al-Jalal

Gulf University, where he listened to their academic experiences and reaffirmed the ministry's

New app enables online transfer of drone control

KUWAIT CITY, July 20: The Ministry of Interior launched a new service through the Sahel application that allows the online transfer of drone ownership without the need to visit the relevant institution, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

In a statement posted on Sahel application's X account, the ministry indicated that registering drone data and proving ownership does not constitute a permit to use or operate a drone.

It affirmed the necessity of obtaining the required permits and approvals from the relevant authorities before using a drone.

Don't dump construction waste outside, says EPA

KUWAIT CITY, July 20, (KUNA): The Environment Public Authority (EPA) on Monday urged the public to refrain from dumping or leaving demolition and construction waste on roads, sidewalks or in front of homes, stressing the need to transport such materials to designated sites as an environmental, legal and social responsibility.

Shaikh Al-Ibrahim, Director of the Public Relations and Media Department at the EPA, told Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) that the authority is closely monitoring the environmental impacts of ongoing clearance works carried out in parallel with the Kuwait Municipality's campaign "Kuwait is more beautiful without encroachments" in various governorates.

Al-Ibrahim noted that random disposal of demolition and removal waste constitutes a clear violation of Article (33) of the Environmental Protection Law, which states that "it is prohibited to throw garbage or waste of any kind except in containers or places designated for that." She added that such waste does not only distort the civilized appearance of residential areas, but can obstruct traffic, endanger road users and cause negative environmental effects, making broad community cooperation essential to curb these practices.

She pointed out that the Environmental Protection Law prescribes penalties for violators, with fines for breaches of the above-mentioned article reaching up to 500 Kuwaiti dinars, in addition to obliging offenders to remove the effects of the violation, rectify the situation and bear all related costs and consequences in accordance with established procedures.

Al-Ibrahim called on property owners and contractors conducting removal and construction works to comply with approved environmental requirements and ensure that waste is transported to designated disposal sites. She stressed the importance of cooperation and adherence to proper practices to preserve the environment and maintain the civilized appearance of residential neighborhoods.

She affirmed that environmental protection is a shared responsibility between government authorities and the wider community, and that respecting environmental regulations and laws helps maintain cleanliness across areas and enhances quality of life in the State of Kuwait.

Other Voices

The dear immortal Willis

By Ahmad alsarraf

The world and I will soon celebrate the 150th anniversary of your birth. Although we never met, you have been with me every day since 1956, when I first discovered you. For nearly 70 years, you have remained with me, especially during the hot summer months and the cold winter nights.

I remember well your beginnings as a quiet, intelligent child. You used to say that your name would one day be immortalized, and we would either laugh or simply smile. Nothing in your humble life, or in your family's life on a remote farm in New York State, hinted at such a future.

You grew into a young man and became the most intelligent and handsome among us. I struggled with mathematics alongside you, but you mastered it while I did not. In 1901, you earned a degree in mechanical engineering from Cornell University, while I never fulfilled my father's dream of seeing me graduate from there.

We were delighted when you joined the Buffalo Engineering Company in 1902. Your fortunes changed the day the company received a request from a New York City printing house. It needed help eliminating the excessive heat and humidity inside its press, as it was causing the paper to expand and contract unevenly during printing, resulting in blurry, poor-quality prints.

Fortunately for all of us, the company entrusted you with solving the problem. Your goal was never to invent something that would transform our lives, but simply to find a way to reduce the humidity inside the printing house. This led you to design a system that circulated air over cooled coils, condensed the excess moisture, and then reheated or adjusted the air to the desired temperature. The result not only cooled the air but also allowed precise control of humidity. It became the first modern air conditioning system to combine both functions.

In 1911, encouraged by our friend



alsarraf

Jack, you published your famous Rational Psychrometric Formula, laying the scientific foundation for the entire air conditioning industry.

I vividly remember your decision in 1915 to embark on a new adventure by founding a company with a capital of \$ 32,600 to manufacture refrigeration equipment.

That was the beginning of the air conditioning giant, the Carrier Engineering Company, which, two years later, installed Willis Carrier air conditioners in shopping malls in Detroit.

People flocked to these malls in the summer, ushering in the era of modern air conditioning and a profound transformation in people's lives.

The American South became a massive economic hub. Without air conditioning, this transformation would have been far less likely, as few people were willing to live in such a hot and humid region.

The American South became a major economic hub, which would not have been possible as few people were willing to live in such a hot and humid region.

Thanks to air conditioning, hospitals gained the ability to perform delicate surgeries in sterile, carefully controlled environments. Also, many sensitive and precise industries could be developed.

Without air conditioning, the construction of skyscrapers, modern aircraft, high-speed trains, advanced military systems, spacecraft, submarines, and countless other technologies would have been far more difficult, if not impossible.

Thank you, my friend, for making life in Kuwait more comfortable through your ingenious invention, which has improved the quality of life and contributed to longer, healthier lives for many.

When you passed away in 1950 at the age of 73, your fame had spread to every corner of the world, from the hottest regions to the coldest.

You left behind an unforgettable legacy and a company that has grown into one of the world's largest air conditioning manufacturers, now valued at more than \$73 billion.

It is no surprise that TIME magazine named you one of the 100 most influential people of the 20th century.

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Kuwait marks over 60 years in League

‘Vital diplomatic role in Arab unity support’

CAIRO, July 20, (KUNA): Kuwait marks the 65th anniversary of its accession to the Arab League, commemorating more than six decades of diplomatic efforts in support of Arab unity and joint Arab action.

Following its independence on June 19, 1961, Kuwait chose its Arab surroundings as the natural focus of its foreign policy, reflecting its belief that Arab strength depends on unity and coordinated efforts and joined the League on July 20, 1961.

Over the past six decades, Kuwait has played political, economic, development and humanitarian roles supporting Arab causes and strengthening joint Arab action.

It hosted several major Arab summits, including the first Arab Economic, Development and Social Summit in 2009, the third Arab-African Summit in 2013 and the 25th Arab Summit in 2014, which addressed regional political and economic issues, including the Palestinian cause.

Kuwait also hosts key Arab institutions, in-



Dr Al-Malki



Al-Ojairi

cluding the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development and the Arab Investment and Export Credit Guarantee Corporation (Dhaman).

The Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development has financed development projects across the Arab world since its establishment in 1961, covering infrastructure, energy, education, healthcare and water, alongside humanitarian and relief assistance.

Arab League Assistant Secretary-General for Administrative and Financial Affairs Ambassador Mohammad Al-Ojairi told KUNA Kuwait has played a leading role in supporting joint Arab action through its balanced diplomacy

and efforts to promote regional stability and development.

He praised Kuwait’s hosting of Arab summits and initiatives aimed at strengthening dialogue, narrowing differences among Arab states and advancing cooperation.

Al-Ojairi also commended Kuwait’s foreign policy under His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, highlighting its continued support for the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, humanitarian assistance to Gaza and calls for a just and comprehensive settlement of the Palestinian issue.

Assistant Secretary-General for Economic Affairs Ambassador Dr Ali Al-Malki said Kuwait has been a key supporter of Arab economic integration through its participation in Arab economic agreements and financing of development projects.

He noted Kuwait’s contributions to food security, sustainable development, humanitarian initiatives and support for Arab organizations, as well as its role in hosting international donor conferences for Syria in cooperation with the United Nations.



Farwaniya Governorate photo

Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Athbi Nasser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah receives Abdulwahab Al-Sharad, Director of the Subscriber Services Department at the Ministry of Communications.

Focus on ways to improve telecom services for public

KUWAIT CITY, July 20: Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Athbi Nasser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah met with Abdulwahab Al-Sharad, Director of the Subscriber Services Department at the Ministry of Communications, on Monday morning to talk about ways to improve telecom services for residents, according to a press release from the Farwaniya Governorate.

During the meeting at the governorate headquarters, the governor was briefed on the department’s main services for subscribers in Farwaniya and discussed with Al-Sharad ways to boost cooperation and coordination between the governorate and the ministry to better serve

citizens and residents.

Sheikh Athbi said the governorate is ready to keep working with the Ministry of Communications and stressed how important it is to make sure telephone exchanges across Farwaniya keep running smoothly and without interruptions.

He also praised the Subscriber Services Department for its efforts in meeting customers’ needs and making procedures easier, noting its role in improving public services.

Al-Sharad thanked the governor for the warm welcome and his ongoing support for joint efforts to improve services and serve the people of Farwaniya.

219 families of prisoners get Zakat House help

KUWAIT CITY, July 20, (KUNA): Kuwait’s Zakat House announced on Sunday that its 2025 Prisoners’ Families Project has provided support to 219 families across the country, as part of ongoing efforts to strengthen social solidarity and ease the financial burdens on vulnerable households.

Acting Director General Dr. Majid Al-Azmi said in a statement to Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) that the project’s outcomes reflect the tangible humanitarian impact of donors’ generosity, highlighting their direct role in helping meet the basic needs of prisoners’



Dr. Al-Azmi

families.

He emphasized that the assistance offers more than material relief, describing it as a source of hope that contributes to improving social and living stability for beneficiaries.

Al-Azmi added that Zakat House remains committed to advancing its social and humanitarian initiatives in line with its mission to reinforce values of compassion and solidarity within society. He also expressed appreciation for donors’ continued trust and support, noting that their contributions enable the organization to reach the most vulnerable groups while preserving their dignity and alleviating their hardship.



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MoSA reviews co-op pharmacy contracts over ‘illegal’ bonuses

KUWAIT CITY, July 20: The Ministry of Social Affairs, represented by the General Department of Cooperative Affairs, has begun reviewing the investment contracts of pharmacies belonging to all co-operative societies to identify pharmacies directly managed by the societies, reports Al-Jarida daily.

According to informed sources, the review revealed that some cooperative societies operating their pharmacies directly are granting pharmacists a bonus equivalent to one percent of total sales. The pharmacy branch managers are receiving percentages ranging between 1.5 percent and 2 percent, which violates the approved salary structure for employees of cooperative societies.

The ministry has contacted the Union of Consumer Cooperative Societies to instruct cooperative societies to immediately stop disbursing these unauthorized percentages and restrict payments to approved salaries only.

The ministry has requested the boards of directors of cooperative societies to submit a technical and financial study, prepared by a competent and accredited entity, to the General Department of Cooperative Affairs within a maximum period of one month. The study must

outline the mechanism for calculating bonuses or financial incentives granted to pharmacy employees, ensuring that they are based on profits rather than total sales.

The General Department of Cooperative Affairs will review the submitted studies to verify the soundness of their foundations and ensure compliance with applicable laws and regulations.

The ministry will adopt mechanisms that protect the interests of cooperative societies while safeguarding their financial resources, without compromising employees’ rights.

The continued payment of bonuses in this irregular manner has resulted in losses amounting to hundreds of thousands of dinars from shareholders’ funds.

The sources confirmed that the ministry will continue reviewing the mechanisms for granting financial benefits in various investment activities of cooperative societies as part of a plan to strengthen governance and standardize financial and administrative procedures.

They indicated that some pharmacists were receiving more than KD 5,000 per month in addition to their basic salaries due to the improper disbursement of bonuses.

News in Brief

Phone exchanges repairs soon

KUWAIT CITY, July 20: The Ministry of Communications announced that it will carry out routine maintenance on a number of telephone exchanges in the coming days as part of its plan to develop telecommunications network infrastructure and improve the efficiency of services provided to subscribers, reports Al-Rai daily.

The ministry explained that the maintenance work will include the Shuwaikh Exchange on July 27-28, and the Surra Exchange on Wednesday, July 29, from midnight until 6:00 am. The maintenance activities may cause temporary disruptions to some telecommunications services during the scheduled hours.

The ministry urged subscribers to take this into consideration when using the services.

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Power outages restored: The Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy announced on Sunday that two sub-feeders from the main substation in the Hiteen (H) area went out of service due to a technical malfunction, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

In an official statement, the ministry explained that the malfunction caused a power outage affecting limited areas in blocks 2 and 4. Its emergency teams worked on-site to repair the fault and restore power as quickly as possible.

The ministry expressed its appreciation for the understanding and cooperation of citizens and residents.

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PACI launches new service: The Public Authority for Civil Information (PACI) has launched a new service through the Sahel application for issuing “Civil Registration Certificates”, reports Al-Seyassah daily

The service enables users to obtain the certificate electronically for use in verifying civil registration data when requested by official entities. The new digital service aims to simplify procedures, reduce processing time, and save effort for beneficiaries.

□ □ □

Acquitted of fraud: The Criminal Court, chaired by Judge Abdulwahab Omar Al-Muaili, acquitted two defendants of forging bank documents, online fraud and stealing KD5,850 from the bank account of the purported victim, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The court cited insufficient evidence as the reason behind the acquittal decision.

The Public Prosecution charged the defendants with obtaining banking information from the supposed victim after deceiving her about an online investment opportunity. They allegedly persuaded her to download a remote-control application and enter her banking details, resulting in funds being deducted from her account without her knowledge. They were also accused of stealing KD80 under the guise of investment.

Attorney Jarrah Al-Sharika, lawyer for one of the defendants, argued for his client’s acquittal due to the lack of evidence linking the latter to the crime. He pointed out to the court the lack of technical or material evidence of the involvement of his client in the alleged withdrawal of funds or the fraud.

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Decision overturned: The Administrative Court overturned the decision of an administrative body to withdraw an agricultural plot from the beneficiary, emphasizing the need for immediate implementation of its ruling, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The court confirmed that the administrative body failed to justify the contested decision and it did not provide the violation reports and other documents that led to the issuance of the withdrawal order.

Attorney Mohammad Al-Ansari affirmed that the judgment is based on the rule of law and proves that the administrative body is subject to judicial oversight. He pointed out that the discretionary power granted to administrative bodies is not absolute, indicating such power is limited as per the relevant law and the principles of legality.

LOCAL

Iran seeks regional destabilization: Yemen envoy

Ambassador Bin Safaa warns of Iranian air bridge to Houthis

By Fares Ghaleb

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, July 20: Yemeni Ambassador to Kuwait Dr. Ali bin Safaa affirmed that Yemen took measures as the legitimate exercise of its sovereign right to manage its air-space, airports and ports.

In a statement to the newspaper, Bin Safaa pointed out that the management of sovereign airspace, airports and ports is the prerogative of the state and its legitimate institutions, asserting no state or militia has the right to impose air, security or operational arrangements outside the authority of Yemen.

He stressed that Yemen will not allow a fait accompli that infringes on its sovereignty or transforms its airports and ports into tools to serve hostile regional schemes. He indicated that the Yemeni government exhausted all political, diplomatic and legal means before resorting to sovereign measures, which were taken after presenting the practical and legal initiatives and solutions that guarantee the continuation of civilian flights, protect the rights of citizens and ensure the safety of air navigation.

He pointed out that Yemen acted responsibly and with restraint, ensuring to protect civilians and public properties, as well as preventing the escalation of confrontation. He reiterated that the actions of his country are considered the legitimate sovereign choice after all possible alternatives and solutions were rejected.

He clarified that the Yemeni government did not close Sana'a Airport, as it rather supports efforts to guarantee the continuous operation of the airport for civilian flights in a legal and safe manner. He said the legal solution lies in managing and operating flights through Yemen Airways – the national carrier – in accordance with technical, security and legal guarantees. He indicated that the government had earlier



Yemeni Ambassador to Kuwait Dr. Ali bin Safaa gives an exclusive interview to Al-Seyassah reporter Fares Ghaleb, discussing regional developments and Yemen-Kuwait relations.

presented alternatives to ease travel for patients, students and citizens to and from all governorates without discrimination or selectivity. He added that protecting sovereignty and guaranteeing the right of citizens to travel are complementary and mutually exclusive objectives.

He disclosed that the Houthi militia rejected the initiatives and legal solutions presented by the government, insisting on preventing Yemen Airways from managing and operating flights. He asserted that this move exacerbates the suffering of patients, students and travelers, as the Houthi militia exploited the suffering and humanitarian needs of citizens to achieve political and military goals and impose arrangements outside the authority of the state. He said those who besiege citizens and obstruct their travel are the same party that rejected legal solutions and prevented state institutions from fulfill-

ing their duties. He affirmed that the Yemeni government will not allow the Houthi militia to use the humanitarian situation to blackmail the international community or impose illegitimate political and military realities.

He believes that the Houthi's insistence reveals a truth that goes beyond civilian flights, as it could be an attempt to establish a rapid and regular supply line that enhances the military capabilities of the Houthi militia and bypasses traditional maritime smuggling networks. He added that this attempt gives the Iranian regime greater ability to transport experts, sensitive equipment, spare parts and military technologies within hours – a qualitative shift in the level of support provided to the militia.

He warned that these movements may be aimed at bolstering the Houthis' preparations to carry out new military operations at the Red

Sea, threaten international navigation, attempt to impose a blockade or close the Bab al-Mandab Strait. He stated that the Red Sea and the strait are considered the strategic artery for global trade and energy supplies, such that any threat to them will not only affect Yemen or the region, but also the international economy and security.

He emphasized that attempts to strengthen the Houthi militia's missile, air and naval capabilities raise concerns about the use of Yemeni territory as a platform for targeting brotherly and friendly nations and their vital interests, threatening to expand the scope of the conflict and increase instability in the region.

He explained that the Iranian regime's support for the Houthi militias has not been limited to political stances, but included the transfer of military expertise and technology, as well as

the components for missiles, drones and naval weapons, making air route to Yemen a constant source of international concern.

He cited the danger of the air bridge project, as it could be transformed into a means for resupplying militias with advanced military capabilities, enabling them to threaten commercial ships, ports, vital infrastructure and international shipping lanes.

He called on the international community to treat the air bridge project between the Revolutionary Guard and the Houthi militia as a threat to regional and international peace and security, not merely a bilateral dispute over the airport operations or flight routes. He stressed the need to take a clear stance to prevent the use of civilian aviation as cover for transporting experts, weapons and military technology. "It is important to take action to thwart the Iranian bridge project, not only to protect Yemeni sovereignty, but also to guarantee international maritime security and safeguard the interests of the international community. This will also prevent Yemen from becoming a platform for threatening the security of the Red Sea and neighboring countries," he added.

He affirmed that the attacks on Kuwait and other Gulf states reflect an approach based on destabilizing the region. He stressed that targeting civilian and vital facilities cannot be justified and constitutes a violation of international laws and norms.

He said Kuwait and other Gulf states have exercised the utmost restraint throughout the past years despite the threats they faced. He indicated that Kuwait has always been known as a country of security, stability and humanitarian work, and has welcomed various nationalities without discrimination.

He urged the Arab states to reassess their relationship with the Iranian regime and develop a unified Arab strategy for dealing with it. He said the problem is not with the Iranian people or Shiites, but rather with the policies of the Iranian regime, which uses sectarianism as a means to achieve its po-

litical goals.

On the Kuwaiti-Yemeni relations, he described them as historical and strong, and based on humanitarian and developmental support, disclosing that Kuwait was among the first countries to stand by Yemen, and that its support is not tied to political or economic interests, but rather stemmed from a steadfast humanitarian approach.

He indicated that Kuwaiti projects are widespread in various Yemeni governorates, including schools, hospitals, institutes and infrastructure. He also cited the role played by Kuwaiti charitable organizations and the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development in financing development projects and providing loans and facilities. He then expressed his deep appreciation for Kuwait, its leadership and its people, wishing them continuous security and stability. He confirmed that the Yemeni people have the highest regard for Kuwait for its unwavering support for Yemen in different humanitarian and development fields.

He holds the Iranian regime fully responsible for the escalation and for its unending support for the Houthi militia, enabling the latter to violate the policies of the Republic of Yemen and the international law. He reiterated that the issue is not a single flight, but the attempt to establish a permanent air bridge linking the Iranian regime and the Revolutionary Guard to the terrorist Houthi militia.

He explained that the aim of such attempts is to impose a new reality and use Yemeni airports to serve the Iranian scheme outside the jurisdiction of the state. He considers the insistence of Iran on direct flights as a sign that the objective goes beyond transporting passengers and it is linked to an attempt to build a regular logistics channel with the Houthi militia.

He added that his country was among the first to suffer from Iranian interference, so what the region is witnessing now is no longer surprising. He said the policy of the Iranian regime is based on the intention to prevent the establishment of stable Arab states within its vicinity.

Continued from Page 1

The Iranian

Iranian narratives regarding certain news and figures are characterized by absolute secrecy. Therefore, it is certain that the Iranian Supreme Leader, Mojtaba Khamenei, will remain merely a scarecrow until he appears, if he ever does.

This hypothesis is supported by the extremely sensitive internal situation in Iran. The embers of public anger smolder beneath the ashes of the war that the Iranian regime, particularly the Revolutionary Guard, is exploiting to protect its own financial and economic empire, which is bigger than the entire Iranian economy.

