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20 KILLED AS U.S., SAUDI POUND IRAN PROXIES IN IRAQ



Opinion

Ahmed Al-Jarallah

Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

O Saudi Army and its leaders ... Thank you so much

SOMETIMES, it is wise to respond with a deterrent punishment, especially after a long period of patience with the aggressor. This is even wiser when the punishment is directed at a group that violated the law, and the national and international legitimacy.

This introduction matches the Saudi response to terrorist crimes committed by Iranian-backed militias operating in the Iraqi territory.

The harsh punishment for terrorist aggression must be severe by all standards -- national, regional and international. Sometimes, discipline comes through amputation.

The response of the Saudi Army to the crimes of the Iranian-backed Iraqi factions was a successful surgical operation and it conveyed a clear message: targeting the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the other Gulf states will never be tolerated.

The same applies to the Houthi group, which received a resounding response as a result of its repeated attacks on Saudi Arabia.

Restraining a reckless individual involves stages, beginning with patience and gentle treatment, in the hope that they will return to reason. Therefore, diplomatic means should be allowed to restrain the enemy and preserve relations between two Arab neighbors, even if they involve a mercenary group serving the interests of the Iranian regime.

The Saudi response was expected long ago, so that terrorists in Iran and Iraq would know they are not immune from punishment.

For the past six months, these terrorist groups have been launching attacks on the Gulf Arab states whenever the United States and Israel bombed Iran. They were mistaken when they thought that Gulf wisdom and patience in front of dangers are signs of weakness.

The truth is that the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries have been working hard throughout the past months to deny Tehran and its proxies in the region, such as the Houthis, Hezbollah and Iraqi groups loyal to Iran like the Popular Mobilization Forces, the opportunity to retaliate.

The GCC states have armies and weapons capable of responding to the attacks of Iran or any of its proxies with overwhelming force. The Gulf states are not as weak as these barbaric thugs believe -- thugs who disregard international values, norms, treaties and conventions.

Over the past six months, the Iranian regime and its proxies in some Arab countries have been attempting to muddy the waters whenever they felt weak. The Iranian regime deluded itself into thinking it could dodge punishment for its crimes, and that the Gulf states would not retaliate.

Now, the tables have turned. From this day forward, terrorist attacks will not go unanswered, the response will be far more severe than these fools expect.

The strategic course of the Gulf has shifted since the very first moments of the aggression against the GCC states. This new course is meticulously calculated, affirming that there are no limits to deterrence when it comes to the sovereignty of the Gulf states. While diplomacy has been given a chance to operate, de-escalation will not come without a price for the aggressor.

The Iranian regime and its proxies have consistently thwarted moves toward de-escalation, believing this will help them achieve their objective of subjugating the region.

Hence, they resorted to escalating tension in the Bab el-Mandeb Strait through the Houthi terrorist attacks on Saudi ships, in addition to launching drones at Saudi oil facilities, coinciding with attacks by the Iraqi proxy militias.

This situation is now a thing of the past, because Saudi Arabia and the other GCC states have drawn red lines that Iran and its proxies cannot cross. The proxies of Iran must reconsider their calculations. They must understand that the future of the region is determined by the GCC states, not by any other party.

I would like to thank Mr. Muqtada Al-Sadr for his comments on what happened, as he did not deny that Iraq harbors many agents and sectarian groups. It will be beneficial if Iraqi Prime Minister Ali al-Zaidi presses ahead with his plan to visit Saudi Arabia, so that the proxies of Iran will stop meddling in Iraqi affairs.

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KUNA photo

GCC armed forces participate in the Bahrain Shield joint exercise, strengthening military coordination, readiness and collective defense capabilities among Gulf states.

Kuwait, GCC back Saudi self-defense

KNG reviews force readiness amid regional escalation

Kuwait, Jordan deepen air defense ties

GCC forces show muscle in Bahrain Shield drill

RIYADH/KUWAIT CITY, July 29, (Agencies): Saudi Arabia, in coordination with the United States Central Command (USCENTCOM), launched precision air-strikes early Wednesday against militia targets in Iraq following a series of drone attacks on the Kingdom's oil facilities, as regional tensions escalated sharply.

Saudi Ministry of Defense spokesman Maj. Gen. Turki Al-Malki said the strikes targeted militias operating from Iraqi territory that were responsible for recent attacks on oil installations in the Kingdom's Eastern Province and Riyadh Region.