The Iranian regime will not easily abandon its financial empire. The Revolutionary Guard uses the Mojtaba Khamenei scarecrow whenever it feels weak. Thus, the Revolutionary Guard attributes its statements to the Supreme Leader to evade responsibility.

Kuwait building

■ Attract and guide at least 1,000 job seekers annually who wish to pursue training and development programs to enhance their skills and address gaps in their knowledge.

■ Identify and showcase at least 3,000 genuine job opportunities annually through direct coordination with private sector companies' vacancy databases to ensure the successful entry of new job seekers into the labor market.

A government source confirmed that the state is focusing on several key aspects of the project, most notably aligning job and financial benefits between employees in the public and private sectors and ensuring the transformation of the private sector.

The source indicated that the state is relying on the "Employment Centers" project, currently under implementation, as a fundamental solution to the problem of excessive reliance on government employment, particularly as the salaries and wages item in the general budget now accounts for the largest share of state revenues.

Kuwait rolls

Implementation will begin with a pilot station and selected priority sites before expanding gradually based on performance assessments, while excluding stations scheduled for demolition or reconstruction to ensure efficient spending.

HH Crown Prince

The meeting reviewed the relations between Kuwait and Syria and discussed ways to enhance bilateral cooperation in various fields, along with issues of mutual interest.

The meeting was attended by Chief of the Crown Prince's Diwan Sheikh Thamer Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Foreign Minister Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and senior officials.

Similarly, Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah received Syria's Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates Asaad Al-Shaibani on Monday on his official visit to Kuwait.

The Foreign Ministry said in a statement that the two ministers held talks reviewing the fraternal relations between the two countries and ways to strengthen and expand cooperation across various fields in a manner that serves their shared interests.

The discussions also covered the latest regional developments, particularly the current escalation and its repercussions, as well as ongoing efforts to promote diplomatic solutions aimed at preserving regional security and stability.

'License' era

terms and conditions, and provide accurate product and service details.

The regulations also require platforms to adopt clear exchange, return and refund policies, establish complaint-handling mechanisms within specified timeframes, protect consumers' personal data, and maintain records of electronic transactions and payments.

They set delivery service obligations to ensure safe handling and delivery of products, while requiring platforms to oversee delivery operations and coordinate with all parties.

The regulations cap platform commissions at 17 percent when delivery is provided by the platform and 10 percent when merchants handle deliveries themselves. Consumer delivery fees are capped at KD 1 per order, with additional charges exceeding the limit prohibited.

Effective from July 8, 2026, the resolution grants the ministry inspection and enforcement powers, including requesting information, conducting inspections and imposing administrative penalties on violators.

Licensed platform operators must amend their business activity to "Management of Delivery Services via Electronic Platforms".

The regulations will be accompanied by an implementation guide outlining compliance requirements for platforms, service providers, delivery companies and consumers.

The explanatory memorandum said the regulations address challenges arising from the growth of e-commerce, including varying commission rates, delivery fees and unclear commercial terms, while promoting transparency, service quality and confidence in digital transactions.

The resolution also repeals Ministerial Resolution No. 10 of 2026 on restaurant and ready-food delivery regulations, replacing it with a broader framework covering all intermediary electronic platforms.

Farewell filled

Sönmez made the statement during her farewell ceremony, marking the end of her tenure in the country.

She revealed that she assumed her duties on June 2, 2022, indicating she was appointed by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. She considers representing her country in Kuwait a great honor, stressing that bilateral relations witnessed a huge leap forward, culminating in the historic visit of His Highness the Amir Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to Turkiye, as well as President Erdoğan's visit to Kuwait.

She commended the support of Kuwait during the devastating earthquake that hit Turkiye in February 2023, asserting that the air bridge, dispatch of search and rescue teams, and provision of humanitarian aid will remain etched in the memory of the Turkish people.

She disclosed that the Embassy of Turkiye in Kuwait organized more than 150 events in the fields of culture, education, arts and economics, and celebrated its anniversary in 2024. "The 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the two countries was celebrated through art and archival exhibitions, concerts and official receptions. The embassy highlighted the unveiling of the 'Friendship Mural' in Souq Mubarakia and the publication of a book documenting six decades of Kuwaiti-Turkish relations," she added.

She went on to say that the embassy conducted awareness programs as part of the 'Zero Waste' initiative to raise environmental awareness. She indicated that the trade volume between the two countries exceeded \$1 billion for the first time in 2025, achieving 52 percent growth, thanks to the efforts of the business councils and economic forums.

She also cited the inclusion of Bayraktar TB2 drones into the Kuwaiti defense system, stronger coordination among multilateral organizations, and the opening of the 'Embassy Diwaniya' to expand communication with the Turkish community and Kuwaiti society.

She then expressed her gratitude to the Kuwaiti authorities, her colleagues at the embassy, and members of the diplomatic corps, confirming that Kuwait is her second homeland.

Conflict spills

The Kuwait Fire Force said Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef was briefed by medical teams on the condition of the injured firefighters and directed that they receive the highest level of medical care. He praised the efforts of medical staff and wished the injured a speedy recovery.

Regional condemnation

The United Arab Emirates strongly condemned repeated Iranian missile and drone attacks targeting Kuwait, Bahrain and Jordan, describing them as a violation of the sovereignty of the three countries and a threat to regional security and stability.

The UAE Ministry of Foreign Affairs reaffirmed its solidarity with Kuwait, Bahrain and Jordan and expressed support for measures taken to safeguard their security.

Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah

and Jordanian Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi also condemned the attacks during a phone conversation on Sunday.

The two ministers reaffirmed their countries' right to take necessary measures to protect their sovereignty and security, while reviewing regional developments and efforts to pursue diplomatic solutions aimed at maintaining stability.

Arab Parliament Speaker Mohammad Al-Yamahi condemned the Iranian attack on a power and water desalination facility in Kuwait, calling it a grave violation of international law.

He said targeting civilian facilities and vital infrastructure represented an unacceptable assault on Kuwait's sovereignty and a dangerous escalation threatening regional security. He reaffirmed the Arab Parliament's support for Kuwait and called on the international community to take firm action against attacks on Arab states and civilian infrastructure.

Bahrain also condemned repeated Iranian missile and drone attacks targeting civilian and vital facilities, describing them as a serious breach of international law and a threat to regional security.

The Bahraini Foreign Ministry said the attacks also targeted civilian air navigation systems within the Bahrain Flight Information Region, posing a threat to international aviation safety. It reaffirmed Bahrain's right to take all legitimate measures to protect its sovereignty, security and vital infrastructure.

Egypt condemned the Iranian attacks targeting Kuwait and Bahrain, describing them as a dangerous escalation and a violation of the sovereignty of the two Gulf states.

The Egyptian Foreign Ministry reaffirmed Cairo's full solidarity with Kuwait and Bahrain and rejected any attacks against Arab states, their vital facilities or civilians.

Jordan, meanwhile, summoned the Iranian charge d'affaires in Amman to protest what it described as continued Iranian attacks on Jordanian territory and provocative statements by Iranian officials.

Jordanian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Ambassador Fouad Al-Majali said Tehran was urged to immediately halt the attacks, stressing that Jordan's security and the safety of its citizens were a red line.

He condemned the attacks as violations of Jordan's sovereignty and international law, while reaffirming Jordan's solidarity with GCC states and support for measures taken to protect their security and citizens.

Retaliation storm hits Gulf

Elsewhere, the United States conducted a new round of airstrikes against Iran on Monday after announcing the death of another American service member. Iran responded by launching attacks on American allies Kuwait and Bahrain, home of the U.S. Navy's 5th Fleet.

Even as the U.S. and Iran inch closer to all-out war, glimmers of hope appeared on the diplomatic front, as two regional officials said Iran's interior minister was expected to arrive late Monday for a two-day

visit in Pakistan, a key mediator in the conflict. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the matter.

The interim deal signed last month that was meant to end the fighting has crumbled and shipping through the Strait of Hormuz - a vital supply route for world energy supplies - has largely stalled. As fighting intensifies, both sides have targeted civilian infrastructure relied on by millions of people.

The escalation has pushed oil prices higher in recent weeks. Benchmark Brent crude traded Monday above \$86 a barrel and regular gasoline in the U.S. climbed to an average of \$4 a gallon, keeping pressure on Americans' wallets ahead of midterm elections this fall.

The U.S. military said its service member was killed in Iraq on Saturday during the "controlled detonation" of a downed Iranian drone. President Donald Trump said the latest wave of attacks on Iran were done "in honor of" U.S. soldiers recently killed.

The U.S. military's Central Command said its ninth straight night of airstrikes targeted "Iranian military command centers, air defense and coastal surveillance sites, maritime capabilities, missile and drone launch sites and communications networks."

Iran's state-run IRNA news agency reported that the American strikes killed at least one person around Tabriz, a northwestern city about 520 kilometers (325 miles) from the capital, Tehran. Tabriz is believed to host underground missile bases run by Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard.

U.S. strikes likely also hit Bandar Imam Khomeini in Khuzestan province, Sirik and Jask in Hormozgan province and Konarak and Chahbahar in Sistan and Baluchistan province, IRNA reported.

As the strikes began, a vessel caught fire early Monday in the Strait of Hormuz after being hit by a projectile near the coastline of Oman, the British military's United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations center said. The crew abandoned the vessel, which was adrift and still ablaze hours later, the UKMTO said. The route around Oman has been the one the U.S. military has encouraged ships to travel to avoid Iran's control. The Guard later claimed it was targeting tankers in the strait.

Tehran has retaliated by hitting U.S.-allied countries throughout the Middle East. Bahrain sounded its missile alert sirens Monday morning, while Kuwait said its air defenses were firing at an incoming Iranian barrage.

Bahrain's Foreign Ministry condemned Iranian drone strikes targeting the country's air traffic systems, saying they endanger travel for civilians.

A new pressure point could emerge for world energy markets as Yemen's Houthi rebels announced on Monday a maritime embargo against Saudi Arabia. The Houthis, who are backed by Iran, said they would block shipping between the

Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden in response for an attack on Sanaa International Airport last week that they blamed on Saudi Arabia.

With the Strait of Hormuz blocked up, Saudi Arabia has been relying on a pipeline to the Red Sea to get millions of barrels of oil out to market. The Houthis earlier demonstrated their ability to disrupt shipping there when they targeted ships for months over the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza, with over 100 vessels attacked.

There was no immediate response from Saudi Arabia.

Trump has threatened to target Iran's power stations and bridges to try to compel Tehran to loosen its hold on the Strait of Hormuz, through which one-fifth of world oil supplies were shipped before the war. Recent attacks suggest the U.S. military is carrying out that plan.

The U.S. in the past week reimposed a naval blockade on Iranian ports to halt its shipments of crude oil. The military on Saturday said it had redirected six ships and disabled one since then.

Pakistan has intensified diplomatic efforts in recent days to resuscitate the interim ceasefire reached last month that called for resolving remaining issues tied to the war within 60 days. The truce unraveled after both sides resumed attacks on each other's military installations and other infrastructure.

Iranian Interior Minister Eskandar Momeni is expected to arrive in Pakistan late Monday, according to the two regional officials, though there was no official confirmation from Islamabad or Tehran.

On Sunday, U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio told reporters that the U.S. is still open to negotiating with Iran but that "it has to be real."

"We're going to continue to respond. If the door opens to diplomacy - if the guys that want to do something productive for Iran win and take control of that system, or take control of the negotiations - that'll be a very positive development," Rubio said. "That's not where we are tonight, unfortunately."

Mohammad Javad Zarif, a former Iranian foreign minister, said in an essay published Monday by Foreign Affairs that the interim deal "could never survive such dissonance" over the Strait of Hormuz.

"As the current conflict makes clear, Washington cannot eliminate the Iranian government," Zarif wrote. "Only diplomacy, a new peace agreement, and a new security framework produced by regional states and for regional states will allow the United States to turn its attention elsewhere."

However, Zarif, who helped elect the country's reformist President Masoud Pezeshkian, also warned the country's theocracy that "if Iran repeatedly threatens maritime traffic, it could turn much of the world against it."

Iranian authorities on Sunday said at least 50 people have been killed and 517 wounded in the latest rounds of U.S. strikes. Since the war began on Feb. 28, 17 U.S. service members have been killed.

Zelenskyy grapples with protests

Ukraine fires 400 drones toward Moscow

KYIV, July 20, (AP): Ukraine fired more than 400 drones toward Moscow in its latest major attack on the Russian capital, the city's mayor said Monday.

The blitz came hours after Russia bombarded Kyiv and other Ukrainian cities with ballistic missiles in a relentless cycle of tit-for-tat strikes that make a settlement to end Moscow's more than 4-year-old all-out invasion appear a distant possibility.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, meanwhile, said he would hold "key talks" on Monday as he tries to defuse a domestic political crisis, after last week's government reshuffle exposed a deep split between the military's old guard and young innovators over how to fight the war.

Zelenskyy needs to reassure Ukrainians that sacrificing 35-year-old Mykhailo Fedorov as defense minister and keeping faith with 60-year-old Soviet-trained Gen. Oleksandr Syrskiy as armed forces chief won't derail the fight against Russia.

Days of street protests in favor of Fedorov and against Syrskiy followed Zelenskyy's decision.

Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyanin said that over 400 Ukrainian drones



In this photo provided by the Ukrainian Emergency Service, a residential building is seen in fire following a Russian air attack in Kramatorsk, Donetsk region, Ukraine, on July 20, (AP)

were sent toward the Russian capital from late Sunday until early Monday. He said most were downed far from the capital and 85 were intercepted near Moscow.

Andrei Vorobyov, the head of the region around Moscow, said that 10 people were wounded by Ukrainian drones. He said that several residen-

tial buildings and civilian infrastructure facilities were damaged.

The attack started a fire at the Yuzhnye Vrata industrial park, about 30 kilometers (18 miles) south of Moscow, according to Yevgeniya Khrustaleva, the head of the Domodedovo area of the Moscow region.

The Astra news outlet reported that the assault also caused a fire at an oil depot in Podolsk, about 20 kilometers (12 miles) south of Moscow but there was no official confirmation of the strike.

Ukrainian forces struck logistics facilities and an oil depot in the Moscow region, more than 400 kilometers (250 miles) from Ukraine's border, Zelenskyy said. He also said Ukrainian forces hit two vessels belonging to Russia's so-called shadow fleet transporting sanctioned oil and four dry cargo ships in the Black Sea.

It was not possible to independently verify either side's claims.

Ukraine's long-range drone technology has swiftly evolved during the war, posing a problem for Russia, whose huge land mass is hard to fully protect. Kyiv's forces have aimed especially at Russian oil facilities, causing fuel shortages and embarrassing Russian President Vladimir Putin.



Britain's King Charles III welcomes Andy Burnham, (left), during an audience at Buckingham Palace, London, where he invited the leader of the Labour Party to become Prime Minister and form a new government on July 20. (AP)

Burnham becomes Britain's seventh PM in decade after Starmer resigns

LONDON, July 20, (AP): The moment for Andy Burnham has finally come.

After weeks as leader-in-waiting, Burnham officially became prime minister on Monday during a meeting with King Charles III at Buckingham Palace.

He succeeded Keir Starmer, on a day when Britain's political turbulence gave way, at least temporarily, to smooth choreography.

Buckingham Palace has released a photo of the two men shaking hands. The ceremony known as "kissing hands" marks the transfer of power.

The palace said in a statement that the king "received in audience the Rt. Hon. Andrew Burnham MP and requested him to form a new Administration. The Rt. Hon. Andrew Burnham MP accepted The King's offer and kissed hands upon his appointment as Prime Minister and First Lord of the Treasury."

Burnham is the seventh UK prime minister since 2016 in a now well-rehearsed handover after replacing

Starmer as leader of the center-left governing Labour Party on Friday.

Starmer made a short farewell speech outside the prime minister's 10 Downing Street residence, saying "my work is done."

The outgoing leader, forced to resign by his own party, said Britain is now "stronger and fairer than it was two years ago," when he took office.

"I go with good grace, I go with a smile and I go proud of everything that we have achieved," Starmer said before heading to Buckingham Palace to offer his resignation to the king. It was an offer "His Majesty was graciously pleased to accept," the palace said in a statement.

Burnham then went to the palace in his turn and Charles will ask him to form a government. That's when he officially becomes prime minister, a moment known as "kissing hands."

The king's role harkens back to a time when the monarch exercised supreme power and chose a prime minister to run the government. To-

day, the king has no political power, but the monarch still officially offers the job to the leader of the party that can command a majority in the House of Commons. No hand-kissing is involved.

Britain's parliamentary democracy allows governing parties to change leaders, and thus prime ministers, without the need for a general election. The next national poll doesn't have to be held until 2029, though Burnham can call one sooner if he wants.

From the palace, Burnham will go to Downing Street, where he will make his first speech as prime minister.

A spokesperson said Burnham will say that he's "acutely aware" of how many changes of leader the country has been through in the past decade, and will pledge to restore stability.

Starmer said much the same when he took office two years ago. Last month he announced he would resign after missteps and judgment errors that eroded his standing with his party and the public.

Europe

German CDUCSU group leader resigns: Jens Spahn

Spahn, leader of the parliamentary group of Germany's ruling conservative CDUCSU bloc, resigned on Saturday amid controversy over becoming a father through surrogacy abroad, German media reported.

According to the German Press Agency, Spahn informed members of the CDUCSU parliamentary group of his decision in a letter.

He said he had realized that his personal happiness could not be reconciled with his political office and had therefore resigned.

German Chancellor and CDU Chairman Friedrich Merz said Spahn's decision was "right and unavoidable."

"Credibility is the highest asset in politics," Merz said.



Spahn

Spahn and his partner recently disclosed that they had become fathers to a son through a surrogate mother in the United States, triggering widespread controversy in Germany. (Xinhua)

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Trump's envoy faces protests in Venice: Several hundred protesters marched Friday against the arrival in Venice of the billionaire American ambassador's luxury yacht, briefly clashing with riot police as they neared the vessel.

Activists described hospitality mogul Tilman Fertitta's arrival as an unwelcome display of American wealth and influence at a time when many Italians see the Trump administration upending the post-World War II international order.

They marched carrying inflatable water toys and beach balls behind a sign reading: "Venezia non si USA," a play on words meaning "Venice is not to be used," with the USA acronym capitalized.

Protesters raised their arms to show they were peaceful as they reached a double line of riot police blocking access to the super yacht, but police pushed back with their shields when the demonstrators refused to stop. (AP)

National Guard deployment to DC to last through Trump's term

US Justice Dept activates untested court for 'alien terrorist' deportations

WASHINGTON, July 20, (AP): The Trump administration has filed a first-ever petition to a secretive and dormant court created 30 years ago to consider government requests to deport so-called "alien terrorists" from the United States.

The Alien Terrorist Removal Court was established in 1996 but had never received a petition until this past Wednesday, when the Justice Department filed an application seeking the removal of an individual whose name is withheld from the single-page document posted on the court's website.

The chief judge of the five-member court, Joan Ericksen, said in a written response to the petition that a hearing was held on Thursday during which the court had "questions about the nexus that the government alleges between the actions of the respondent and the specific sections and subsections it invokes with respect to those actions."

"The answers persuaded the Court that the Government could benefit from the opportunity for more thoughtful consideration," wrote Ericksen, a federal judge in Minnesota. She directed the Justice Depart-

ment to provide more information by Wednesday.

The court's authorities emerged from the Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act of 1996, which permits the attorney general to file under seal applications for the deportation of a suspected "alien terrorist." If an application is granted, the court must hold a public hearing at which the government has the burden to prove that the individual satisfies that definition. Applications must be approved by the attorney general or deputy attorney general.

Federal law says that an individual could qualify as an "alien terrorist" by, among other factors, having "engaged in a terrorist activity," endorsing or espousing terrorist activities and by belonging to a political or social group that encourages terrorist activity.

The court has been dormant since its creation, having received - until last week - no applications and conducting no hearings, according to a summary posted on the Federal Judicial Center website. It is comprised of five judges selected by Chief Justice John Roberts.

The Trump administration has



The US Department of Justice building is seen in Washington on Dec 7, 2024. (AP)

moved aggressively over the last year to carry out deportations, including invoking a 1798 wartime law, the Alien Enemies Act, to remove Venezuelan migrants who officials accuse of being part of a terrorist gang. During a hearing in that case last year, the Washington judge presiding over it, James Boasberg,

indicated that the Alien Terrorist Removal Court would be the natural forum to consider a request for deportation on national security grounds.

"In fact, Congress has an answer for us, doesn't it? Because they created the Alien Terrorist Removal Court," he said. "So if there's a national security concern with having

these hearings...you can always go to the ATRC, which would be a first, but that's what it's there for, right?"

The petition was first reported by Court Watch, an independent news site.

Also:

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump's deployment of National Guard troops to the nation's capital is being extended by more than two years and will last until the end of his term.