In a statement, the ministry said the operation was conducted in exercise of Saudi Arabia's inherent right to self-defense under Article 51 of the United Nations Charter.

Al-Malki said Saudi air defense systems had intercepted and destroyed several drones launched from Iraq before they reached their targets. He accused Iranian-backed militias of carrying out the attacks, describing them as terrorist acts, and stressed that the Kingdom reserved the right to respond "at the appropriate time and place."

Continued on Page 5

Shuaiba customs zone set to transform Kuwait's logistics

By Najeh Bilal

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, July 29: Official data obtained by the daily reveals the timeline and financial details of the "Export, Import, and Customs Inspection Zone" project in West Shuaiba, with authorities setting 2035 as the deadline for its full completion.

The data indicates that the project

is currently three percent complete, with a total allocated budget of approximately KD 15 million.

The project aligns with the state's development strategy to diversify national income sources and reduce reliance on oil, thereby strengthening the state's general budget and creating sustainable economic drivers.

Continued on Page 4

23 'landmarks' await new bids

By Mohammed Ghanem

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, July 29: The Kuwait Authority for Partnership Projects (KAPP) Monday referred Tender No. 2/2025-2026/2025, concerning the preparation of consultancy studies for the re-tendering of projects located on state-owned real estate, to the State Audit Bureau (SAB) for pre-audit, review, and approval procedures.

KAPP announced the tender in January last year in cooperation with the Ministry of Finance, inviting specialised local, regional, and international consultancy firms and consortia to submit technical and financial proposals for the provision of consultancy services.

The tender includes the preparation of feasibility studies and tender documents for 23 projects located on state-owned real estate, in accordance with the provisions of Law No. 116/2014 and the procedures stipulated in Law No. 49/2016 concerning public tenders and its executive regulations.

The responsibilities of the winning consultancy firm include preparing technical, economic, environmental, and legal feasibility studies, preparing tender documents, and evaluating bids for each project.

Continued on Page 5



Gulf Bank records KD 27.4 million net profit in H1, increase of 14.1% compared to 2025

KFH reinforces CSR leadership through strategic sustainable initiatives



NBK launches Kuwait's first fully digital loan



Ministry of Interior photo

Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior Maj. Gen. Abdulwahab Al-Wuhaib chairs a meeting with assistant undersecretaries and security sector chiefs to review work progress, enhance coordination and strengthen operational efficiency.

Stringer coordination on agenda

Interior sharpens security edge

KUWAIT CITY, July 29: Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior Major General Abdulwahab Al-Wuhaib on Wednesday chaired a meeting with the assistant undersecretaries and heads of security sectors to follow up the progress of work and strengthen coordination among all departments in the ministry, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

At the beginning of the meeting, Al-Wuhaib conveyed the greetings of First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah to the attendees, along with his wish for success in performing their duties.

Continued on Page 4

Newswatch

6 decrees withdraw citizenship from 25

KUWAIT CITY, July 29: Six decrees were published on Wednesday in the official gazette "Kuwait Al-Yaum," withdrawing and revoking Kuwaiti citizenship from 25 individuals, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

■ Decree No. 116/2026 stipulates the withdrawal of Kuwaiti citizenship certificates from six individuals, as well as from those who acquired citizenship through dependency.

■ Decree No. 117/2026 stipulates the withdrawal of Kuwaiti citizenship from two individuals.

Continued on Page 5

HORIZON TALK

Ahmed Al-Jarallah

What if mankind lived in a world without laws?

What would society be like if theft were answered with theft and blood with blood?

Hammurabi: The sword alone is not enough to govern a vast empire.

People need justice to feel safe and secure.

He forged alliances to strengthen his army and dug irrigation canals to support agriculture.

He commissioned sculptors to inscribe 282 laws on a massive stele.

Whoever breaks another person's bone will have their own bone broken.

Laws that protect the weak, the orphan, and women from the oppression of the powerful.

True strength lies not in war, but in establishing justice among people.

In Greece, the name Ephialtes became synonymous with treachery.

Where there is treachery, anything is possible.



Prayer Timings

Fajr 03:38 Asr 15:30
Sunrise .. 05:07 Maghrib .. 18:42
Zohr 11:55 Isha 20:11



HH the Amir



HH the Crown Prince

Amir sends condolences to Japan over earthquake

KUWAIT CITY, July 29, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a cable of condolences to Emperor Naruhito of Japan over the earthquake that struck Kumamoto Prefecture in southwestern Japan.

His Highness expressed his sincere condolences and heartfelt sympathy over the victims of the earthquake, which claimed lives, injured hundreds and caused damage to property and public facilities.

He wished the injured a speedy recovery and expressed hope that the Japanese authorities would successfully contain and overcome the impact of the natural disaster.

His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah also sent a cable of condolences to Emperor Naruhito of Japan over the earthquake that struck Kumamoto Prefecture in southwestern Japan.

His Highness expressed his sincere condolences and heartfelt sympathy over the victims of the earthquake, which claimed lives and injured hundreds. His Highness also wished the injured a speedy recovery.

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah sent a cable of condolences to Emperor Naruhito of Japan over the victims of the earthquake that struck Kumamoto Prefecture in southwestern Japan.

Indonesia stands with Kuwait, raps Iran attacks

KUALA LUMPUR, July 29, (KUNA): Indonesian Foreign Minister Sugiono affirmed his country's solidarity with Kuwait on Tuesday regarding the Iranian attacks on vital civilian infrastructure, emphasizing that these attacks violate international law.

In a press statement, Kuwait's Embassy in Jakarta said that this came during a meeting between Minister Sugiono and Kuwaiti Ambassador to Indonesia Khaled Al-Yaseen, where they discussed regional developments in light of the ongoing Iranian attacks and violations targeting the security, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of Kuwait and other countries in the region.

They further discussed the resulting regional and international repercussions of the attacks while Sugiono stressed the importance of de-escalation and resolving disputes peacefully.

On the bilateral level, Sugiono highlighted the importance of the existing partnership between the two countries, based on mutual respect and shared values, and its role in strengthening efforts toward sustainable development, emphasizing the need to activate the bilateral agreements signed between them.

For his part, Ambassador Al-Yaseen affirmed during the meeting Kuwait's commitment to developing cooperation with Indonesia in various fields, noting the importance of enhancing politi-



KUNA photo
Kuwaiti Ambassador to Indonesia Khaled Al-Yaseen meets the Indonesian Foreign Minister Sugiono.

cal, economic, and cultural cooperation to achieve the common interests of the two friendly nations.

The statement indicated that the two sides discussed ways to strengthen bilateral relations between Kuwait and Indonesia, and reviewed the latest developments in the region and ways to continue coordination on issues of common interest.

Kuwait grants KD 5m loan for Liberia road project

KUWAIT CITY, July 29, (KUNA): The Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) participated Wednesday in the inauguration of the Banga-Salayea road project in Liberia and the foundation stone laying ceremony for the Salayea-Konia road project, supporting infrastructure development.

Liberian President Joseph Nyuma Boakai said the projects represent a milestone in Liberia's development, creating opportunities, connecting communities,

expanding economic activities and improving citizens' quality of life.

KFAED Operations Department Director Thamer Al-Failakawi said the projects reflect the strong cooperation between KFAED, Liberia and development partners, highlighting the importance of partnerships in achieving sustainable development.

The 81-kilometer Banga-Salayea road project aims to improve transportation, reduce travel costs and enhance access to

markets and services, with KFAED contributing a KD 5 million loan.

The 50-kilometer Salayea-Konia road project, financed through a KD 4 million KFAED loan, completes the corridor and strengthens connectivity and trade within Liberia and neighboring countries.

KFAED's cooperation with Liberia began in 1978, with the fund providing four loans and one technical assistance grant to support development projects.

'Diversified prospects for Kuwaiti investors'

Peru marks 205th Independence Day; 'Ties growing rapidly'



Cake-cutting ceremony

By Fares Ghaleb
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, July 29: The Embassy of the Republic of Peru celebrated the 205th Peruvian Independence Day recently, with Assistant Foreign Affairs Minister for the Americas Minister Plenipotentiary Abdulaziz Al-Qadfan, and a huge number of ambassadors, diplomats, government officials, business leaders and representatives of the private sector in attendance.