The Pentagon confirmed the extension in an email Thursday, saying the mission will continue until Jan 20, 2029, "or until terminated by the President." The deployment was set to expire at the end of this year after previously being extended.

The deployment in Washington, D.C., has been contentious since Trump issued an executive order in August 2025 to deal with what he called a crime emergency, calling up the Guard and additional federal law enforcement officers. The administration has said crime has rapidly fallen since then, although local officials have argued that crime was already going down before Trump

ordered 2,500 troops into the city.

During their deployment, Guard members have responded to medical emergencies, assisted with arrests, helped with snow removal and carried out beautification projects.

"Taxpayers are paying more than a million dollars a day to have them walk around," Phil Mendelson, chairman of the District of Columbia Council, said in April, adding that "the presence of armed soldiers on American streets is not a good look."

Deployments to other cities have ended or been paused by courts in California and Illinois, while more limited operations are ongoing in cities including New Orleans. But in Washington, Guard members still walk city streets and patrol metro stations, tourist attractions, neighborhoods and parks.

A Guard member was fatally shot and another was wounded in November after authorities said a man drove from Washington state to D.C. and opened fire outside a subway station three blocks from the White House. Spc. Sarah Beckstrom, who was killed, and Staff Sgt. Andrew Wolfe were deployed from West Virginia.

DHS Secretary Mullin pushes states to comply with election demands

WASHINGTON, July 20, (AP): Homeland Security Secretary Markwayne Mullin warned that state officials could lose funding or face investigations if they fail to go along with President Donald Trump's election security demands, part of the Republican president's longstanding attempt to undermine Americans' confidence in the vote.

Experts said the threats - issued just months before midterm elections that will determine control of Congress - were likely hollow because Trump's voting initiatives have been stalled by judges and the Constitution gives states control over how elections are run.

Nevertheless, Mullin's remarks, delivered from the White House complex one day after Trump's primetime address on the topic, could further doubts about election processes and create headaches for states as they prepare for November.

"We absolutely can build confidence in the American people, but the states have to do their part," Mullin said.

Trump continues to falsely claim that Democrat Joe Biden won only because of fraud in 2020, and he's tried to marshal the powers of the federal government to rewrite that history since he returned to office last year - even though judges and his own attorney general in his first



US Homeland Security Secretary Markwayne Mullin speaks to reporters in the Indian Treaty Room at the Eisenhower Executive Office Building on the White House campus, on July 17, in Washington. (AP)

term concluded the election was legitimate.

Mullin insisted that the president was not relitigating the 2020 election, "although he definitely could at this point."

"This is just about exposing what took place and making sure it never happens again," he said.

During his remarks, Mullin advanced an unsubstantiated claim Trump made Thursday that the federal government had found 250,000 noncitizen voters on the rolls in California, Nevada, New Jersey and

Pennsylvania. He said the Department of Homeland Security's investigation was conducted using public data, which election experts say is insufficiently detailed and updated to properly identify whether a registered voter is a noncitizen.

Election officials in California and Pennsylvania said they would review the Trump administration's findings but noted that they conduct their own voter list maintenance and noncitizen voting is exceedingly rare. Research has supported that finding.

America

US VP, wife welcome baby boy: US Vice President JD Vance and his wife, second lady Usha Vance, on Sunday announced the birth of their fourth child, the first born to a sitting vice president in more than 150 years.

Born Sunday, Alec Neel Vance joins older siblings Ewan, 9; Vivek, 6; and Mirabel, 4.

Vance announced the birth on social media with a statement signed by him and his wife.

"We are excited to announce that our baby boy, Alec Neel Vance, was born this morning. Usha and the baby are happy and healthy, and our kids are overjoyed to meet their little brother," the statement said.

They thanked doctors and staff at the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center and with the White House medical team.

The Republican vice president's growing family is in keeping with his passionate advocacy for Americans to have more children. He has also suggested that the 2025 killing of conservative activist Charlie Kirk, who was his friend, factored into the decision to have another child.

Vance, a former US Marine, repeatedly expressed alarm about declining birth rates in America as he launched his political career in 2021 with a bid for a U.S. Senate seat from Ohio. As vice president, he said in Washington at the 2025 March for Life anti-abortion rally, "I want more babies in the United States of America." (AP)

□ □ □

10 injured in Arizona mass shooting: Ten people, including the suspect, were injured in an overnight mass shooting Sunday in Tucson, the US state of Arizona, authorities said.

The shooting occurred around 2 a.m. local time (0900 GMT) on Sunday in a crowded area of down-



Usha Vance

town Tucson, the second-most populous city of Arizona, said officials with the Tucson Police Department.

Police officers patrolling the area heard gunshots and immediately ran towards the sound of the gunfire, local media reported, citing police.

When the police arrived at the scene, they saw a man running away. Officers gave orders to the suspect several times before a uniformed officer shot him.

Officers treated victims at the scene before the Tucson Fire Department took them to a nearby hospital. "A suspect is in custody and multiple victims are being treated for critical injuries," the Tucson Police Department said in a post on X.

"Last night, Tucson experienced another serious and senseless act of gun violence," Tucson Mayor Regina Romero said in a statement.

The identities of the suspect and the victims were not released. The cause of the shooting and the current condition of the victims are unknown. (Xinhua)

□ □ □

Utah flash flood kills 5: Five family members who had set out for a day of hiking were killed after a flash flood swept through canyons of southern Utah on Friday, law enforcement officials said.

The victims were a captain in the Provo, Utah, fire department, his wife and their sons, according to fire officials. A daughter who was not on the trip survived.

The family arrived Friday at Sunglow Campground in a scenic red rock canyon near Bicknell, Utah for their day excursion, the Wayne County Sheriff's Office said.

"It is believed the family fell victim to flooding caused by heavy rains," the sheriff's office said in a news release.

Although the sheriff's office did not identify the victims, the Provo Fire Department confirmed in a social media post that a fire captain, Spencer Long, and his family members were killed.

"We are absolutely heartbroken by the death of Captain Spencer Long and his family. Our thoughts are with his family, friends, and colleagues during this difficult time," officials with the fire department wrote. (AP)

Russia’s Putin meets with N.Korea FM in latest high-level diplomacy

SEOUL, South Korea, July 20, (AP): Russian President Vladimir Putin met with North Korea’s foreign minister and thanked Pyongyang for supporting his war against Ukraine, in the latest high-level diplomacy between the countries, Russian state media reported.

The visit by North Korean Foreign Minister Choe Son Hui comes without an obvious occasion, such as a multilateral diplomatic event or state anniversary, and has raised speculation that she may be coordinating a possible visit to Russia by North Korean leader Kim Jong Un. North Korean state media said Choe departed for Russia on Saturday at the invitation of Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov but has yet to comment on the purpose of her visit.

Yoon Min Ho, spokesperson for South Korea’s Unification Ministry, which handles affairs related to North Korea, said Monday that Seoul was closely monitoring the meetings but declined to assess whether Moscow and Pyongyang were discussing another summit between their leaders.

Russia’s Tass news agency said Putin during his meeting with Choe at the Kremlin on Sunday praised the countries’ bilateral relations and reiterated his “gratitude to the North Korean leadership and people” for supporting his military operations against Ukraine. Choe told Putin that

Kim remains committed to the “comprehensive development” of relations with Russia, Tass said.

Kim traveled to Russia’s Far East for summits with Putin in 2019 and 2023. Putin invited Kim to visit Russia again during their summit in Pyongyang in June 2024, where the leaders signed a strategic partnership agreement pledging mutual aid if either country faces aggression.

Kim in recent years has made Russia the priority of his foreign policy, sending thousands of troops and huge supplies of weapons to support Putin’s war in Ukraine, possibly in exchange for economic aid and technology transfers that some experts say are helping advance North Korea’s military capabilities.

Kim has also been seeking stronger ties with China, including hosting Chinese President Xi Jinping for a June summit in Pyongyang, as he embraces the idea of a “new Cold War” and projecting Pyongyang as part of a united front against Washington.

Choe’s visit to Moscow came shortly after North Korea and China exchanged high-level visits, with North Korean Cabinet premier, Pak Thae Song, Kim’s top economic official, meeting Xi in Beijing and Wang Huning, a member of the Chinese Communist Party’s powerful Politburo Standing Committee, visiting Kim in Pyongyang this month.



Russian President Vladimir Putin, (second right), speaks to North Korean Foreign Minister Choe Son Hui, (second left), during their meeting at the Kremlin in Moscow on July 19. (AP)

Iran war, Myanmar crisis under spotlight

SE Asian ministers set to call for opening of Strait of Hormuz in Manila talks

MANILA, Philippines, July 20, (AP): Southeast Asia’s top diplomats will express alarm over renewed hostilities in the Middle East and call for the full reopening of the Strait of Hormuz when they gather in the Philippine capital Tuesday for talks with Western and Asian counterparts.

Iran and some of the world’s most intractable conflicts will be high in the agenda of the annual talks held by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and hosted by the Philippines, the 11-nation bloc’s current chair.

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi and Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov are among the attendees. Ukraine’s top diplomat, Andrii Sybiha, has been invited to attend a Friday ceremony commemorating a 1976 nonaggression treaty of ASEAN, but will not be participating in the ASEAN meetings attended by Lavrov and Rubio.

Rubio and Lavrov have not announced any plans to meet each other or Sybiha while they are in Manila.

Southeast Asia, a bustling region of more than 680 million people, relies heavily on Middle East oil and gas and was severely hit by the global supply and price shocks sparked by the Iran war. Philippine President

Ferdinand Marcos Jr. declared a national energy emergency in March to ensure the availability of fuel, food and other basic goods and prevent hoarding and profiteering.

ASEAN foreign ministers will first meet among themselves on Tuesday to discuss the renewed hostilities between the United States and Iran and threats to shipping in the Strait of Hormuz, the waterway where roughly 20% of global oil supplies transited before the war.

“We underscored the importance of maintaining regional peace, stability and prosperity, upholding international law ... including the need for a complete and immediate cessation of hostilities across all fronts in the Middle East,” the ministers said in a draft statement of concern, which was seen by The Associated Press.

“We acknowledged the further implications of the continued tensions in the Middle East on regional trade, energy and food security, including energy markets and supply chains, agricultural production,” said the statement, which will be made public after their meeting.

The ministers “called for the restoration of the safe, unimpeded and continuous transit passage of vessels and aircraft in the Strait of Hormuz.”

Rubio’s attendance in the ASEAN meetings was apparently aimed at



From left: Myanmar Permanent Secretary Hau Khan Sum, Malaysia Secretary-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Amran Mohamed Zin, Thailand Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sihasak Phuangketkeow, Timor-Leste Foreign Minister Bendito dos Santos Freitas, Vietnam Deputy Foreign Minister Dang Hoang Giang, Philippines Foreign Secretary Theresa Lazaro, Singapore Permanent Secretary of Foreign Affairs Albert Chua, Brunei Foreign Minister Erywan Yusof, Cambodia Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Prak Sokhonn, Indonesia Director General for ASEAN Cooperation Ina Hagniningtyas Krisnamurthi, Laos Foreign Minister Thongsavanh Phomvihane, and ASEAN Secretary-General Kao Kim Hourn pose for a photo with representatives from the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) Representatives during the ASEAN Foreign Ministers’ Meeting at the Philippine International Convention Center on July 20 in Pasay, Metro Manila, Philippines. (AP)

dispelling concerns that the war in the Middle East would deter the US from focusing on the Indo-Pacific, especially China’s actions in the dis-

puted South China Sea and its presence on Taiwan.

“The secretary’s visit advances a clear US priority: a free and open

Indo-Pacific that delivers safety, security and prosperity for the region and for the American people,” State Department spokesperson Thomas Pigott said in Washington.

Rubio is also expected to meet member of the Quad, which consists of the U.S., India, Japan and Australia, and is seen as a major component of the American strategy to counter China. It has been repeatedly criticized by Beijing as a US scheme to contain its growing influence.

The foreign ministers have been under growing pressure to do more to help resolve the conflicts in their own region, primarily the civil war in Myanmar and the disputes in the South China Sea.

Since Myanmar’s army wrested power from the democratically elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi in 2021, more than 8,100 people have been killed and nearly 22,500 remained in detention, according to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners, a rights-monitoring group.

A five-point peace plan issued by ASEAN leaders in 2021 has failed to end the violence, mainly due to non-compliance by its military-backed government. The bloc has banned the country’s leaders and foreign minister from attending its top-level meetings, including this week’s meetings in Manila.

In a bid to break the impasse, the foreign ministers, led by the Philippine’ Theresa Lazaro, met their Myanmar counterpart for the first time in five years this month in Bangkok, where they renewed calls for an end to the violence and renewed efforts to foster dialogue.

Rights groups criticized the meeting, saying it effectively abandoned the bloc’s ban on engaging the country’s senior officials and rewarded the generals without extracting any concession.

“It was not and should not be mischaracterized as an abandonment of the five-point consensus,” Lazaro said, referring to the peace plan. “The path to peace can only be obtained through resolute diplomacy with all parties to the conflict.”

The ministers will meet Wang Yi in Manila to discuss the status of negotiations between China and the regional bloc on a proposed pact called a “code of conduct,” which aims to prevent territorial disputes in the South China Sea from spiraling out of control.

The territorial standoffs involve China, Taiwan and ASEAN members Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines and Vietnam, but confrontations in the disputed waters have particularly spiked between Chinese and Philippine coast guard and naval forces in recent years.



Supporters of the Cockroach Janta Party push against a barricade as they attempt to march to India’s Parliament, demanding the resignation of the education minister, in New Delhi on July 20. (AP)

India police use tear gas to stop march on Parliament by Cockroach party supporters

NEW DELHI, July 20, (AP): Police used tear gas and batons to stop supporters of India’s youth-led Cockroach movement from marching to Parliament on Monday to demand the education minister’s resignation, while the government appeared to make its first outreach to the movement’s leaders.

The police action came after thousands of demonstrators tried to breach security barricades surrounding the protest site in central New Delhi, marking one of the most serious confrontations in the movement’s campaign against Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s government. Despite the crackdown, many protesters continued marching toward Parliament in small groups.

Cockroach Janta Party spokesperson Saurav Das accused authorities of “brutally cracking down” on “peaceful protesters.” Delhi Police said the march had not been authorized and that restrictions were needed to maintain law and order around Parliament during the monsoon session, which began Monday.

The crowd at Jantar Mantar, a designated site for protests just a few kilometers (miles) from Parliament,

included students, professionals and families with young children. As the day progressed, the gathering spilled beyond the protest site, with demonstrators filling surrounding streets and roads.

Many carried backpacks with water and food, expecting a long day. Others waved Indian flags as chants against the education minister and Modi rippled through the growing crowd.

The Cockroach Janta Party emerged in May, after the Supreme Court chief justice compared some unemployed young people to “cockroaches” during an unrelated hearing. Supporters embraced the remark, turning it into a satirical movement that has attracted millions of followers on social media.

The movement has gained momentum after repeated leaks of high-stakes entrance exams for medical colleges and government jobs sparked public anger. It drew wider attention after police forcibly moved hunger-striking activist Sonam Wangchuk to the hospital on Saturday.

Protesters calling themselves “cockroaches” have camped at Jantar Mantar for the past month, with

members of several student groups joining Wangchuk’s hunger strike. Thousands of supporters have also turned out at universities and rallies in other cities. They are demanding the resignation of Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, reforms to the examination system and compensation for the families of students who died by suicide following paper leaks.

Senior leaders in Modi’s government have taken a hard line against the movement. Pradhan has accused the protesters of acting against the nation, while other ministers have acknowledged students’ concerns but insisted there is no need for talks or negotiations with the movement.

Though that appeared to shift Monday, when representatives of the movement held talks with Health Minister J.P. Nadda. It was the first apparent sign of government outreach to protest leaders, who sought to bring their demands directly to lawmakers, prompting authorities to tighten security around the complex.

CJP spokesperson Das, who met Nadda, said he presented the protesters’ demands, including the immediate resignation or removal of the education minister.

5.5 magnitude quake hits Peru’s Andes region and kills at least six

LIMA, Peru, July 20, (Agencies): A 5.5 magnitude earthquake shook the Andes region of Peru, killing at least six people, injuring more than 30 and displacing 300, authorities said Sunday.

The US Geological Survey reported the quake struck on Saturday at 9:24 p.m., with its epicenter located 2 kilometers (1.24 miles) west-southwest of the city of Sicaya in Huanayo province. It was 10 kilometers (6.21 miles) deep.

Peru’s National Civil Defense Institute said in a statement the total number of missing is still unknown. Several buildings collapsed or suffered structural damage, including the historic “Santiago de León” church and former convent in Chongos Bajo, which was built in 1565 and designated as national heritage site for being a 16th century “architectural gem.”

Luis Vásquez, head of the local civil defense office, told journalists that the use of rustic adobe materials in construction in that Andean area “has contributed to the greater impact and damage.”

Earthquakes are frequent in Peru, which is located in the so-called Pacific “Ring of Fire.”

Images broadcast by local media captured the anguish of victims’ relatives in one of the hardest-hit areas, the agricultural region of Chongos Bajo, where residents huddled under blankets out-



Residents walk amid the debris of homes that collapsed after an earthquake struck Pumpuya, Peru on July 19. (AP)

side severely damaged homes. Animals were also seen under the rubble.

“My home has been destroyed,” Hermenegilda Guamalato told a local radio station as she sought a place to stay with her three children in the neighboring province of Huayucachi.

Also:

CARACAS: The death toll from the two powerful earthquakes that shook Venezuela last month rose to 5,069 late on Friday, local authorities said.

The interim government of President **Dely Rodriguez** added in a statement that the number of injured

remains unchanged at 16,740, as in the past 11 days.

Ongoing recovery and debris-clearing operations have led to the increase in the death toll, particularly in the coastal state of **La Guaira**, the hardest hit by the quakes close to the Caribbean Sea. A total of 1,331 aftershocks had been recorded by Friday.

Venezuela’s government says 856 buildings are damaged and 190 collapsed completely since the 7.2 and 7.5 quakes on June 24. Hundreds of other types of structures, such as bridges and roads, were also affected.



This satellite image from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration shows Tropical Storm Fausto on July 19. (AP)

Tropical Storm Fausto forms off Mexico’s Pacific coast

MIAMI, July 20, (AP): Tropical Storm Fausto formed Sunday well off Mexico’s southwest Pacific coast, while a tropical depression meandering in warm Gulf of Mexico waters south of the Florida Panhandle was threatening to strengthen into a named storm.

Fausto emerged from a tropical depression about 750 miles (1,200 kilometers) south-southwest of the southern tip of Mexico’s Baja California peninsula and was expected to undergo steady or rapid strengthening and become a hurricane by Monday night, the U.S. National Hurricane Center said.

The storm had maximum sustained winds of 40 mph (65 kph) and was moving to the west-northwest at 13 mph (20 kph). No coastal watches or warnings were in effect.

Also in the eastern Pacific, Tropical Storm Elida was weakening Sunday and expected to become a remnant low within a couple of days. Elida was centered Sunday about 1,015 miles (1,635 kilometers) west of the southern Baja peninsula and had top sustained winds of 60 mph (95 kph).

Delivering 3% Year-on-Year Growth

NBK posts KD 324.8 million in Net Profit for the first half of 2026

KUWAIT CITY, July 20: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) announced its financial results for the six-month period ended 30 June 2026. The Bank reported a net profit of KD324.8 million (USD 1.1 billion), compared to KD315.3 million (USD 1.0 billion) during the corresponding period in 2025, reflecting year-on-year growth of 3%.

The Bank's net profit for the second quarter of 2026 increased to KD189.3 million (USD 614.9 million), compared to KD 181.2million (USD 588.4 million) in the corresponding period of last year, recording year-on-year growth of 4.5%.

Total assets reached KD46.2 billion (USD 150.2 billion) as of the end of June 2026, up 5.9% compared to the corresponding period of last year, while the group loans and advances portfolio increased by 8.9% to reach KD 27.8 billion (USD 90.2 billion).

Customer deposits continued to record strong growth, rising by 13.1% year-on-year to KD27.0billion (USD 87.7 billion) at the end of June 2026, while shareholders' equity stood at KD 4.5billion (USD 14.7 billion), up 7.1% compared to the end of June 2025.

A Robust Business Model

Commenting on the financial results, National Bank of Kuwait Chairman, Mr. Hamad Al-Bahar, said: "NBK's performance in the first half of 2026 reaffirms the Bank's ability to continue delivering sustainable growth, despite persistent global and regional uncertainty and ongoing geopolitical challenges weighing on the economic landscape."

He noted that NBK's financial performance during the first six months of 2026 underscores the strength and resilience of the Group's business model in navigating evolving conditions, supported by its diversification strategy across business segments and geographies, as well as its strong financial position, robust capitalization and liquidity levels, solid asset quality, and resilient governance and risk management framework.