Speaking at the event, Ambassador of Peru to Kuwait Carlos Jimenez pointed out that the celebration is an opportunity to put the spotlight on the significant economic and investment potential of his country. He said his country, which is celebrating its 205th Independence Day, is one of the most dynamic and stable economies in the world, thanks to its responsible fiscal policies, open economy, and commitment to promote trade and investment.

He indicated that Peru is not only known for its abundant natural resources, as it also offers an attractive investment environment with a modern legal



Listening to the national anthem.



Diplomats and guests at the event.



KUNA photos
Ambassadors, diplomats and prominent guests at the function.

framework and a broad network of free trade agreements that provide preferential access to markets, representing more than 80 percent of global gross GDP.

He affirmed that the relationship between Peru and Kuwait continues to grow at a rapid pace, adding that the two countries celebrated the 50th anniversary of the establishment of their diplomatic relations last year. He is hoping that this momentum will continue through the new initiatives that will strengthen ties between the two nations.

He urged the Kuwaiti investors to take advantage of the promising opportunities in the infrastructure, food security, mining, renewable energy, logistics, tourism, education, healthcare and digital technology sectors in his country.

He asserted that economic diplomacy is not limited to trade and investment exchange, as it is also based on building trust, strengthening communication between peoples, and exchanging expertise to achieve shared prosperity.

Aside from the Independence Day celebration, the embassy also organized the Peru Investment and Trade Fair, which showcased Peruvian products and industries like premium coffee, quinoa, other high quality food products, traditional textiles, and mineral resources such as gold and others.

Kuwait eyes S.Korean expertise in oil, energy

KUWAIT CITY, July 29, (KUNA): Kuwait's Ambassador to South Korea Azzam Al-Asfour praised South Korea's technological progress, stressing the importance of benefiting from its expertise, particularly in oil, energy, artificial intelligence and information technology.

In a statement to KUNA on Wednesday, the Kuwaiti Embassy in Seoul said that Al-Asfour made the remarks while receiving a delegation of high school students participating in Kuwait Oil Company's "Nabd" awareness program, headed by the company's Public Relations and Media Manager Mohammad Al-Basri.

The ambassador also highlighted the advances made by South Korean universities in AI-related fields, underscoring the importance of developing skills, expanding knowledge and keeping pace with technological developments to prepare qualified national cadres.

Al-Asfour expressed hope for an increase in Kuwaiti students pursuing advanced and specialized fields, including electronic engineering, artificial intelligence and cybersecurity, affirming the embassy's readiness to strengthen cooperation between Kuwait and South Korean institutions.

The student delegation also visited museums, scientific centers, major landmarks in Seoul and leading technology and AI companies.

Launched by Kuwait Oil Company in 2014, the "Nabd" program aims to promote economic and petroleum awareness among youth while fostering leadership and knowledge of Kuwait's national resources.



KUNA photo
Kuwait's Ambassador to South Korea Azzam Al-Asfour receives a delegation of outstanding students.

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Other Voices

Al-Hayya, Hamas and political Islam

By Ahmad alsarraf

THERE is a widespread belief that no equivalent to the term "political Islam" exists in other countries, and that there is no such thing as "political Christianity," "political Judaism," "political Buddhism," or "political Hinduism." Some believe that there are only political parties with religious affiliations or religiously inspired names. As a result, the term "political Islam" has become closely associated with Islamic states and societies, and is often used to describe Islamist or fundamentalist groups that are extremist, radical, or armed.

In Western discourse, the term is commonly used to highlight the tendency of such extremist or Salafist groups towards radicalism and violence.

They may ignore the fact that medieval churches in Europe exercised supreme political authority. Their control was not dismantled until after the French Revolution. During that period, the church itself embraced a rigid and fundamentalist ideology.

American presidents, religious figures, and others have held, and continue to hold, beliefs that they are divinely appointed. The Jews of Israel have sought to make the state Jewish in identity, and to that end have waged dozens of religious and racial wars, committing various forms of violence and crimes against the indigenous inhabitants. These beliefs and actions qualify them as representatives of "political Judaism."

"Political Islam" has never been embodied in any movement or organization as clearly as in the Muslim Brotherhood, whose primary and ultimate goal,



alsarraf

in every country where it has operated, including Western countries, has been to seize political power.