Al-Bahar stated that NBK continues to reinforce its leadership by capitalizing on promising opportunities across the markets in which it operates, while maintaining the highest levels of financial and operational discipline, an approach that has remained one of the Bank's key success factors for more than seven decades.

He affirmed that sustainability has become a key pillar of the Group's strategy, noting that the Bank continues to expand its sustainable financing activities and support initiatives that contribute to the transition towards a more sustainable economy. He also highlighted NBK's continued leadership in social responsibility through the launch and sponsorship of development and community initiatives that create a positive and sustainable impact on society.

Balanced Growth

Meanwhile, Mr. Isam J. Al-Sager, NBK Group Vice Chairman and CEO, said: "The financial indicators for the first half of 2026 reflect the Group's strong operating performance and its success in delivering balanced growth across its various business segments, supported by diversified income streams and continued growth in core banking activities. This underscores the resilience of the Group's business model and its ability to deliver sustainable results across varying economic conditions."

Al-Sager noted that the Bank recorded growth of 4.8% year-on-year in net operating income, rising from KD 631.4 million (USD 2.1 billion) in the first half of 2025 to KD 662.0 million (USD 2.1 billion) in the first half of 2026. This was driven by the strong performance of various business segments, sustained momentum in core banking activities, and the maintenance of high levels of operational efficiency, thereby reinforcing earnings quality and supporting the sustainability of growth.

Furthermore, Al-Sager affirmed that investment in technology and innovation represents one of the key pillars of the Group's sustainable growth strategy, noting that NBK continues to develop its technology infrastructure and strengthen its digital capabilities. These efforts contribute to enhancing operational efficiency, improving the customer experience, and delivering innovative banking solutions that keep pace with the rapid developments shaping the financial sector.

He added that NBK Mobile Banking App represents one of the key pillars of the Bank's digital ecosystem, through the continued development and delivery of innovative digital features, solutions, and services that meet customers' evolving needs while enhancing ease of use and flexibility.

Moreover, Al-Sager noted that the Group's international operations continued to deliver strong performance during the first half of 2026, making an effective contribution to revenues and profitability, supported by the Group's geographic reach and diversified business base across regional and global markets. Boubyan Bank also continued to strengthen its contribution to the



Hamad Al-Bahar



Isam Al-Sager

■ Al-Bahar:

1H2026 financial results reaffirm NBK's ability to continue delivering sustainable growth, despite ongoing regional and global uncertainty NBK's performance underscores the strength of the Group's business model and its resilience in navigating evolving market conditions

The Bank continues to reinforce its leadership by capitalizing on promising opportunities across the markets in which it operates

We remain committed to expanding our sustainable financing activities and supporting initiatives that advance the transition towards a more sustainable economy

■ Al-Sager:

Our financial indicators reflect the Group's strong operating performance and balanced growth across its various business segments

Investment in technology and innovation remains a key pillar of NBK's sustainable growth strategy

NBK continues to advance its technology infrastructure and strengthen its digital capabilities to deliver innovative banking solutions

Strong performance and effective contributions from the Group's international operations and Boubyan Bank continued to support revenues and profitability

NBK Wealth continues to reinforce its leading position locally and regionally, while Weyay Bank maintains its momentum in expanding its customer base

The Kuwaiti economy continues to demonstrate resilience in the face of regional and global challenges

Higher oil production, coupled with an acceleration in the pace of development project awards, represents a key factor supporting an improved operating environment once the situation stabilizes



NBK headquarters

Group's results through business growth, customer base expansion, and the continued development of its products and services, supporting the Group's strategy of diversifying income streams and reinforcing its presence locally, regionally, and globally.

NBK Wealth Group also continued to deliver outstanding performance, reinforcing its leading position locally and regionally in wealth management and private banking, while providing comprehensive investment solutions that meet the needs of high-net-worth clients across different markets.

Weyay Bank, meanwhile, continues to expand its customer base and enhance its digital services, leveraging its innovative banking model and its focus on meeting the needs of the new generation, in support of the Group's direction towards building an integrated digital banking ecosystem.

On sustainability, Al-Sager emphasized that NBK views it as a strategic opportunity to enhance long-term value, noting that the Bank is working to embed sustainability principles across its various businesses and investment decisions. This supports the development of a more resilient business model capable of adapting to change and delivering sustainable growth.

"We continue to enhance operational efficiency, elevate the customer experience, and develop our human and technological capabilities, further strengthening our ability to deliver sustainable value to our shareholders, customers, and the communities in which we operate," he added.

Operating Environment

Addressing the outlook for the local operating environment, Al-Sager commented: "The Kuwaiti economy continues to demonstrate its resilience in the face of regional and global challenges. Although uncertainty persists at both the global and regional levels, current indicators support cautious optimism regarding Kuwait's economic recovery, once the geopolitical conditions stabilize."

He added that recent economic indicators point to an improvement in domestic economic activity, with bank credit continuing to grow, supported primarily by the growth recorded by the business sector. He also noted that increased oil production, alongside an acceleration in the pace of development project awards and higher capital spending, represent key factors that will support a post-conflict improved operating environment.

Prestigious Awards

During the first half of 2026, NBK continued to strengthen its leadership locally and regionally by receiving a number of prestigious awards from leading global institutions, in recognition of its excellence in banking performance, innovation, and the quality of services delivered to customers.

The Bank was named "Best Bank in Kuwait 2026" by Global Finance, and also received, for the fourth consecutive year, the "Best Bank for Cash Management in Kuwait 2026" award from the same publication, in recognition of its leadership in treasury and liquidity management solutions.

The Bank also won five awards from MEED at the MENA Banking Excellence Awards 2026, including "Best SME Bank – MENA", "Best SME Bank – Kuwait", "Best Credit Card Offering – MENA", and "Best Retail Bank – Kuwait", in addition to Weyay Bank winning "Best Loan Offering – MENA".

Meanwhile, NBK Wealth continued to reinforce its leadership position in wealth management and private banking, achieving a significant global milestone by winning Global Finance's "Best Private Banking Services for the Next Generation in the World 2026" award. The Group also received Euromoney's "Kuwait's Best for Next-Generation 2026" award, in addition to being named "Kuwait's Best for Ultra-High-Net-Worth (UHNW) Clients 2026", as well as winning the "Best for Fixed Income – Middle East 2026" and "Best for Fixed Income – Kuwait 2026" awards. These accolades underscore NBK Wealth's excellence in delivering specialized banking services and investment solutions tailored to the evolving needs and aspirations of diverse client segments.

Key financial indicators for the first half of 2026

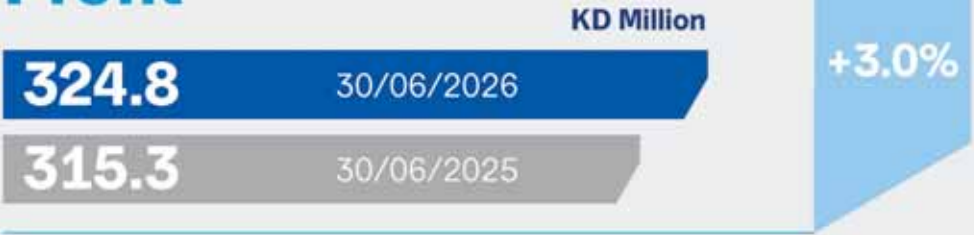
- Net operating income stood at KD662.0 million (USD 2.1billion), up 4.8% year-on-year
- Total assets grew by 5.9% year-on-year, at KD 46.2billion (USD 150.2 billion)
- Total loans and advances increased by 8.9% year-on-year to KD 27.8billion (USD 90.2 billion)
- Customer deposits grew by 13.1% year-on-year to KD 27.0billion (USD 87.7billion)
- Total shareholders' equity amounted to KD 4.5billion (USD 14.7 billion), registering an annual growth of 7.1%.
- Strong asset quality metrics, with NPL/gross loans ratio at 1.22% and an NPL coverage ratio of 256%
- Robust Capital Adequacy Ratio of 17.0%, comfortably exceeding regulatory requirements.

Financial Highlights

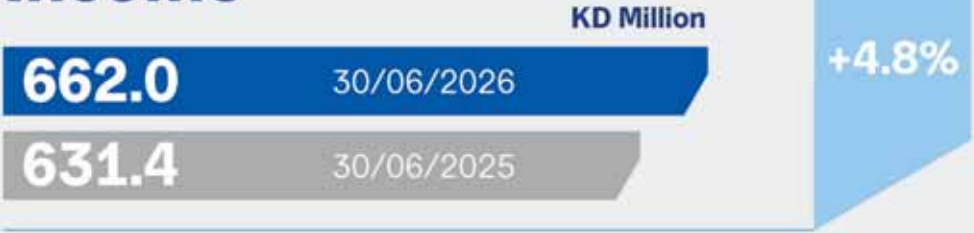
1H 2026



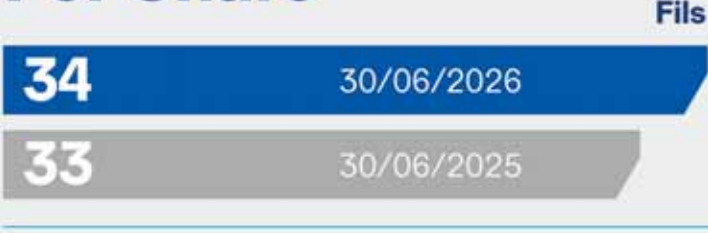
Net Profit



Net Operating Income



Earnings Per Share



Total Assets



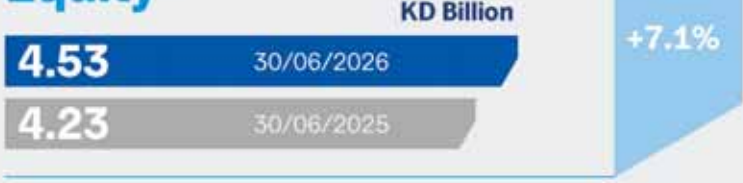
Customer Loans & Advances



Customer Deposits



Shareholders' Equity



To provide access to leading private infrastructure strategy

InvestGB strengthens strategic relationship with Ares Wealth Management Solutions

KUWAIT CITY, July 20: As part of its continuous efforts to provide its clients with high quality alternative-investment products managed by leading global fund managers, Gulf Capital Investment Company KSCC “InvestGB”, the investment arm of Gulf Bank, announced the strengthening of its strategic relationship with Ares Wealth Management Solutions, the global wealth distribution platform of Ares Management Corporation (NYSE:ARES) (“Ares”), a leading global alternative investment manager with the aim of providing compelling investment opportunities in the core infrastructure sector for qualified clients in Kuwait.

InvestGB affirmed that infrastructure investments have become one of the most compelling asset classes for institutional and private capital. Even in times of macroeconomic and market uncertainty, quality infrastructure assets may offer long-term contracted cash flows that provide uncorrelated risk-adjusted returns through economic cycles. Digital networks, power facilities, transport corridors, and utility systems share a common investment profile: long dated assets, limited commodity exposure, and resilient, proven technology.

The global infrastructure funding gap is estimated to be in the tens of trillions of dollars, with governments and municipalities increasingly calling on private capital to finance essential systems. For long-term investors, this structural shortfall represents a sustained and growing pipeline of high-quality opportunities.

Ares is a global leader in private infrastructure investing, providing innovative and scalable equity and debt solutions that support critical assets across the digital infrastructure, power, midstream, transport and utilities



Noorah AlSane and Mark Serocold

sectors. Leveraging its scale, flexibility, and deep sector expertise, Ares Infrastructure delivers solutions that seek to drive differentiated investment opportunities and unlock long-term value in the essential infrastruc-

ture powering modern economies worldwide. As of March 31, 2026, Ares Infrastructure had assets under management totaling \$26.3 billion across the firm.

In this regard, Ms. **Noorah Tareq AlSane**, Managing Director of Alternatives at InvestGB, said: “This collaboration with Ares reflects InvestGB’s commitment to enabling our clients to access the world’s leading investment managers. Infrastructure investment has traditionally been limited to institutions, but this partnership opens the door for private wealth clients in Kuwait to benefit from an asset class that serves as the cornerstone of modern economies, given its resilience and stable, long term cash flows. This strategic relationship is a direct expression of our ongoing commitment to connecting clients with best-in-class global investment opportunities.”

She added: “From InvestGB’s perspective, this strategy represents a natural extension aligned with our clients’ long-term investment objectives, as its broad exposure to diverse sectors and resource and energy markets enhances this sector’s resilience to economic volatility.

For his part, **Mark Serocold**, Partner & Co-Head of International Wealth Management Solutions at Ares, said: “As investors in the Gulf region continue increasing their allocations to private markets, we are pleased to support their goals by expanding access to our core infrastructure strategy through an innovative solution. We believe InvestGB, a trusted collaborator, is well positioned to help us continue capturing private market opportunities in Kuwait. We look forward to continuing to build this relationship and delivering long-term value to investors in the region.”

Main 50 outperforms

Boursa Kuwait ends higher

KUWAIT CITY, July 20, (KUNA): Boursa Kuwait closed Monday’s trading session on a positive note, with all major indices recording gains amid moderate trading activity.

The General Market Index advanced by 9.02 points, or 0.10 percent, to settle at 8,626.87 points. Trading activity saw 297.9 million shares exchanged through 18,003 transactions, with a total value of KWD 71 million (approximately USD 231.2 million).

The Main Market Index rose by 13.52 points, or 0.15 percent, reaching 8,769.83 points. A total of 188.4 million shares were traded via 9,754

transactions, valued at KWD 30.5 million (around USD 99.3 million).

Meanwhile, the Premier Market Index gained 8.53 points, or 0.09 percent, closing at 9,044.17 points. Trading activity included 109.4 million shares across 8,249 transactions, with a value of KWD 40.5 million (approximately USD 131.9 million).

The Main 50 Index posted the strongest performance among the indices, rising by 81.93 points, or 0.81 percent, to reach 10,152.30 points. Trading volume stood at 157.6 million shares through 7,219 transactions, valued at KWD 26 million (around USD 84.6 million).

Brent tops \$90

US gasoline prices return to \$4 as Iran tensions escalate

NEW YORK, July 20, (AP): U.S. gas prices jumped to an average of \$4 a gallon again Monday as the U.S. and Iran launched more attacks.

According to motor club federation AAA, the national average for a gallon of regular gasoline is now back to \$4. The average price a year ago was \$3.14 a gallon.

The price is a national average, meaning drivers in some states have been paying well over \$4 a gallon for a while now, while others pay less. Prices vary between states due to factors ranging from nearby supply to differing tax rates.

People around the world are also dealing with high gas prices as a result of the war.

Gas prices first went over \$4 a gallon on average at the end of March. They dipped below that in mid-June and continued to fall as crude oil prices eased when the U.S. and Iran reached an interim deal. Even then, President Donald Trump expressed frustration that gas prices weren’t falling as quickly as oil prices.

Affordability is likely to be a key issue for voters in the U.S. midterm elections, and higher gas and oil prices can help push up prices for groceries and other goods.

Oil prices have climbed again in recent days as the U.S. and Iran move closer to resuming an all-out war.

Brent crude, the international standard, rose 3.2% to \$90.95 per barrel Monday and benchmark U.S. crude climbed 2.8% to \$84.04 per barrel.

Shaikan output exceeds 45,000 bpd

Gulf Keystone halts Shaikan output on security concerns

IRBIL, July 20, (KUNA): UK-based Gulf Keystone Petroleum announced Monday the temporary suspension of oil production at the Shaikan oilfield in Iraq’s Kurdistan Region, describing the move as a precautionary measure.

The company said the decision was taken to safeguard personnel and operations in light of the evolving security situation in the region.

The suspension follows similar precautionary measures adopted by other international oil companies operating in the Kurdistan Region.

Gulf Keystone said its assets and facilities remain undamaged, adding that the Shaikan field’s latest production exceeded 45,000 barrels per day.

The company said it is closely

monitoring developments and will provide further updates when appropriate.

Gulf Keystone operates the Shaikan license under a production-sharing contract with the Kurdistan Regional Government and holds an 80 percent operating interest in the field, located about 60 kilometers northwest of Irbil.

On July 16, Dana Gas suspended operations at the Khor Mor gas field over security threats, reducing electricity generation in the Kurdistan Region by around 2,000 megawatts.

US-based HKN Energy also halted production at the Sarsang and Atrush oilfields in Duhok for the same reason.

Lower Saxony drives surge

Germany gas output reaches 20-year high on new North Sea field

BERLIN, July 20, (KUNA): The State Office for Geology, Mining and Energy (LBEG) in the German state of Lower Saxony reported that gas production reached 4.5 billion cubic meters last year, marking an unprecedented increase in output in two decades.

The government office attributed this rise in a report to the commissioning of a new gas field in the North Sea, adding that last year’s production increased by two percent compared to 2003.

According to LBEG, gas production had been steadily declining since 2003, and even a slight increase represents a “significant reversal” in this trend.

Gas production in Germany is almost entirely concentrated in Lower Saxony, which accounts for 98 per-

cent of total production, with the remainder coming primarily from Saxony-Anhalt.

The report explained that the main reason for this shift is the commissioning of a new gas field in 2025, which alone will provide approximately four percent of total domestic gas production.

In contrast, the office reported a continued decline in crude oil production, which fell by 4.2 percent during the same period to 1.6 million tons.

Prior to the outbreak of the Ukrainian war and the interruption of Russian gas supplies, Germany was almost entirely dependent on supplies coming from Russia, German government and economic sectors are looking for alternatives to their economy, which is heavily dependent on energy materials.

Five-year SAP and Proaxia alliances mark a modernization milestone

ALSAYER launches ‘iVolution’ Program to drive digital transformation powered by SAP S/4HANA



KUWAIT CITY, July 20: ALSAYER Group officially launched the iVolution Program, a comprehensive digital transformation initiative that will redefine how the organization operates, serves its customers, and competes in an evolving market landscape. The launch was held in the presence of the company’s executive leadership, senior management, and distinguished partners.

As the cornerstone of the iVolution Program, Al-Sayer Group has signed a five-year strategic agreement with SAP Middle East, securing access to SAP’s latest innovations in enterprise solutions, cloud computing, and artificial intelligence. The agreement was signed by Mr. Mubarak Naser Al-Sayer, Chief Executive Officer, and Ms. Sundus Bushari, Country Managing Director – SAP Kuwait.

In parallel, ALSAYER Group has partnered with Proaxia, an SAP-focused software solution and consulting partner. Proaxia was represented by Mr. Sascha Lessmann, Managing Director – Proaxia MENA. ALSAYER will implement Proaxia’s automotive-specific Sales & Services Solution (VSS), providing ALSAYER Group with access to industry-leading technologies that strengthen operational capabilities, elevate service delivery, and consistently exceed customer expectations.

According to Mr. Mubarak Naser Al-Sayer “iVolution is more than a technology program – it is a commitment to our people, our customers, and our future. We have invested in the best, and I am confident that this team will go the distance to make it a success.”

Mr. Bengt Schultz, Chief Operating Officer, ALSAYER Group said “iVolution will fundamentally strengthen how we operate. It will enable our teams to deliver greater value to our customers – faster, more consistently, and to a higher standard.”

ALSAYER Group IT Department led by Mr. Ivan Tkachenko Chief Information Officer and Mr. Cajetan Barreto Group Manager – Project Management Office stressed that the iVolution Program is designed to deliver measurable impact across four core pillars:

- Operational Excellence: Streamline and standardize processes



Photos during the event.

across the organization through the unified SAP S/4HANA platform, reducing complexity and increasing efficiency at every level.

- Customer Value: Elevate the customer experience by enabling faster, more reliable, and more

personalized service – positioning Al-Sayer Group as the partner of choice.

- Data-Driven Decision Making: Equip leadership and management teams with real-time insights and advanced analytics to drive smart-

er, faster business decisions.

- Future-Ready Foundation: Build a scalable, cloud-enabled enterprise architecture that supports continuous innovation and positions the Group for long-term growth.

Enhancing employee preparedness with safety training

ABK organizes awareness workshop on occupational safety & security systems



Explanation of safety procedures.



A group photo of the workshop participants.

KUWAIT CITY, July 20: As part of its ongoing commitment to providing a safe and healthy working environment for both employees and customers, Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) organized an awareness workshop highlighting the occupational safety and security systems implemented across its Head Office and branch network, in line with international best practices.

The workshop, delivered by Shekhah Al Zamel, Head of Safety Management Systems at ABK, was attended by employees from various divisions. It introduced participants to the latest technologies and systems designed to safeguard both people and infrastructure, including early warning systems, automatic fire suppression systems, emergency evacuation procedures, business continuity protocols, and other key safety measures.

The initiative aimed to strengthen the Bank’s culture of prevention by raising employees’ awareness of the importance of complying with occupational safety and health requirements. It also emphasized the role of

effective safety practices in creating a secure, healthy, and attractive work environment, while reinforcing employees’ understanding of the regulations, policies, and procedures governing workplace safety and occupational health.

The workshop also underscored ABK’s investment in state-of-the-art global safety systems to build a comprehensive framework capable of responding promptly to any emergency, helping safeguard the interests of customers and all stakeholders while mitigating workplace risks in accordance with the latest local and international regulatory standards.

Participants were also introduced to the Bank’s emergency communication procedures, enabling them to understand how to contact emergency response teams in the event of an incident, become familiar with emergency response plans, recognize the importance of providing accurate information immediately following an incident, and receive practical guidance on responding to workplace injuries and enhancing emergency preparedness.

ABK reaffirmed that the safety of its people remains the cornerstone of its operational success, noting that continuously enhancing and upgrading its safety systems is not merely a preventive measure but an integral part of strengthening the Bank’s readiness for any emergency, ensuring uninterrupted banking services while maintaining the highest standards of safety and security.

The Bank regularly conducts emergency evacuation drills, awareness workshops, and educational sessions to enhance employees’ knowledge and ensure they are fully familiar with operating and responding to the advanced safety systems and technologies deployed across the Bank, thereby strengthening their readiness to respond effectively to any emergency situation.

ABK also continues to invest in adopting the latest safety and security systems as part of its role as a leading and responsible banking institution in the local market, applying international best practices across its operations.

Markets jittery as AI selloff meets geopolitical risks

World shares are mixed and South Korea’s Kospi drops 4.5% as some AI stocks swoon

HONG KONG, July 20, (AP): World shares were mixed on Monday and South Korea’s Kospi fell 4.5% as investors unloaded more stocks linked to artificial intelligence.

U.S. futures edged higher.

In early European trading, Britain’s FTSE 100 fell 0.4% to 10,561.22. France’s CAC 40 was up 0.3% to 8,362.37, and Germany’s DAX added 0.3% to 24,905.61.

Oil prices stabilized after rising earlier in the day as the U.S. and Iran moved closer to resuming an all-out war. Early Monday, the U.S. announced more attacks for a ninth straight night. Iran has been responding to U.S. strikes by hitting U.S. allies across the Middle East.

Brent crude, the international standard, fell 0.4% to \$87.77 per barrel but still remained much higher than prewar levels. Benchmark U.S. crude dropped 0.8% to \$81.13 per barrel.

“The U.S. and Iran continue to exchange strikes, which are proving to be deadly for both sides,” ING commodities strategists Warren Patterson and Ewa Manthey wrote in a commentary Monday. “If this escalation goes unchecked, we could return to an environment of wide-scale attacks across the Persian Gulf.”

Tanker traffic in the Strait of Hormuz, a crucial waterway for global oil transport, have nearly ground to a halt, adding to pressures on supplies, they noted. On Monday, U.S. gas prices again surged to an average of \$4 a gallon.

In Asia, Japan’s markets were closed Monday for a holiday. South Korea’s Kospi, which has benefited substantially from the global AI frenzy, sank 4.5% to 6,516.27. Two of its most valuable stocks booked losses. Samsung Electronics lost 4.3%, while memory chipmaker SK Hynix fell 4.2%.

Taiwan’s Taiex, also heavy in AI-related stocks, was 0.5% lower as its leading chipmaker, TSMC, or Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Co., climbed 1.3%. It had fallen 7.3% on Friday after the company announced it plans to spend an additional \$100 billion to expand its chipmaking capacity in the U.S.

Hong Kong’s Hang Seng rose 2.4% to 25,143.05, while the Shanghai Composite index traded 0.9% higher at 3,796.28.

Australia’s S&P/ASX 200 fell less than 0.1% to 8,791.30. India’s Sensex slipped 0.6%.

AI-related shares including chipmaking stocks de-



A TV cameraman prepares to film near the screens showing the Korea Composite Stock Price Index (KOSPI), the foreign exchange rate between U.S. dollar and South Korean won and the Korean Securities Dealers Automated Quotations (KOSDAQ) at a dealing room of Hana Bank in Seoul, South Korea, Monday, July 20, 2026. (AP)

clined on Friday, pulling world markets lower. Pledges of huge spending on AI are fueling worries the sector may be in a bubble, and many investors have opted to sell to lock in profits from recent big gains.

“The return to war in the Strait of Hormuz may start to weigh more heavily on financial markets before too long, especially if even strong tech earnings reports continue to be met with skepticism,” Jonas Goltermann, chief markets economist at Capital Economics wrote in a note Monday.

Markets were also shaken by the rollout of another powerful Chinese AI model, this time by Beijing-based Moonshot AI.

The impact of the new Kimi K3 open-source AI model was similar to when China’s “DeepSeek moment” rattled world markets in early 2025. It was viewed as another sign of how lower-cost, capable Chinese AI models are increasingly chal-

lenging rivals like Anthropic’s Claude and OpenAI’s GPT.

On Wall Street, the benchmark S&P 500 ended the week down 1% at 7,457.69. The Dow Jones Industrial Average fell 0.8% to 52,146.42, while the technology-heavy Nasdaq composite lost 1.4% to 25,520.24.

Chipmaking stocks took a hit, with Nvidia falling 2.2%, while Broadcom and AMD, or Advanced Micro Devices, fell 1%.

SpaceX, Elon Musk’s rocket company, dropped 5.4% after dropping below its initial public offering price of \$135 a share, reaching its lowest point since its stock began public trading on the Nasdaq last month.

In other dealings, the U.S. dollar was mostly unchanged at 162.43 Japanese yen. The euro was trading at \$1.1430, down from \$1.1438.

Demand spike pushes Kimi K3 to capacity limits

Kimi K3 overwhelmed by demand, halts new users

HONG KONG, July 20, (AP): The new, powerful Chinese artificial intelligence model Kimi K3, which has caused a stir in the U.S. tech industry, has suspended new subscriptions after a flood in demand overwhelmed capacity within days of the launch.

The development highlighted challenges faced by Chinese AI models in serving a growing user base at home and abroad at a time the U.S.-China tech race is heating up.

Chinese open-source, lower-cost advanced AI models, including DeepSeek’s latest V4, have been moving fast in gaining global attention. In early 2025, DeepSeek shook world markets and helped China to be recognized as a serious competitor to the U.S., where Chinese frontier AI models are largely open source, meaning they are made accessible for people to examine and build upon.

“Kimi K3 has received far more love than we expected,” Moonshot AI, which is Beijing-based, wrote in a X post late on Sunday. “Over the past 48 hours, demand has pushed close to the limits of our current capacity.” Moonshot said that it’s prioritizing existing subscribers and would be temporarily pausing new ones. “We’re adding capacity as fast as we can and will reopen new subscription spots in batches,” it added. The AI



Visitors at the booth for Moonshot’s Kimi K3 during World AI Conference in Shanghai, Friday, July 17, 2026. (AP)

startup also posted a similar message on Chinese social media.

K3’s public rollout late last week, aiming at challenging more advanced AI models by Anthropic.

OpenAI and others, has rattled U.S. rivals. At 2.8 trillion parameters, a measurement of an AI model’s capabilities, it’s deemed as the world’s largest open-source AI model.

“New model releases generally trigger massive interest, which can strain existing compute infrastructure,” said Lian Jye Su, a chief analyst at the technology research and advisory group Omdia. “This does show Moonshot AI does not have sufficient compute chips to serve the current surge in demand.”

Su said that the key reason was more likely due to Moonshot not

fully anticipating the surge in K3’s popularity. K3 is “very demanding” in terms of compute requirements, he said, making compute allocation challenging and expensive.

By measure of front-end coding capability, a metric for AI models’ performances, Kimi K3 topped the chart of the major advanced AI models in rankings on Arena - an AI model evaluation platform - after its public release.

K3’s release has also put pressure on stocks of American technology titans on worries that more affordable Chinese AI models may undercut the pricing power and demand at the U.S. AI companies, even as U.S.-led restrictions have already barred China from accessing some of the world’s advanced technologies, including the most cutting-edge chips.

K3 is one of the latest new Chinese AI models coming out that have drawn strong global reactions.

Over the weekend, China’s Alibaba also previewed its latest Qwen3.8 Max AI model, which the tech giant said had 2.4 trillion parameters as one of the world’s most powerful models and was second only to Anthropic’s Fable 5. Last month, Chinese startup Zhipu, or Z.ai, also rolled out its GLM-5.2 model, which saw rapid adoption across the world.

‘Largest DSA penalty yet’

EU fines AliExpress EUR 550 mln over sale of counterfeit products

BRUSSELS, July 20, (KUNA): The European Commission on Monday imposed a EUR 550 million fine on Chinese e-commerce platform AliExpress for failing to take sufficient measures to prevent the sale of illegal and counterfeit products on its marketplace, in breach of the EU’s Digital Services Act (DSA).

European Commission Executive Vice-President for Tech Sovereignty, Security and Democracy, Henna Virkkunen, said in a statement that risks must be identified and addressed “systematically to ensure consumers can safely shop online,” adding, “Today, we are holding AliExpress to this standard and request it to take action.”

The Commission said its investigation, launched in March 2024, found that the platform had allowed the continued sale of illegal products, including unsafe toys and cosmetics that failed to meet the EU’s environmental and safety standards, as well as counterfeit goods.

It added that AliExpress had overestimated the effectiveness of its systems for detecting and removing illegal products, with many remaining available for weeks after being identified.

Millions of illegal products also reappeared on the platform, while some continued to be recommended

to users before being removed.

The Commission further found that the platform’s mandatory brand authorization system was ineffective and understaffed, allowing traders to bypass it and continue selling counterfeit products.

It said the amount of the fine reflected the nature of the violations, their impact on European consumers, and the duration of the infringements, noting that it is the largest penalty imposed to date under the Digital Services Act, which entered into force in 2022.

The Commission ordered AliExpress to pay the fine and submit an action plan by October 20 outlining the measures it will take to address the breaches, warning that the company could face periodic penalty payments if it fails to comply.

Speaking to reporters, Virkkunen said AliExpress was “cooperating very actively” with the European Commission, stressing that the EU’s enforcement of its rules does not target platforms based on their country of origin.

“We are investigating several online platforms. So a big part of them are from the USA, many of them are from China and also from Europe,” she said, adding that the objective is to ensure that all digital platforms comply with EU rules and that consumers are protected.

Hungarian former minister’s BYD job sparks investigation

BUDAPEST, July 20, (AP): Hungary’s government announced an investigation Monday into a large foreign investment by Chinese automaker BYD negotiated by a former foreign minister who last week resigned from Parliament to take an executive position at the company.

Péter Szijjártó’s announcement last Wednesday that he would take the job at the world’s top electric carmaker prompted accusations of a conflict of interest and criticism over his role in facilitating substantial government subsidies to the company while in office.

Prime Minister Péter Magyar told lawmakers on Monday that Szijjártó, a close ally of former Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, had helped BYD while he was in office “with hundreds of billions (of forints) in public money, diplomatic support and state infrastructure.”

“We will examine all the decisions, negotiations and state commitments made by Péter Szijjártó that were related to the BYD Hungary investment,” Magyar said Monday.

He added the investigation would look into all subsidies, tax breaks, permits, environmental exemptions and publicly-funded investments given to large multinational firms during Orbán’s tenure.

“We will investigate who made these decisions, who prepared them, what professional warnings were ignored, and how much burden they left on Hungarian taxpayers, workers, local communities and the environment,” Magyar said.

Neither Szijjártó nor BYD have responded to Magyar’s allegations of conflict of interest while Szijjártó was in office. The former foreign minister has posed his new job as a “prestigious” opportunity to work for one the “greatest success stories” in the automotive industry.

While serving in government, Szijjártó was instrumental in securing foreign investments in Hungary from Chinese companies, including his now-employer BYD, which received considerable state subsidies during his tenure.

In 2023, Szijjártó announced that BYD would open its first European factory in Hungary - allowing the conglomerate to skirt European Union import tariffs on Chinese electric vehicles imposed to protect the continent’s domestic auto manufacturing sector.

In 2025, Szijjártó also announced BYD would locate its European headquarters and a research and development center in Budapest and receive 20 billion forints (\$63.7 million) in government assistance.

The investments were part of the Orbán government’s push to make Hungary a global hub of lithium-ion battery manufacturing, largely through attracting Chinese battery manufacturers who opened a series of plants across the country.

The moves led local residents, environmentalists and opposition politicians to protest over fears the new industry would exacerbate existing environmental problems, hit the country’s precious water supplies and further undermine its economy to China.

While foreign minister, Szijjártó also maintained close relations with Russia despite its full-scale invasion of Ukraine on Feb. 24, 2022. Breaking with nearly all of his EU counterparts, he frequently traveled to Moscow to negotiate agreements on purchasing Russian oil and gas and to meet with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, whom he referred to as his “friend.”

He was embroiled in controversy during Hungary’s 2026 election campaign when the Washington Post reported that he made regular phone calls to Lavrov during high-level EU meetings with “live reports on what’s been discussed.”

Szijjártó has dismissed the report while acknowledging that he conferred with Lavrov before and after EU foreign minister meetings about their agenda and decisions.

During a government news conference last week, Magyar said that “as far as I know,” an investigation had been launched concerning Szijjártó’s connections to the Russian government.

From Homer to Hollywood gold

Nolan's 'The Odyssey' makes epic \$264.1m global debut

NEW YORK, July 20, (AP): Christopher Nolan's "The Odyssey" launched with an estimated \$124.5 million in domestic ticket sales and another \$139.6 million from overseas, notching an even better debut than "Oppenheimer" and marking the filmmaker's best opening since 2012's "The Dark Knight Rises."

Nolan flexed his singular box-office might with a global debut unlike any other. Few filmmakers alive could pull off a starry, big-budget adaptation of Homer's epic poem. But in a Hollywood where intellectual property rights rule most hits, Nolan turned one of the world's oldest works of literature into an unlikely summer blockbuster.

The Universal production was no small gamble on Nolan, coming off the 2023 best picture-winning "Oppenheimer." With a production budget of \$250 million, it's among the most expensive R-rated movies ever made. Universal is spending some \$125 million to market it.

But no behind-the-camera name turns out audiences more than Nolan's. So great was the hype on "The Odyssey" that IMAX put tickets on sale for some 70 mm showtimes a full year in advance. To satisfy the extraordinary demand for Nolan's preferred format, IMAX 70 mm, some theaters added midnight and 3 a.m. screenings - and sold them out.

"It's incredibly rewarding to see the palpable excitement in theaters this weekend," said Jim Orr, head of domestic distribution for Universal. "Nolan has crafted an epic adventure. It's on a scale that audiences have responded to extraordinarily well."

Billed as Nolan's first feature shot entirely with IMAX cameras, the format drove a huge slice of ticket sales. That included \$29.6 million domestically on IMAX and \$51.8 million globally, leading to the company's best weekend ever. IMAX is dedicating its screens entirely to "The Odyssey" for three weeks. Though only 41 IMAX screens can screen "The Odyssey" in 70 mm, they accounted for \$6.3 million in ticket sales.

"The IMAX of it all helped turn it from not only a blockbuster, but a global cultural event," said Rich Gelfond, chief executive of IMAX. "We have tickets on sale for week five in some theaters and some of them have already sold out."

Since the pandemic, Nolan has been at the forefront of reviving cinemas. His "Tenet" was one of the first big releases to wade back into theaters in 2020. Three years later, "Oppenheimer" and Greta Gerwig's "Barbie" combined to create arguably the movies' signature moment of the decade. "Oppenheimer" ultimately grossed \$975 million worldwide.

"The Odyssey" arrived in theaters during Hollywood's best summer since 2019. Ticket sales are running 10.4% ahead of last year, according to Rentrak. The industry is expecting the first \$10 billion year at the domestic box office since the pandemic.

The only question for "The Odyssey" will be how front-loaded it is, given that many moviegoers have had this weekend circled for months. The film faced no new-release competition over the weekend, and it won't next weekend, either.

Gelfond said that presales for the movie's second weekend would rank among their 10 best presales, proof that many moviegoers are waiting to see the film in their preferred format. IMAX 70mm screenings, he said, are largely sold out for the next month, except for some front row seats.

"Christopher Nolan and Tom Cruise may be the two most high-profile ambassadors for the big-screen experience," said Paul Dergarabedian, head of marketplace trends for Rentrak. "Nolan is a director who's a star as much as any movie star in front of the camera."

The audience for "The Odyssey" was notably male, accounting for 59% of tickets sold. But Orr said moviegoers were otherwise "ridiculously broad," playing across demographics and geography.

"It's delivering for a 17-year-old dude and it's delivering for a female that's 55 and up," said Orr. "It points to what I'm convinced will be a very long, very successful run throughout not only the rest of the summer but into the fall, too."

The next movie to pose any competition, ironically, also stars Tom Holland and Zendaya: Sony's "Spider-Man: Brand New Day" on July 31.

"The Odyssey" stars Matt Damon as Odysseus and features Holland as his son, Telemachus; Anne Hathaway as Penelope; Zendaya as Athena; Robert Pattinson as the suitor Antinous and Charlize Theron as the sea nymph Calypso.

Nolan's casting of "The Odyssey," including Lupita Nyong'o as Helen and Elliot Page as a soldier, was controversial to some conservative commentators. Elon Musk called Nolan a "coward" over Nyong'o's casting.

But that criticism had little to no effect on "The Odyssey" becoming one of the big-screen cultural events of the year. Reviews (95% fresh on Rotten Tomatoes) are among the best of Nolan's career. Audiences gave it an "A" CinemaScore.

PG-rated films followed in the wake of "The Odyssey." The Walt Disney Co.'s "Moana" landed in a distant second place with \$19 million in its third weekend. Following its disappointing \$43 million launch, the live-action remake slid 56% on its second weekend. In two weeks it collected \$178 million worldwide, a poor result for a film



Zendaya attends the premiere of 'The Odyssey' at AMC Lincoln Square on Tuesday, July 14, 2026, in New York. (AP)



Charlize Theron attends the premiere of 'The Odyssey' at AMC Lincoln Square on Tuesday, July 14, 2026, in New York. (AP)



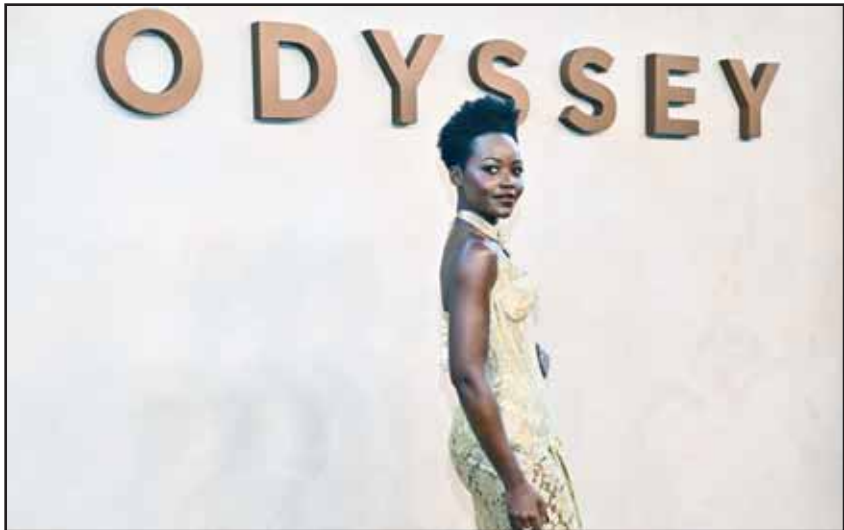
Matt Damon attends the premiere of 'The Odyssey' at AMC Lincoln Square on Tuesday, July 14, 2026, in New York. (AP)



Anne Hathaway attends the premiere of 'The Odyssey' at AMC Lincoln Square on Tuesday, July 14, 2026, in New York. (AP)



Tom Holland attends the premiere of 'The Odyssey' at AMC Lincoln Square on Tuesday, July 14, 2026, in New York. (AP)



Lupita Nyong'o attends the premiere of 'The Odyssey' at AMC Lincoln Square on Tuesday, July 14, 2026, in New York. (AP)



Travis Scott attends the premiere of 'The Odyssey' at AMC Lincoln Square on Tuesday, July 14, 2026, in New York. (AP)



Director Christopher Nolan, left, and Emma Thomas pose for photographers upon arrival at the premiere of the film 'The Odyssey' on Monday, July 6, 2026, in London. (AP)

that cost \$250 million to make.

"Moana" was trailed by Universal's "Minions & Monsters" and Disney's "Toy Story 5," both of which grossed about \$15 million.

With final domestic figures being released Monday, this list factors in the estimated ticket sales for Friday

through Sunday at U.S. and Canadian theaters, according to Rentrak:

1. "The Odyssey," \$124.5 million.
2. "Moana," \$19 million.
3. "Minions & Monsters," \$14.8 million.
4. "Toy Story 5," \$14.8 million.