It was therefore unsurprising that the newly elected head of Hamas's political bureau, Khalil al-Hayya, expressed gratitude only to Iran, the Houthis, Hezbollah, and several armed factions in Iraq for the weapons and sacrifices they provided in support of Hamas, which emerged from the Muslim Brotherhood. Al-Hayya deliberately omitted any acknowledgement of the State and people of Kuwait, despite their being among the first to support the Palestinian cause from the very beginning.

I, along with tens of thousands of others, have never hesitated to support the Palestinian cause and have consistently contributed financially to it, following the example set by the generosity and steadfast positions of our people and successive governments since the mid-1950s, and even earlier.

Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and others have done the same. How can such disregard be justified, especially given that al-Hayya is not a politically naive individual who would make such an oversight? It is clear that al-Hayya deliberately sought to erase our entire previous stances about the Palestinian cause, as though we were forced to do so.

At the same time, Iran, which al-Hayya thanked, continues to direct its destructive missiles and deadly drones towards our desalination plants, airports, border crossings, power stations, and homes. It has also instructed its proxies in Iraq to threaten us with invasion and aggression.

Al-Hayya's actions reflect Hamas's, as an offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood, ambition to seize power in Arab countries, particularly the Gulf states, in pursuit of its expansionist agenda.



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All geared up for '26/'27 academic year

MoE scrambles for schools readiness

KUWAIT CITY, July 29: As part of its intensive preparations for the 2026/2027 academic year, the Ministry of Education continues to implement its comprehensive plan to enhance the readiness of public schools by overseeing maintenance and renovation works across all educational zones, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Assistant Undersecretary for Admin-

istrative, Financial, and Technical Affairs Eng. Mohammad Al-Khaldi held an extensive meeting at the Ministry of Education auditorium with the engineering teams formed to monitor preparations for the new academic year.

The meeting reviewed the progress of maintenance works in government schools, assessed completion rates, and discussed key observations and

challenges encountered during implementation, along with mechanisms to address them.

The meeting also discussed the efforts of the General Directorate of Educational Facilities and Projects, which formed ten specialised engineering teams to supervise and monitor the implementation of maintenance works in 949 government schools.



Jahra Governorate photo
Jahra Governor Hamad Jassim Al-Habashi had a meeting with Director of the Arab Open University (AOU) Dr. Salah Saleh Al-Hammadi and his accompanying delegation.

Jahra Gov., AOU seek educational cooperation

KUWAIT CITY, July 29: Jahra Governor Hamad Jassim Al-Habashi had a meeting with Director of the Arab Open University (AOU) Dr. Salah Saleh Al-Hammadi and his accompanying delegation on Tuesday.

They discussed avenues of cooperation in the educational field, as well as the experience and academic programs of the university.

The Governor expressed his appreciation for the visit and commended the role of the university in supporting higher education through its

diverse academic programs that meet the needs of students and keep pace with the demands of the labor market.

The delegation conducted a presentation on the educational programs and academic services of the university, along with its efforts to develop the educational system and provide higher education opportunities, thereby, contributing to the preparation and qualification of national talent.

The Governor affirmed that Jahra Governorate is witnessing rapid population growth and

urban expansion, hence, the need for comprehensive educational services.

He is hoping that the governorate will be included in the future plans of the university, such as the establishment of a branch of the university in the governorate to bring educational services closer to the residents and ease the enrollment of students in suitable courses.

He then wished the university continuous success, while underscoring the importance of ongoing cooperation with academic institutions.

Stipend, study plan gets okay

Kuwaiti imams, muezzins sought

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

KUWAIT CITY, July 29: Minister of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy Dr. Subaih Al-Mukhaizeem approved the scholarship and study leave plan for ministry employees as per the laws and regulations governing civil service and study leave.



Dr. Al-Mukhaizeem

The decision mandates the undersecretary to issue an internal circular announcing the start of the application period for the scholarship plan within five working days of receiving approval from the Civil Service Commission (CSC).

The circular will include the general and specific conditions, approved specializations, application procedures, required

documents, and the application opening and closing dates. It will also be published on the official website of the ministry.

The decision includes the criteria and conditions for nomination to scholarships and study leaves and the mechanism for ranking applicants. This ranking will be based on various factors, such as academic qualifications, overall grade, seniority, performance reports, and the relevance of the specialization to the needs of the ministry, in addition to the criteria for evaluating accredited universities and the required specializations.