5. "Evil Dead Burn," \$5 million.
6. "The Invite," \$3.9 million.
7. "Young Washington," \$3.7 million.
8. "Obsession," \$2.5 million.
9. "Supergirl," \$1.5 million.
10. "Disclosure Day," \$1.5 million.

Translator applauds film's impact, questions its soul

Blockbuster 'Odyssey' draws praise and scholarly criticism



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

NEW YORK, July 20, (AP): For Greek translator Emily Wilson, the release of director Christopher Nolan's "The Odyssey" has been gratifying in various ways. Her acclaimed 2017 edition of Homer's epic has reached the top 5 on Amazon.com, leading a wave of similar books boosted by the movie. Nolan has even cited her translation, notably the opening line "Tell me about a complicated man," as inspiration.

But the film itself, which brought in more than \$260 million worldwide during its opening weekend and has received raves from many critics, left her unsatisfied.

"I want to celebrate the fact that so many more people are aware of 'The Odyssey' and were brought back to the poem," she told The Associated Press. "But at the same time, I had the sense that Christopher Nolan was trying to pack everything in while missing themes that were essential to the poem."

One of the year's most anticipated releases, "The Odyssey" stars Matt Damon as the returning warrior Odysseus, Anne Hathaway as his wife, Penelope, and Tom Holland as their son, Telemachus. Reviewers have praised the acting and the narrative drive, the grand scale of a movie shot entirely on IMAX film and how it weds the sensibilities of ancient Greece and the modern world, at least as Nolan perceives it.

The divide between scholars and critics seems in part a matter of whether the balance should tilt toward Nolan or Homer. Wilson and fellow translator Daniel Mendelsohn both expressed admiration for Nolan's cinematic flair and ambition, what Mendelsohn calls his "great visual pa-

nache." Both speculated that his desire to make a "Christopher Nolan" movie led to unfortunate decisions.

Mendelsohn is an author, critic and translator and his assessment appeared Friday in The New York Review of Books, where he is an editor-at-large.

Mendelsohn had previously defended Nolan's controversial decision to cast a Black actor, Lupita Nyong'o, as Helen of Troy, calling it a worthy way to "provoke, challenge and discomfit how we think about beauty and identity." But he faulted the director for giving us an Odysseus with "no cleverness, no humor, no wily charm." One of the Western canon's formative tricksters has been transformed, he contended, into the kind of haunted protagonist featured in such previous Nolan movies as "Oppenheimer" and "Memento."

"This tormented, guilt-ridden Odysseus, stripped of humor and wit, seductiveness and cleverness, is a sibling of Memento's anguished amnesiac, of Batman, of Oppenheimer, men tormented by pasts they wrestle with in different ways," wrote Mendelsohn, whose "Odyssey" translation came out in 2025. "Nolan has merely remade Homer's hero in his own image."

Author Gareth Hinds, whose graphic novel adaptation of "The Odyssey" has also received a sales bump from the movie, had a response similar to Mendelsohn's about Nolan's interpretation of Odysseus. The "wily trickster and smooth talker" is now an "everyman who appears to be honorable, except in select situations which then continue to haunt him." For Hinds, Nolan's film raises the question of how much you can change a story's main character before the story itself is changed entirely.



Jennifer Hudson sings the national anthem of the United States during the World Cup final soccer match between Spain and Argentina in East Rutherford, N.J., near New York. (AP)



Entertainers perform during the pregame closing ceremony prior to the World Cup final soccer match between Spain and Argentina in East Rutherford, N.J., near New York. (AP)



Singer Post Malone performs before the World Cup final soccer match between Spain and Argentina in East Rutherford, N.J., near New York. (AP)

All-stars Madonna, Shakira, BTS and Bieber redefine football’s biggest stage

Music meets football in FIFA’s first-ever World Cup halftime show



Influencer IShowSpeed performs before the World Cup final soccer match between Spain and Argentina in East Rutherford, N.J., near New York. (AP)



Ronaldinho and Ronaldo perform with Madonna during the halftime show in the World Cup final soccer match between Spain and Argentina in East Rutherford, N.J., near New York, Sunday, July 19, 2026. (AP)



Singer Justin Bieber performs at halftime during the World Cup final soccer match between Spain and Argentina in East Rutherford, N.J., near New York. (AP)

NEW YOR, July 20, (AP): Madonna, Justin Bieber, BTS and Shakira each brought a bit of one of their hits to the World Cup’s first halftime show in a whirlwind performance Sunday that also squeezed in Burna Boy, Ted Lasso and many Muppets.

The show at what’s otherwise known as MetLife Stadium, outside New York, was an attempt to bring Super Bowl vibes to the World Cup, but the 11-minute performance was considerably more packed than the usual one-headliner, 13-minute American football counterpart. Each headliner here spent about two minutes performing.

Madonna opened the show with her 2000 dance-pop hit “Music,” joined by star Brazilian soccer players of yesteryear, Ronaldo and Ronaldinho. It started with an apparently prerecorded piece in a roller rink before she rode into the stadium on a dune buggy, singing, “Music, makes the people come together.”

Venezuelan conductor Gustavo Dudamel led an orchestra through the White Stripes’ sports anthem “Seven Nation Army,” while the Muppets house band - including drummer Animal in lieu of Meg White - provided furry shakes in the background.

K-pop sensations BTS took to the field in variations of red and black moments later singing “Dynamite” following a nod to Norway’s Viking row.

Promoting the upcoming season of “Ted Lasso,” Jason Sudeikis and Brendan Hunt, in character, pumped



BTS performs during the halftime show in the World Cup final soccer match between Spain and Argentina in East Rutherford, N.J., near New York. (AP)

up Justin Bieber, who changed the tempo with “Everything Hallelujah,” performed with an acoustic guitar and a casual feel.

“Alright young man, let’s go! It’s your big shot!” Sudeikis said to Bieber. “Go out there, don’t be nervous, nobody’s watching.”

Shakira and Burna Boy followed with their official World Cup anthem “Dai Dai,” heard before all 104 kickoff during this tournament. The Colombian superstar was barefoot, wearing a dress of yellow and pink feathers and surrounded by similarly clad dancers - including a group of children - before the Afrobeats icon joined her in the song whose refrain

is an Italian version of “Let’s go!”

Shakira has virtually made a genre out of World Cup songs, including 2010’s “Waka Waka (This Time for Africa).”

The show wrapped with the PS22 Chorus of elementary-school students from Staten Island, backed by Dudamel and joined by Chris Martin - the Coldplay singer who curated the performance - along with Shakira and many more Muppets and “Sesame Street” characters, including Kermit, Miss Piggy, Count von Count and Cookie Monster.

Dudamel and about 40 musicians - about half from the New York Phil-



Shakira performs at halftime of the World Cup final soccer match between Spain and Argentina in East Rutherford, N.J., near New York. (AP)

harmonic and half from Venezuela’s Simón Bolívar Symphony Orchestra - were on the field, though their music was prerecorded Wednesday at the Manhattan Center.

Afterward, Javier Bardem was among the Spanish fans at the stadium celebrating their home country’s second World Cup win. Bardem danced and pumped his fist as he celebrated the win.

Other stars at the game included Beyoncé and Jay-Z. Timothée Chalamet and Kylie Jenner, and Matt Damon, who was having a big weekend with the epic opening of “The Odyssey.” He was with his wife, Luciana Barroso Damon, who wore the colors of her native Argentina.

Jennifer Hudson, Robbie Williams and others performed a slew of anthems, Post Malone brought an old hit and a new tune and Tom Cruise gave an earnest hype-em-up speech in the pre-match closing ceremony.

British singer and former Take That member Williams performed his FIFA anthem “Desire,” wearing a blue bedazzled track suit. He was joined by Pussycat Dolls member Nicole Scherzinger and Italian singer Laura Pausini in blue spangled gowns. Williams had released the song a year ago but dropped a new version with the two women earlier in the week.

The streamer IShowSpeed took the field first to perform his World Cup-themed song “Champions,” atop an image of the Empire State Building. Next was Post Malone, who walked on to the New York/New Jersey Stadium pitch covered with a tarp showing the New York skyline. He sang a brand new song, “Chrome Heartbreaker,” and was joined by Swae Lee to perform their 2018 duet “Sunflower” on a hexagon-heavy stage in the center of the field.

Cruise, who was also part of the Paris Olympics’ closing ceremony, followed them with a speech delivered in polo shirt and jeans.

“Today only two teams remain: España!” Cruise said, pausing for cheers before adding, “y Argentina!”

“Let us celebrate a tournament that brought the world together,” he said.

Most of the national anthems were piped in during the tournament, but they were performed live on Sunday. EGOT winner and talk show host Jennifer Hudson sang “The Star-Spangled Banner.” Wearing a white suit with red, white and blue trim, she stood in front of a bank of flags of the world, singing a cappella before being joined by a brass band.

Spanish Brass played Spain’s instrumental “La Marcha Real,” followed by Argentina’s “Himno Nacional Argentino,” sung by pop star María Becerra, clad in a flowing dress reminiscent of the Argentine flag.

Autopsy key in D4vd death case

LA medical examiner calls for transparency

LOS ANGELES, July 20, (AP): Autopsy reports rarely come with barbed comments. So eyebrows rose when the autopsy results of 14-year-old Celeste Rivas Hernandez were released with a statement from the Los Angeles County chief medical examiner saying it was “unfathomable” her grieving parents had to wait months to learn how their daughter died.

The autopsy performed on the dismembered body found in a Tesla in the Hollywood Hills had been sealed by a court order in the investigation that led to murder charges for singer D4vd. Dr. Odey Ukpo’s comment with the report was his most pointed effort yet to emphasize his office’s independence from police and prosecutors, as well as his desire to make as much death information public as soon as possible.

D4vd, who has pleaded not guilty, this week faces a crucial preliminary hearing to determine whether there is enough evidence for a trial. Ukpo’s agency, which determined Rivas Hernandez died from stab wounds, plays a major role, as it has in other prominent cases, including following the death of “Friends” star Matthew Perry and the killings of director Rob Reiner and his wife, photographer Michele Singer Reiner.

Ukpo, 46, sat for a recent interview with The Associated Press in the building where he performed autopsies for nearly a decade before getting the head role in 2023. He has

always welcomed the celebrity cases that Los Angeles brings, saying the scrutiny they receive and the likelihood of misinformation spreading are strong incentives to do careful, irrefutable work. And they provide an opportunity to show what his office does and what kind of dangers the community may face.

“I should be able to anticipate the strongest arguments or the most interesting questions by the work that I’ve done,” he said. “If I haven’t, then something’s missing.”

“Life is complicated, but death is simple,” Ukpo said.

Ukpo doesn’t believe sealing autopsy reports helps police investi-

gations, including in the killing of Celeste.

“That goes completely against our mission,” he said. “It’s so important for us to release the information that she did not die from something natural, she did not die from drugs, she was stabbed. And then we start to look back at what made her vulnerable to be in that situation.”

A court-ordered security hold still seals the Reiner autopsies. Authorities said immediately after their deaths that they had been stabbed by their son, who has pleaded not guilty, but little information has followed. Ukpo said he would discuss the findings - if he was allowed.



Los Angeles County medical examiner, Dr. Odey Ukpo, poses for a portrait on Tuesday, June 16, 2026, in Los Angeles. (AP)

Leaders urge unity and preservation

UNESCO heritage session opens in Busan

BUSAN, South Korea, July 20, (Xinhua): The 48th session of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee opened in Busan, South Korea. The event brought together around 3,000 participants to consider new World Heritage nominations and discuss the protection of cultural and natural heritage sites.

At the opening ceremony, UNESCO Director-General Khaled El-Enany said World Heritage represented not only the legacies of the past but also a living source of inspiration for the present. He described the session as a defining moment of unity and called on states parties to work together to address common challenges and safeguard humanity’s shared heritage.

South Korean President Lee Jae Myung said in his opening remarks that World Heritage transcended national borders and generations, serving as a symbol of humanity’s shared values and a foundation for peaceful international cooperation.

At a time of growing conflict and division, he said, cultural dialogue was more important than ever.

The meeting will review 30 new nominations for inscription on the World Heritage List, three proposals to modify existing World Heritage properties and the conservation status of 147 sites already on the list.

In addition to reviewing nominations, delegates from states parties, observer organizations, non-governmental organizations

and academia will discuss issues related to the conservation and management of World Heritage properties, as well as the implementation of the World Heritage Convention.

There are currently 1,248 World Heritage properties worldwide, comprising 972 cultural sites, 235 natural sites and 41 mixed sites.



The K-Heritage House at BEXCO is prepared ahead of the opening ceremony of the 48th session of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee in Busan on Sunday. The house will operate throughout the committee session from July 20-29. (Xinhua)

Biogen’s diranersen slows cognitive decline

Experimental Alzheimer’s drug shows promise targeting different brain protein: study

WASHINGTON, July 20, (AP): An experimental drug might help slow early Alzheimer’s disease in a markedly different way than today’s treatments - by lowering levels of a brain protein called tau, researchers reported.

Tau is one part of a toxic duo fueling Alzheimer’s but prior attempts to develop drugs that can target the protein have failed. Two Alzheimer’s drugs, lecanemab and donanemab, try to clear buildup of the better-known amyloid protein and can modestly slow cognitive decline.

The new findings suggest Biogen’s diranersen did more than lower tau levels. The study of about 400 people found signs that it also slowed cognitive decline, in one small subset enough to be comparable to amyloid therapy, according to results presented at the Alzheimer’s Association International Conference in London. Biogen is planning a larger study to try to prove the drug’s benefit.

“This is really quite promising if it were to hold up” in that next-step testing, said Jessica Langbaum of the Banner Alzheimer’s Institute in Phoenix, who wasn’t involved with Biogen’s study. “This is early days,” cautioned Dr. Reisa Sperling of Mass General Brigham, who also wasn’t involved in

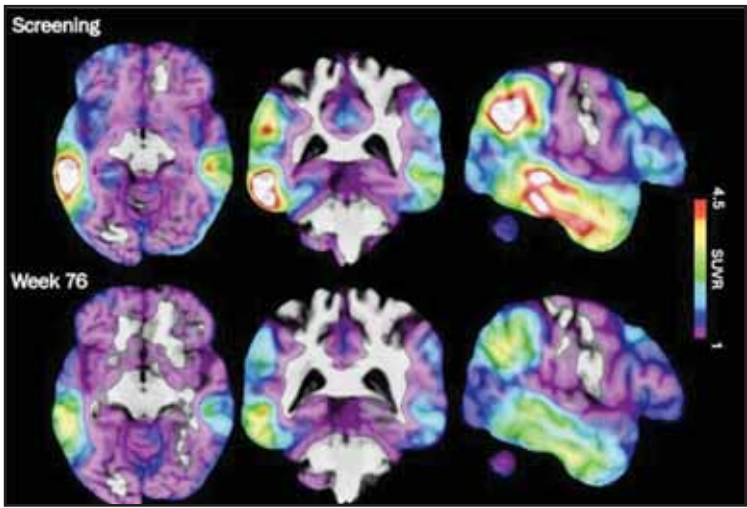
the study. But “I think it will reinvigorate interest and investment in lots of tau mechanisms, and the field needs that.”

It’s one of multiple novel attempts to fight the mind-destroying disease, including a possible tau vaccine, an experimental heart drug that might do double-duty for some people at high risk of Alzheimer’s, and ways to help medicines more easily get across the so-called blood-brain barrier.

It’s not clear exactly what causes Alzheimer’s, which affects more than 7 million Americans and tens of millions worldwide. That sticky amyloid protein starts building up to form plaques in the brain about two decades before symptoms appear. But amyloid alone isn’t enough to cause Alzheimer’s. Many scientists believe that amyloid buildup eventually triggers an abnormal form of tau to form tangles in neurons, setting off symptoms.

Diranersen is what’s called an antisense oligonucleotide that doesn’t attack tau buildup but instead instructs a tau-producing gene to produce less.

“If you lower tau production, you are lowering the amount of the abnormal tau that needs to be cleared by the microglia, by the clearance mechanism in the brain. And so you are enabling the normal clearance



These brain scan images provided by Biogen show how high levels of Alzheimer’s-related tau protein, in red, dropped in a recipient of the company’s experimental drug diranersen. (AP)

mechanism to have more capacity to clear the tau,” said Dr. Cath Mumery of University College London, who led the new study.

Today’s anti-amyloid drugs are given through the bloodstream via infusions or injections. Diranersen is injected into the fluid surrounding the spinal cord, a straighter path to the brain.

goal of showing that higher doses brought greater benefits.

Still, scientists had been anxiously awaiting details about how much that twice-a-year spinal shot really helped. Five of six different brain tests showed diranersen recipients’ memory and other cognitive abilities still worsened but more slowly than those given dummy shots, Mumery said. In one test of the lowest dose, that translated to a 26% reduction in cognitive decline - “approximately the same” change seen in earlier tests of amyloid drugs, she said.

Side effects included injection site pain and a temporary state of confusion that could appear a few days after the shot and last about a week, she said. But there were no signs of brain inflammation, which can affect recipients of anti-amyloid drugs.

The University of California, San Francisco, last week opened a first-of-its-kind study known as the Alzheimer’s Tau Platform. Funded by the National Institutes of Health, it will test a variety of experimental anti-tau therapies against and in combination with today’s amyloid treatments. First up is a vaccine called AADvac1 designed to train the immune system to recognize and fight a specific worrisome portion of the tau protein, said UCSF’s Dr.

Adam Boxer.

The “platform” approach will expand to locations around the country, allow addition of other tau drugs to test and include people with Alzheimer’s-related protein buildup who aren’t yet showing symptoms, he said.

Researchers told the Alzheimer’s meeting that an experimental cholesterol-lowering drug called obicetrapib might do more than help heart health. They’re exploring if it also might lower buildup of Alzheimer’s-related proteins in people who carry a genetic risk for the disease.

Why? That gene, called APOE4, also affects how the body processes cholesterol. Obicetrapib maker NewAmsterdam Pharma plans to begin a study soon to test if the drug’s cholesterol effects also can mitigate the Alzheimer’s risk in people carrying one or two copies of that gene.

Companies also are trying to get Alzheimer’s drugs into the brain faster and at higher volumes, by penetrating the protective lining meant to protect the brain from harm. Denali Therapeutics’ CEO Ryan Watts describes it as “hitching a ride” with iron that naturally gets into the brain. His company is pursuing drugs that target tau and amyloid using that “transport vehicle” technology.

Far above Earth, NASA’s Apollo lunar lander put astronauts on the moon

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla., July 20, (AP): America’s most daring, extraordinary feat – landing astronauts on the moon – remains the pinnacle of achievement by anyone anywhere. Ever.

And the lunar lander – a groundbreaking piece of America – is up there still, far away.

NASA put 12 men on the lunar surface more than half a century ago, beginning with Apollo 11’s Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin. The two became the first humans to explore another world when their lander, bearing the patriotic name Eagle, settled onto the Sea of Tranquility on July 20, 1969. “The Eagle has landed,” Armstrong radioed as a spellbound Earth erupted in cheers and tears.

Just 6½ hours later came the most momentous and memorable line of all. Armstrong descended the ladder and stepped onto the gray, gritty dust: “That’s one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind.”

At 23 feet (7 meters), the Apollo lunar module stood a little taller than a giraffe and looked just as ungainly. It had two sections: a lower descent stage with four legs and an upper stage that housed the crew. The descent stage got the moonwalkers to the lunar surface and remained behind as the men blasted back into lunar orbit.

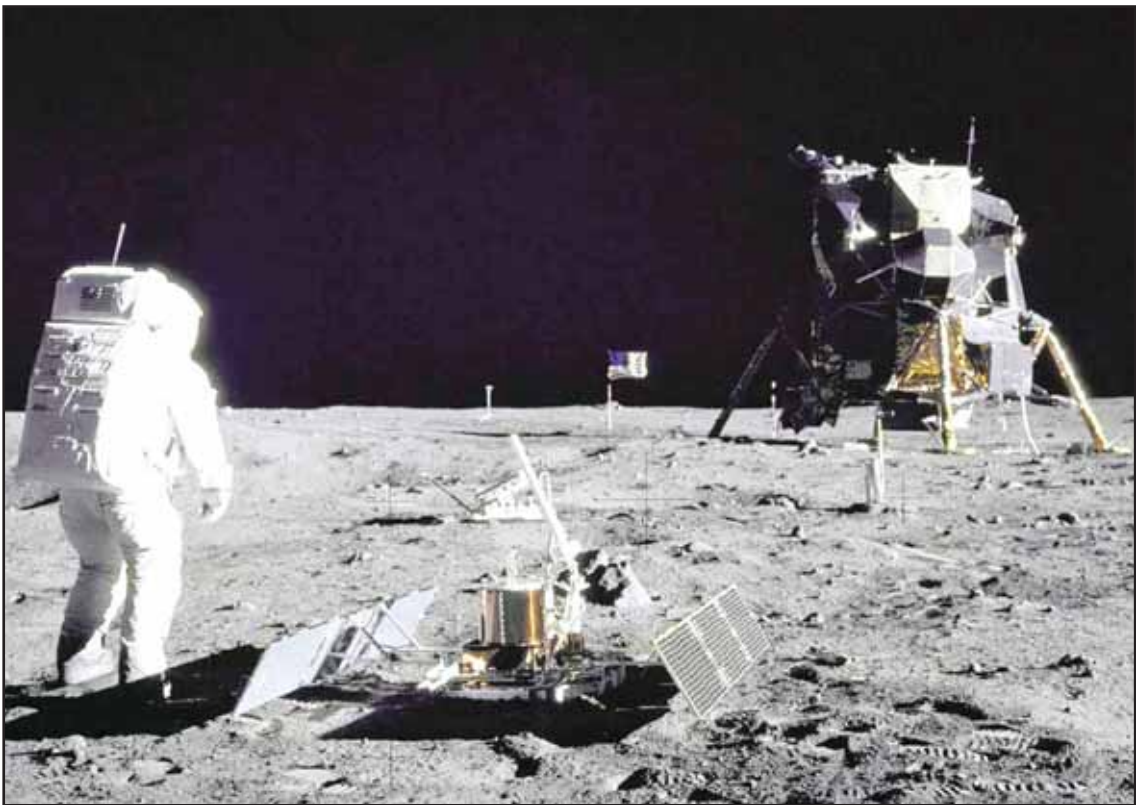
All six descent stages will be there for perpetuity, clumped around the equator on the moon’s near side.

NASA’s Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter and other countries’ satellites around the moon have photographed

them. Resembling whitish splotches from orbit, the descent stages pinpoint the touchdown sites not only of Eagle but Intrepid, Antares, Falcon, Orion and Challenger. Its moon landing nixed, Apollo 13’s lunar module Aquarius was turned into a lifeboat that got its crew of three safely home. The ascent stages are scattered all over the moon – smashed to bits, no longer needed once the moonwalkers were back inside the command module. Some speculate, however, that Apollo 11’s ascent stage might still be orbiting.

For NASA’s new Artemis program, private businesses are handling lunar lander details and operations. Elon Musk’s SpaceX and Jeff Bezos’ Blue Origin are scrambling to get their landers ready for a docking test in low-Earth orbit with a NASA crew capsule next year. If Artemis III’s docking rehearsal goes well, NASA could launch its first moon landing with astronauts since Apollo as early as 2028. SpaceX’s Starship is so tall that moonwalkers will need a 10-floor elevator to descend to the lunar surface. The Apollo astronauts used a nine-rung ladder.

On that long-ago day, President Richard Nixon said in a phone call to Armstrong and Aldrin as the pair stood alongside the U.S. flag they had just planted 240,000 miles (385,000 kilometers) from home. Said Nixon: “For one priceless moment in the whole history of man, all the people on this Earth are truly one.”



In this image released by NASA, Astronaut Edwin E. Aldrin Jr., a lunar module pilot, stands on the lunar surface after the Apollo 11 moon landing on July 20, 1969. The Lunar Module is seen in the background. (AP)

At least 930 dead in Congo’s Ebola outbreak

BUNIA, Congo, July 20, (AP): At least 930 people have died in Congo’s Ebola outbreak, the country’s Ministry of Health said Monday, with 37 new deaths recorded in a 24-hour span Friday into Saturday, one of the highest totals.

The deaths were recorded out of the 2,344 cases confirmed as of Saturday, the health ministry said.

The Ebola outbreak that was declared in eastern Congo on May 15 is the fastest-growing Ebola outbreak on record. The Bundibugyo virus responsible for the outbreak is less common than others that cause Ebola disease, and there is no approved vaccine or treatment.

Ebola is highly contagious and can be transmitted to people from wild animals. It spreads in the human population through contact with bodily fluids such as vomit, blood or semen, and with contaminated surfaces and materials such as bedding and clothing. The disease is rare but severe and often fatal.

The surge in deaths comes as safety fears have restricted the response in the worst-affected province of Ituri. A total of five provinces have been affected, all in the eastern region where rebel violence is rampant.

At least 12 attacks - mostly fueled by skepticism and rumors - have



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)

been recorded against health facilities and teams since the outbreak was declared in mid-May, authorities said Saturday. Many health workers meanwhile have walked off their jobs as they protest lack of payment.

At least 36 health workers infected with the virus have died.

The World Health Organization last week expressed concerns that 80% of new Ebola cases were emerging from unknown chains of transmission, a sign the outbreak is

spreading faster than health officials can track despite an expanding response.

Congo’s Health Ministry said in its latest update that 724 patients are currently in isolation and in hospitals, and that it is intensifying response efforts in affected health zones.

“Patient care and support capacities are consolidating, with 22 new recoveries recorded in 24 hours,” the ministry said.

Nigerian children pay price for Iran war as malnutrition, poverty surge

SOKOTO, Nigeria, July 20, (AP): Maryam Aminu was hardly surprised when the last of her six children was diagnosed with malnutrition in April for a second time. She was barely feeding the 18-month-old regularly, let alone with nutritious foods.

Although the family in northwest Nigeria has struggled with economic hardship, their situation deteriorated after February, when her husband, Shehu Aminu, lost his job as a taxi driver due to a spike in the retail price of petrol caused by the war in Iran.

“When she was diagnosed the second time, even though I suspected it, I was sad and angry because I knew why,” Aminu said in the living area of their unvarnished two-bedroom house in the quiet town of Kware, Sokoto, as ash from the coal stove billowed into the room. “Times are tough, and the food is not consistent.”

Children relapsing into malnutrition has become an increasingly common occurrence in the state and across northern Nigeria, according to local health and aid workers, who cite knock-on effects from the Iran war.

Northern Nigeria, one of the world’s poorest regions, is already under pressure from an insurgency crisis. Now, the conflict in the Middle East has worsened food security for millions of people living in poverty, especially children.

At the same time, Nigerian President Bola Tinubu’s vast economic reforms sparked high inflation after fuel subsidies were removed three years ago and the currency was devalued. A World Bank technical report this week stated that 139 million Nigerians are now poor or vulnerable to poverty.

If the war in the Middle East continues, up to 23.4 million additional children could fall into monetary poverty - meaning a lack of income or consumption - by the end of the year, the United Nations children’s agency UNICEF said in a report this week. It warned that at least 80% would be in Africa and Asia.

“Children are paying the price for the escalating conflict in the Middle East, including children far beyond the region,” said UNICEF Executive Director Catherine Russell. “The longer this continues, the worse the consequences will be.”

Amid the Iran war, the closure of the Strait of Hormuz - through which a fifth of the world’s oil and gas passed before the war - sent a ripple effect across the world. A worldwide



Children suffering from acute malnutrition receive treatment via nasal feeding tubes at a hospital in Sokoto, northwestern Nigeria on July 16. (AP)

fuel shock drove up the prices of everything from gas and groceries to fertilizer and airline tickets.

In Nigeria, fuel pump prices jumped from 800 naira (\$0.58) per liter in February to 1,400 naira (\$1.02) in April, with a knock-on effect on the prices of food and necessities.

U.S. President Donald Trump has been trying to force Iran to fully reopen the route for months, turning to everything from airstrikes and naval blockades to negotiations and threats.

In Sokoto, where the soaring prices have brought more hardship for families, health workers told The Associated Press that they’ve been seeing more children returned to health facilities this year after falling back into malnutrition.

At a hospital in Sokoto, records shared with AP show nearly 40 children previously treated for malnutrition since February are currently under treatment again, in addition to those not documented.

“I am worried and sometimes angry about the increasing numbers we are seeing,” said health worker Halimah Muhammad.

Beyond current realities, soaring prices and economic hardship mean that children in poor households are more likely to be stunted in the long term, UNICEF’s Russell said in an interview with the AP as she was visiting Sokoto this week.

“Their development will be compromised. They are less likely to stay in school because their parents are under so much financial stress. So the long-term implications for children are absolutely terrible,” said Russell.

The war has also affected fertilizer

supplies and prices, threatening the planting season and worsening the fate of mostly farming communities in northern Nigeria who have struggled to access their farmlands amid a deadly conflict with armed groups.

“I wake up every morning unhappy, seeing I can no longer provide for my family,” said Shehu, Maryam’s husband. “Then, 2,000 naira could buy you a nutritious meal for the whole family. Now, you need 5,000 naira to buy what 2,000 naira would buy.”

Most of their meals are pap, a kind of corn pudding, and rice. “There is no way to feed the children,” he said.

People in northwest Nigeria are caught between regular attacks by bandit groups who specialize in kidnapping for ransom and Islamist militants who have been expanding their territory. The Iran war, analysts say, compounds the impact.

“This distant war offers no relief for the north’s vulnerable,” Ikemesit Effiong, a partner at SBM Intelligence, a Lagos-based geopolitical risk advisory, said.

Larai Malami, a 35-year-old mother of 10, gave birth to her last child in December, but the infant has already been diagnosed with malnutrition twice.

Her family has been struggling after her husband lost his job as a motorcycle rider and crossed the border into neighboring Niger to look for work.

Malami worries about the fuel price because it keeps the price of food high and her husband away. “I worry that the child might never be fully well,” she said.

That is a sentiment shared by Aminu, too. “I wish she were excited and full of life,” she said.

FDA approves first-of-its-kind pill to cut cholesterol in high-risk patients

WASHINGTON, July 20, (AP): The Food and Drug Administration has approved a first-of-its-kind pill that can drastically reduce cholesterol in a way that’s previously only been available with expensive, injectable drugs.

The drug from Merck was OK’d for patients with artery-clogging cholesterol that persists even after taking statins, the standard medications for cutting heart attack risk. Merck will market its pill under the brand name Lipfendra.

It’s the first noninjectable medication that works by blocking a liver protein called PCSK9. That protein limits the body’s ability to clear cholesterol from the blood, and biotech injectables targeting it have been available from Amgen and other drugmakers for more than a decade. But patient access has been stymied for years by high prices, insurance restrictions and limited prescribing by doctors.

Statins block some of the liver’s production of cholesterol and are the cornerstone of treatment. But even at



The logo for Merck appears above a trading post on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange, May 1, 2025. (AP)

the highest doses, many people need additional help lowering their LDL, or bad, cholesterol enough to meet medical guidelines.

Merck, which has headquarters in

Rahway, New Jersey, won approval based on two studies in high-risk patients who added the company’s pill to their standard treatment, including statins.

Hamlin finishes second behind Elliott

Logano breaks drought in North Wilkesboro NASCAR return

NORTH WILKESBORO, N.C., July 20, (AP): The drought is over for Joey Logano.

Logano snapped a 45-race winless streak Sunday night with a dominant victory at North Wilkesboro Speedway in the first points race at the 0.625-mile track in 30 years.

After Logano wrapped up a lengthy on-track burnout, Denny Hamlin approached him and dabbed him up out of respect. Hamlin spent the second part of the race doing everything he could to catch Logano, but it proved fruitless.

The No. 22 Ford was too dominant. Logano led 323 of 450 laps.

“It’s wildly, wildly impressive what he did,” Hamlin said. “I thought it was a really impressive drive from him, how he maneuvered through (lapped) traffic and did eve-



Joey Logano celebrates in Victory Lane after winning a NASCAR Cup Series auto race in North Wilkesboro, N.C. (AP)

rything we know Joey to do.”

It was Logano’s 38th career Cup win, and his first since May 2025 at Texas.

The 36-year-old Logano also extended his streak of winning at least

one race to 15 consecutive seasons, the longest among active drivers. The late Kyle Busch holds the record, winning in 19 straight seasons (2005-2023).

“A win anywhere at this point would have sounded great, but coming here and doing it at North Wilkesboro is awesome,” Logano said.

Hamlin finished second, followed by Chase Briscoe, Ty Gibbs and Shane Van Gisbergen.

It was a huge win for Logano, who entered the race outside of the top 16 in the Chase for the playoffs. He’s now inside the cutline in 15th place.

“I feel like I know exactly what I need to go fast around this place,” said Logano, who won the 2024 All-Star race here in dominant fashion. “I knew coming this weekend that we’ve got to capitalize on the

points.”

The track, built in 1947, sat mostly dormant for a quarter of a century following its last points race in on Sept. 29, 1996.

Speedway Motorsports undertook the monumental task of refurbishing it, including clearing the weeds and trees growing up through the middle of the racetrack. NWS hosted the All-Star race from 2023-25.

Ryan Blaney and Todd Gilliland have reached the finals of the \$1 million NASCAR In-Season Challenge. Blaney defeated Christopher Bell head-to-head in the semifinals on Sunday night, while Gilliland topped Chase Elliott.

The champion will be decided next Sunday in Indianapolis at the Brickyard 400 with the driver finishing higher in the race awarded the \$1

million prize.

Tyler Reddick got caught up a wreck on lap 184 when Alex Bowman cut him off as he was attempting to go from the top row down into pit row, spinning out the No. 45.

Bowman told his crew chief, “I thought I had hole but maybe I didn’t.”

Ryan Blaney, who won last week at Atlanta, was set to start on the pole based on metrics after qualifying was rained out on Saturday. Instead, he was forced to start the race at the rear of the field after his No. 12 Ford Mustang had a power steering pump issue.

Things only got worst for the 2023 Cup Series champion after he received a speeding penalty on pit row on lap 365, dropping him out of the top five and costing him 15 positions.

Fox’s final-hole birdie seals incredible British Open win

Scheffler’s title defense falls short

SOUTHPORT, England, July 20, (AP): The hard work for Ryan Fox was just getting to the 18th hole in the British Open with a share of the lead. Still to come was the toughest hole at Royal Birkdale, which had yielded only four birdies to the 76 players who had already come through Sunday.

For a 39-year-old from New Zealand, the son of an All Blacks rugby star who once only dreamed of having a card on any tour, this was no time to back down.

It turned out to be the stuff of major champions.

The drive was powerful and pure. The 9-iron from 175 yards looked good in the air and even better on the ground when it settled 12 feet below the hole. The birdie putt was the biggest of his life.

Fox closed with four birdies over his last six holes - and one bogey that felt equally important - for a 2-under 68 and a one-shot victory over hard-luck Cameron Young for his first major title.

This was pure theater to cap off a week of so much drama - three record-tying rounds of 62, Bryson DeChambeau’s animated protest over a two-shot penalty, Tommy Fleetwood thrilling and teasing his hometown crowd to massive ovations on every hole.

Four players had a share of the lead at some point in the final round. Young was atop the leaderboard for two hours without hitting a shot anywhere but the range because he finished his astonishing 6-under 64 as the last few groups were on the front nine.

Young was on the range when he heard the massive roar and knew it was over. He bowed his head, lifted his driver and tapped the ground before



Ryan Fox of New Zealand poses with the Claret Jug trophy in front of the club house, after winning the British Open Golf championships at Royal Birkdale golf club, in Southport, England. (AP)

packing up when Fox made his final birdie.

He thrust those powerful arms into the air and was on the phone with his family moments later and was heard telling them, “You asked me to bring a trophy home, and I am, aren’t I?”

His name will go on the base of that shiny claret jug along with another Kiwi, Bob Charles, who won the British Open in 1963. Michael Campbell is the other New Zealand man to win a major at Pinehurst No. 2 in the 2005 U.S. Open.

Fox’s sterling moment brought more disappointment for Young. The American also finished one shot behind in the British Open at St. Andrews four years ago, and he had a Sunday lead on the front nine at the Masters until Rory McIlroy overtook him.

NZ edges West Indies by 1 wicket to seal ODI series

BRIDGETOWN, Barbados, July 20, (AP): Mark Chapman scored 80 and Mitchell Santner shepherded the tail to guide New Zealand to a tense one-wicket win over West Indies in the fourth one-day cricket international Sunday and to an unassailable 3-1 lead in the five-match series.

Santner was dropped with three runs needed and one wicket in hand, and last batter Jayden Lennox survived reviews for caught behind and lbw, before New Zealand edged past West In-

dies’ modest total of 188 with 35 balls remaining.

Santner, the New Zealand captain, hit the winning runs from the first ball of the 45th over to finish 34 not out and to spoil West Indies’ hopes of achieving a series-leveling victory to pay tribute to cricket great Garry Sobers.

“It was pretty chaotic, especially the ending,” Santner said. “You try to chip off the total as much as you can. Even partnerships of 10 or 15 at that stage

was going a long way.

“It probably shouldn’t have got that close but it was nice to get over the line.”

West Indies had expressed a fervent hope to honor Sobers in his home town of Bridgetown and at Kensington Oval, the stadium where he nurtured his career and made his name. Sobers died Friday aged 89; both teams wore black armbands and flags flew at half staff in his memory.

Two seats were left empty in the pa-

vilion named for Sobers and a minute of silence was observed before play began.

Sobers is considered the greatest West Indies cricketer and likely the greatest allrounder in the history of the game with more than 8,000 test runs and 200 wickets.

West Indies’ hopes of honoring him had an early setback when New Zealand won the toss and chose to bowl. Teams bowling first have won all four matches in the series to date.



Dallas Wings guard Azzi Fudd (35) dribbles against Los Angeles Sparks forward Nneka Ogumike (30) during the first half of a WNBA basketball game in Arlington, Texas. (AP)

The Conversation

Now that WCup is over, can host cities turn their investment into lasting social impact?

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

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The 2026 World Cup has been a real moneymaker for FIFA. Revenues from TV broadcasting rights, ticket sales and other commercial sources are projected to amount to nearly US\$11 billion, making it the most financially successful event in the international soccer governing body’s history.

But what about the cities that hosted the tournament’s games? Spread across Canada, the United States and Mexico, 16 cities helped make the World Cup a financial success. Moreover, images of national fans from around the globe taking over

Boston, Miami and Dallas provided a backdrop to the tournament.

Despite spending hundreds of millions of dollars of public money to stage the tournament, these cities receive little direct revenue from the World Cup. Instead, FIFA says it will reinvest the money in the global development of soccer - for example, by distributing funding to its 211 national member associations.

Nonetheless, staging games during the tournament would have financially benefited host cities, FIFA has claimed, mainly through job creation and tourist spending. To that end, FIFA commissioned a 2025 study that projected \$30 billion in economic impact for the U.S. alone.

But reports suggesting that host cities did not experience significant increases in tourism may dampen that financial lift. Moreover, sport economists have long demonstrated that the economic impact of mega-sports events like World Cups and Olympic Games cannot offset the substantial expenditures incurred by host cities.

Now that the tournament is over, the question thus turns to whether host cities can realize longer-term

returns from the tournament that justify their substantial investments, and if so, how.

As sport management scholars who study the impacts of mega- and large-scale sports events, we believe the key to answering this question lies in the intangible social outcomes of hosting the World Cup.

These outcomes are collectively called “social impact” - namely, the noneconomic effects of event hosting that affect the quality of life of people and communities.

One form of social impact is what scholars have termed “psychic income” - defined in one study as “the emotional and psychological benefit residents perceive they receive, even though they do not physically attend sports events.”

Successfully staging events like the World Cup can promote civic pride among residents, making them happier and more satisfied with their lives.

During the 2026 tournament, the warm welcome of Boston to the Scottish fans’ Tartan Army made Bostonians feel proud of their city as Scotland fans joyfully flooded the streets. And

local fans in Guadalajara, Mexico, rejoiced with visiting fans from South Korea to support both teams, under the banner “Coreano Hermano” - or “Korean brothers.”

Another form of social impact is the collective effervescence fostered through event hosting. This shared sense of celebration can strengthen social cohesion in ways that are otherwise difficult to achieve. It can help break down social divisions and facilitate collective action to address issues that influence residents’ everyday lives.

A survey conducted one year after the Qatar 2022 World Cup, for example, found that both citizens and expatriates living in the country experienced stronger social connections within Qatari society, which comprises people from diverse backgrounds.

Beyond these, hosting mega-sports events can inspire residents, especially young people, to participate in sport and physical activity. They can also promote partnerships among local businesses and governments that contribute to broader community development.

As a historical example, according to research conducted by one of us,

Japanese people who experienced the Tokyo Olympic Games in 1964 during adolescence reported consistently higher rates of sports participation later in life, compared with other generations. This evidence suggests that mega-sports events could promote lifelong physical activity among local youths.

The problem with social impacts is they can be transitory and soon disappear without deliberate efforts and strategies to sustain them.

Host cities can encourage longer-term success by undertaking event-related activities after the World Cup is over so its social impact can outlive the duration of the tournament.

Implementing such efforts, however, is challenging because local organizing committees responsible for delivering mega-sports events tend to be disbanded once the events conclude. This makes it unclear who is accountable for managing the long-term social impact of event hosting during the post-event period.

Establishing organizations with a clear mandate to preserve and amplify intangible outcomes is a possible solution to this challenge. Import-

tantly, such organizations need continuous support so their work can be sustained over a long period of time.

Although this rarely happens, there are some positive examples from past events.

For the U.S.-hosted 1994 World Cup, the U.S. Soccer Foundation was created using proceeds from the tournament. Since its establishment, the organization has implemented soccer-based programs to support the development of children from underserved communities.

In addition, the 2012 London Olympics saw the Spirit of 2012 created to keep the positive feeling from the games alive. The organization funds projects within and beyond sports to bring people together and make stronger and happier communities.

We have already seen some early signs of this for the 2026 World Cup. The organizing committee in Dallas, which hosted nine games, has formed the North Texas Sports Foundation with the aim of driving “long-term, positive regional impact through sports-driven community transformation.” (AP)

Blues hope to capitalize on morale gained from Japan win

Confident Kuwait faces Qatar in crucial Gulf derby

By Khaled Al Enezi
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

BEIJING, July 20: Kuwait faces a crucial Gulf derby against Qatar today in the sixth round of the preliminary stage at the 19th Asian Men's Youth Handball Championship in China, a tournament that doubles as a qualifier for the World Championship.

Kuwait enters the clash with renewed confidence after securing a dramatic 30-29 victory over Japan in the fourth round, a result that boosted its chances of reaching the next stage of the competition.

Kuwait played South Korea yesterday in the fifth round before wrapping up its preliminary matches against the UAE tomorrow, with the team looking to maintain its positive momentum and secure a strong finish in the group standings.

The technical staff and players are determined to deliver another impressive performance against Qatar, hoping to capitalize on the morale gained from the Japan win and continue their push for continental success.

The Kuwait squad features 18 players: Hassan Mundher, Obaid Al Shamari, Abdulrahman Al Hashal, Hussein Bouland, Salem Al Mahmoud, Yousef Madwah, Hussein Muthni, Mohammed Faisal, Yaqoub Hassan, Abdullahatif Salmeen, Hassan Rajab, Abdulwahab Al Mutawa, Hassan Bouland, Saad Al Khamis, Faisal Al Enezi, Hussein Sami, Khairallah Abdullah and Abdullatif Al Wuhaib.

The team is led by Danish head coach Hani Jensen, with Saud Mufreh as assistant coach, Yassine Idrissi as goalkeeping coach and Yousef Al Shahin serving as team administrator.



Kuwaiti player is tackled by the Japanese as he goes for a shot.

Kuwaiti coaches make ‘history’ with IHF A-License achievement

By Khaled Al Enezi
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

TOKYO, July 20: Kuwaiti handball coaches Hussein Habib of Al Arabi and Hussein Habib of Al Sulaibikhat have made history after successfully obtaining the IHF A-License, the top coaching qualification awarded by the International Handball Federation, during a specialised course in Tokyo, Japan.

The accomplishment represents a major milestone for Kuwaiti handball, reflecting the dedication of national coaches to improving their expertise and keeping pace with the highest international coaching standards.

The two coaches became the first handball coaches from Kuwait and the Gulf region to earn the IHF A-License. This landmark achievement highlights the growing capabilities of local technical talent and their ambition to develop the game at both domestic and continental levels.

The qualification is expected to open new opportunities for Kuwaiti coaches to lead clubs and national teams while contributing to the continued growth of handball through advanced technical knowledge and modern training methods.



Kuwaiti coaches Hussein Habib and Hussein Habib celebrate IHF A-License achievement.

Kazma kicks off preparations for volleyball new season

By Khaled Al Enezi
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, July 20: Kazma's first volleyball team has launched its pre-season programme under Kuwaiti coach Saad Yaqoub as the Orange side gears up for the new campaign, which begins in early September with the resumption of the remaining 2025-26 competitions.

Yaqoub said the opening phase of training is centered on building the players' physical fitness through conditioning and strength sessions, while also incorporating ball work to regain match sharpness.

He added that the squad has reported well for training, with only a few absentees due to military commitments. National team players Fahad Saad Yaqoub and Ali Saadoun are also unavailable as they compete for Kuwait at the Second West Asia Men's Volleyball Championship in Muscat.



A file photo of Kazma players in action.

ers Fahad Saad Yaqoub and Ali Saadoun are also unavailable as they compete for Kuwait at the Second West Asia Men's Volleyball

Championship in Muscat.

The coach revealed that Brazilian coach Kakarato, along with the rest of the technical staff and foreign players Costa of Brazil and Indonesia's Farhan, are scheduled to join the team in early August, allowing preparations to move into their next phase.

Kazma is also planning a two-week training camp in Cairo during the second half of August. The club is awaiting approval from Kuwait's Public Authority for Sports before confirming the camp.

Yaqoub said the preparation programme is aimed at ensuring the team is fully ready for a long and demanding season, stressing that Kazma will target every competition and strive to produce performances worthy of its fans' expectations.

Kuwait's Al Khader joins elite European goalkeeper development programme

SCHAFFHAUSEN, Switzerland, July 20: Kuwaiti goalkeeping coach Ali Al Khader is participating in a specialised European development programme for goalkeepers, held in Schaffhausen, Switzerland, featuring 60 of the continent's top emerging talents in the position.

Al Khader's invitation to join the programme alongside a select group of international coaches and experts highlights Kuwaiti coaching's growing reputation on the global stage. It follows his previous experiences working with the Brazil national team and clubs competing in continental tournaments.

"I'm delighted to be part of this European programme, which brings together

some of the most promising goalkeeper talents in Europe," Al Khader said.

"These experiences provide coaches with the opportunity to discover the latest methods in goalkeeper development and exchange knowledge with different coaching schools. I hope to benefit from every aspect of the programme and transfer this expertise to the players I will work with in the future."

The European initiative aims to develop young goalkeepers through specialised training under the supervision of international experts, with a focus on technical, tactical and mental skills, as well as the latest modern coaching approaches.

Trump celebrates WC as US victory

‘This has really brought the world together’

EAST RUTHERFORD, N.J., July 20, (AP): President Donald Trump presented the World Cup trophy to Spain, the winner of Sunday's final against Argentina. But to him, the real victor of soccer's premier tournament just might be the United States.



FIFA President Gianni Infantino and President Donald J. Trump present the trophy to Spain's Rodri (16) after the World Cup final soccer match between Spain and Argentina in East Rutherford, N.J., near New York. (AP)

"It turned out we were a soccer country, and I think it's going to remain," Trump said Friday at a FIFA reception at Trump Tower in New York City. "This has really brought the world together."

For the White House, Sunday's match was the culmination of well over a year of navigating a litany of logistical challenges alongside co-hosts Canada and Mexico for what would be the biggest World Cup in history. It had to balance the Trump administration's hard-line migration policies that barred fans from some World Cup qualifier countries from entry into the United States.

Spain won the tournament with a 1-0 victory over defending champion Argentina.

After Trump and FIFA President Gianni Infantino presented them with the trophy, Trump stood alongside the team as they jumped up and down and gold confetti shot out of a cannon.

Later, speaking to reporters at Joint Base Andrews, Trump said he took pride in the country's success as a host, adding that "all over the world, people have come and they love our country." He described the final as a close and exciting match, praising Spain for a dominant performance.

He arrived at Sunday's final

with a flyover in the presidential helicopter, Marine One. Before the game even kicked off, Trump was already proposing another U.S. bid to host the tournament, sending a nudge to Infantino.

"I had a great idea for Gianni: You have to do two countries. Announce us again next time, and then announce another country after that. It'll take out some of the anger and the shock," Trump said on Fox Sports. "Based on the numbers, we will be requesting it again immediately."

The president declined to pick sides in the final but said it would be difficult to beat Argentine superstar Lionel Messi. Trump got a close look at the World Cup trophy when it was presented to him at his box seat during the first half. Video footage showed the president smiling and patting the gold trophy as it was held up to him. Also in the box were first lady Melania Trump and Infantino, among others.

The White House faced warnings from human rights groups, and the tournament confronted backlash over high ticket prices. For months, Trump flirted with the idea of moving games out of cities that did not cooperate with federal immigration authorities, and in the weeks before the tournament's start, local authorities sparred with FIFA over high transit costs, heightening tensions even more.

As the first games were preparing to begin, the administration continued to find itself under global scrutiny for its visa decisions, such as denying entry to a referee from Somalia who had won accolades for his officiating. The pressure increased after Trump launched a war with Iran, leaving the administration to grapple with an Iranian team whose fans and some supporting personnel were barred from the U.S., and that ultimately was based across the border in Tijuana.

But the broader story of the World Cup eventually shifted. Social media was flooded with tales of soccer fans from around the world enjoying the treats and traditions of the U.S., from beer to ranch dressing. Some fears about the Trump administration that circulated beforehand, such as the threat of immigration enforcement raids near the games, never materialized.

"One of the things that we talked about beforehand was, if we're talking about what happened on the pitch, then we've done our job," Andrew Giuliani, the executive director of the White House FIFA Task Force, said in an interview with The Associated Press. "But I think it's even better than that. We're not just talking about only the incredible, athletic feats on the pitch, but we're talking about all these incredible, incredible cultural moments."

Still, Trump did create controversy with a phone call he made to Infantino earlier this month in which he asked for a review of a controversial referee call in Team USA's match against Bosnia and Herzegovina. The referee gave a red card to U.S. star forward Folarin Balogun, meaning he wouldn't be able to play in the subsequent match against Belgium.

Trump says he simply asked Infantino, who has cozier up to the U.S. president and faced backlash for doing so, to review the call. FIFA then reversed the call, and Trump told Infantino at the FIFA reception on Friday that "you made another great decision, if you think about it," because it allowed the U.S. to keep a key player on the field even though the team lost the match to Belgium 4-1.



Al Khader mentors Europe's young goalkeepers.

Best of the Rest

Garcia is not continuing as Belgium coach: Rudi Garcia is not continuing as Belgium coach after failing to reach agreement with the country's soccer federation on a contract extension.

The Royal Belgian Football Association said Monday that it will not renew Garcia's deal beyond the end of this month, and that it is looking for a successor to the French coach who led the Belgian team to the World Cup quarterfinals, where it was beaten by eventual champion Spain.

"Garcia has unquestionably played a key role in restoring the Belgian Red Devils," Belgium sports director Vincent Mannaert said. "He was appointed national coach in a challenging sporting and financial context. (AP)

‘Al-Ittihad’s \$10 mln bid for Ashour rejected by Al Ahly’



Al Ahly midfielder Emam Ashour.

CAIRO, July 20: Saudi side Al-Ittihad has seen a lucrative offer for Al Ahly midfielder Emam Ashour rejected, with the Egyptian club insisting the player is not for sale.

According to Saudi newspaper Al Riyadiyah, Al-Ittihad tabled a package worth \$10 million, including a \$6 million transfer fee and an annual salary of \$4 million for the Egypt international, as it seeks to bolster its midfield during the current transfer window.

The report said Al Ahly turned down the proposal because it values Ashour more highly, having invested around \$6 million to bring him to the club in 2023. That figure includes a transfer fee of approximately \$3 million paid to Danish club Midtjylland, along with nearly \$3 million in wages over the past three seasons.

Ashour currently earns an estimated \$315,000 per year at Al Ahly, meaning the Al-Ittihad offer would have increased his annual salary by more than twelvefold had the move been completed.

The report also revealed that Al-Ittihad has expressed interest in another Al Ahly midfielder, Marwan Attia, whose name has emerged as a potential transfer target during discussions over Ashour.

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NEWS



Argentina's Nicolas Tagliafico (3), Argentina's Nicolas Otamendi (19) try to score as Spain's Pedro Porro (12), Spain's Eric Garcia (4) and Spain goalkeeper Unai Simon (23) try to stop them during the World Cup final soccer match between Spain and Argentina in East Rutherford, N.J., near New York. (AP)

Sports

Spain dethrones Argentina to win second World Cup



Spain celebrates with the trophy after the World Cup final soccer match between Spain and Argentina in East Rutherford, N.J., near New York, Sunday, July 19, 2026.

Torres delivers the winning blow in extra time

EAST RUTHERFORD, N.J., July 20, (AP): This is how good Spain was at the World Cup: Not even Lionel Messi had any answers.

And when it was over, Spain walked off with the trophy. Messi simply walked off in tears.

Spain is back atop the soccer world for a second time, after Ferran Torres' first goal of this year's World Cup - unquestionably the goal of his life - gave his country a 1-0 win over now-dethroned champion Argentina in the final.

"It was a goal scored by 47 million people," Torres said, referring to Spain's population.

Maybe not by them - but certainly for them.

The goal came with Argentina down to 10 men after Enzo Fernandez was sent off late in regulation following a reckless tackle. Tempers flared then, and flared again after the final whistle with Argentina coach Lionel Scaloni and players from both sides engaging in what appeared to be some pushing and shoving.

In the end, Spain denied Messi a second straight title in what he has indicated was his final World Cup match. Torres, a second-half substitute, pounced on a bouncing ball in the box and used his left foot to bury a shot just



Spain's Ferran Torres (7) celebrates scoring their first goal during the World Cup final soccer match between Spain and Argentina in East Rutherford, N.J., near New York, July 19, 2026. (AP)

under the crossbar in the 106th minute.

From there, the airtight defense that dominated opponents throughout the tournament came through one final time. Spain - which also won the title in 2010 - allowed only one goal in eight matches in this World Cup run, setting a record for fewest goals allowed by a champion.

"I feel pride, to be honest," said

Spain coach Luis de la Fuente, who at 65 is now the oldest man to lead a team to a World Cup title. "Accompanying them on this journey is an honor."

This title, combined with the Women's World Cup won by Spain in 2023, makes the European nation the first to hold both the men's and women's titles simultaneously. And in the streets of Madrid - probably many other places in Spain as well - countless people spilled into the streets, celebrating Sunday's victory long into the wee hours of Monday morning.

The score indicates this match was close, but only one team was in command.

Spain took the game's first 20 shots on goal before Argentina - desperate for an equalizer - got its first attempt off in the second half of extra time. Spain took nine of the game's first 10 corner kicks, and only a World Cup final-record 12 saves by Argentina goalkeeper Emiliano Martinez gave the 2022 champion a shot at going back-to-back.

"Dibu was nothing short of exceptional," de la Fuente said, referring to Argentina's keeper by his nickname.

Spain is now unbeaten in its last 38 matches - 29 wins, nine draws - and is the outright holder of the longest such streak by any European men's team ever. Italy went 37 matches (28 wins, nine draws) from October 2018 through September 2021, before Spain ended that streak.



Spain goalkeeper Unai Simon (23) celebrates with the Golden Glove trophy during the World Cup final soccer match between Spain and Argentina in East Rutherford, N.J., near New York, July 19, 2026. (AP)

And for the last two-plus years, nobody has beaten Spain. Not even Messi. An Argentina team that was the kings of the late-game rally in this tournament had no answer this time.

"We lost the game, and we accept that," Scaloni said. "That doesn't mean that we will forget everything we've done so far, so I'd like to thank my people, my players and the country. I can tell



Spain's Rodri poses with the tournament's best player award at the end of the World Cup final soccer match between Spain and Argentina in East Rutherford, N.J., near New York, July 19, 2026. (AP)

them that we played our hearts out."

Messi took a corner kick with about four minutes left before the final whistle and the ball took a fortunate skip toward substitute Giuliano Simeone - who sent it high and over the crossbar, holding his head in disbelief afterward.

"When you have Messi on the other side, well, you are nervous," Torres said. "At the end of the day, we always de-



Spain's Pau Cubarsi poses with the tournament young player award at the end of the World Cup final soccer match between Spain and Argentina in East Rutherford, N.J., near New York, July 19, 2026. (AP)

ended on us. We always come up with our football, and we showed it again."

After the post-match scuffles, they also paid tribute to the former champions. Spain's players lined up to form an honor guard of sorts for Argentina's squad to walk through on its way to the stage for the runner-up medals from President Donald Trump and FIFA President Gianni Infantino.

Messi can conjure no more magic as crown passes from Argentina to Spain

EAST RUTHERFORD, N.J., July 20, (AP): Lionel Messi could conjure no more magic.

Twenty years after his World Cup debut and a career that lifted him above Pelé and Diego Maradona as soccer's greatest player, at 39 he could not will Argentina to become the first repeat champion in more than a half-century.

Spain outplayed the Albiceleste from the opening whistle at MetLife Stadium, where the overwhelming majority of 80,663 were hoping for a recoronation. Ferran Torres scored 37 seconds into the second extra-time period, lifting Spain to a 1-0 victory and its second World Cup title.

Instead of Messi becoming a two-time champion, the crown passed. He fought back tears and had a look of misery as he and teammates faced applauding and bowing Argentina fans at the stadium's south end while Spanish stars lifted the trophy on a podium at the center stripe.

After leading Argentina to victory in the 2022 final against France, sandwiched between consecutive Copa America championships, Messi could only bow his head, grimace and put hands on hips as Spain's Lamine Yamal, less than a week past his 19th birthday and projected as the sport's next big thing, ran to embrace Torres after the goal.

"I hope that everyone feels proud of him, of what he's achieved because he's the best football player ever step-



Argentina's Lionel Messi (10) cries at the end of the World Cup final soccer match between Spain and Argentina in East Rutherford, N.J., near New York, July 19, 2026. (AP)

Saint-Germain, some speculated he would be another retiree moving to Florida.

Instead, he won a Major League Soccer title with Miami and led Argentina back to the final with eight goals and four assists. He has played in a record 34 World Cup games over six tournaments and boosted career goals total to 21, the record until France's Kylian Mbappé scored twice in Saturday's third-place game to surpass him to 22.

ping foot on a pitch," Argentina coach Lionel Scaloni said.

Spain's dominance was thorough in the final and throughout the World Cup as they extended their unbeaten streak to 38 games, the longest by a European team.

La Furia Roja had a 20-2 advantage in shots, the second-largest difference in a World Cup final since stats exist since 1966, behind only West Germany outshooting Argentina 23-1 in 1990, according to Opta. They out-passed Argentina 845-433.

They conceded just one goal the entire tournament, the fewest by a World Cup champion, and scored 14 while compiling a 145-45 advantage in shots. Goalkeeper Unai Simon totaled 10 saves over eight games - Argentina's Emiliano Martinez had 11 in the final alone.

When Messi left European soccer for MLS three years ago after four Champions League medals and 12 league titles with Barcelona and Paris

A trendsetter off the field Liverpool legend Keegan dies

LONDON, July 20, (AP): Kevin Keegan, the two-time Ballon d'Or-winning soccer star who captained and coached England's national team and won the European Cup with Liverpool, has died. He was 75.

Keegan's death was announced by his former club Newcastle, where he had been both a player and coach. Keegan revealed last month that he had stage four cancer.

"One of the most iconic, influential and deeply loved figures in our club's history," Newcastle said.

For a time in the 1970s, Keegan transcended the English game with his celebrity status.

Keegan, one of just four Englishmen to win the Ballon d'Or, wasn't just a brilliant soccer player who dovetailed nimbleness and an eye for goal with a relentless hunger and work rate stemming from his working-class upbringing in northern England.

He was also a trendsetter off the field, through his haircut - a perm, which other footballers across Europe started to copy - and his move into celebrity culture that saw him release a single, appear in an after-shave ad with heavyweight great Henry Cooper, and go on TV shows.

Keegan was also something of a trailblazer in his sport as one of the first English players to move to a continental team when he left Liverpool, where he'd just won the European Cup, for German club Hamburger SV in 1977.

It was in Hamburg where he won the Ballon d'Or - then called the European footballer of the year - twice (1978 and '79) and featured in another European Cup final, a 1980 loss to Nottingham Forest.

Keegan scored 21 times in 63 games for England and played at the 1982 World Cup, his only appearance on soccer's biggest stage after the country failed to qualify for the 1974 and '78 tournaments.

His 16-year coaching career from 1992-2008 was



In this file photo, Newcastle United Manager Kevin Keegan poses for photographers and cameramen after talking to the media at St James' Park in Newcastle, England. (AP)

memorable for almost leading Newcastle, the team where he retired as a player, to the Premier League title in the 1995-96, only for a late-season collapse which included Keegan's memorable outburst of "I'd love it if we beat them, love it" in a nod toward Alex Ferguson's Manchester United - the eventual champion.

And then for showing more vulnerability in a 20-month spell in charge of England (1999-2000) during which the team failed to get out of its group at the 2000 European Championship before Keegan resigned after the first game of World Cup qualifying - a 1-0 home loss to Germany in the last game at the old Wembley Stadium. He announced his departure to Football Association officials in an emotional chat in a toilet cubicle.