□ □ □

Apply for imam, muezzin: The Ministry of Islamic Affairs announced on Monday the opening of applications for Kuwaiti citizens seeking imam and muezzin positions, reports Al-Jarida daily.

The ministry explained that registration will take place at the Mosques Directorate in Al-Mugaa, at the Imam and Muezzin Training Building, during official working hours from 8:30 am to 11:30 am.

Applicants seeking to amend their job title from muezzin to imam must have worked as a muezzin for at least 15 years and memorized a minimum of 15 parts of the Holy Quran.

MoCI suspends new freelance business licenses

KUWAIT CITY, July 29: The Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI) has temporarily suspended the issuance of new licenses for single-person companies (freelance businesses) pending a review and restructuring of procedures, as well as the completion of amendments to the relevant regulations to ensure they align with local market requirements, reports Al-Rai daily.

According to informed sources, the suspension applies only to new license applications. All existing and previously issued licenses will continue to operate normally without any impact on their legal or operational status.

The ministry is currently coordinating with

the Public Authority for Civil Information (PACI) to streamline and unify licensing procedures, ensure consistency between licensing records and company address data, and enhance electronic connectivity between the two entities.

The sources explained that the anticipated amendments aim to regulate the business environment and improve the licensing mechanism, particularly as this type of license covers approximately 122 activities in more than 15 economic sectors.

These sectors include professional, scientific, technical, and consulting activities, as well as information and communications technology, real

estate, trade, tourism, education and training, design and arts, sports and entertainment, environmental services, agriculture, and other activities conducted through freelance business licenses without requiring a physical location.

In a related context, data from the ministry showed that the total number of single-person company licenses issued during the first five months of 2026 reached 6,586.

The licenses were distributed as follows - 1,085 companies in January, 1,557 in February, 1,144 in March, and 1,512 in April. The number declined to 1,288 companies in May, representing a 15 percent decrease compared to April.

KEPS: Need to ‘save’ natural habitat, marine biodiversity



KUNA photos
KEPS stressed the importance of protecting Kuwait's natural ecosystems, preserving its rich terrestrial and marine biodiversity, and safeguarding environmentally sensitive habitats and sites.

KUWAIT CITY, July 29, (KUNA): Kuwait Environment Protection Society (KEPS) on Tuesday stressed the importance of protecting Kuwait's natural ecosystems, preserving its rich terrestrial and marine biodiversity, and safeguarding environmentally sensitive habitats and sites.

KEPS Chairperson Dr. Wijdan Al-Oqab said to KUNA on World Nature Conservation Day, observed annually on July 28, the society seeks to use the occasion to raise public awareness of Kuwait's natural environment and its diverse ecological components.

Al-Oqab said the society is an International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) member and chairs Kuwait's IUCN National Committee, which unites government and civil society representatives to coordinate biodiversity protection and prepare for regional forums and the IUCN World Conservation Congress.

Al-Oqab said the society recently submitted several proposals to IUCN President Dr. Razan Al-Mubarak and IUCN Regional Director for West Asia Dr. Hani Al-Shaer, including the development of a basic framework for national committees to be overseen by each committee chair.



Dr Wijdan Al-Oqab

She added that the proposals included drafting internal regulations to organize committee operations and expanding membership by attracting new groups and individuals, noting IUCN officials welcomed the initiatives for their potential to strengthen national committees through improved organizational structures.

Al-Oqab said KEPS showcases its documentary series on Kuwait's wildlife through IUCN platforms and maintains close international cooperation with the union by providing regular reports on national community efforts to protect wildlife and biodiversity.

She added that the society has produced eight editions of its annual documentary series on Kuwait's wildlife, highlighting the country's terrestrial and marine flora and fauna through no fewer than 250 high-quality television episodes.

The committee also includes the Environment Public Authority, the Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research, and the Kuwait Water Association, she said, noting that KEPS works to unite the efforts of government institutions, civil society organizations, volunteer groups, and environmental initiatives.

Continued from Page 1

Shuaiba customs

It will also significantly enhance handling capacity and reduce customs clearance times.

According to informed sources, the project will enable an exceptional leap in shipping capacity, raising the number of containers handled at Shuaiba Port from 250,000 annually to approximately 500,000, thus doubling its handling capacity.

The project will contribute to developing the logistics system, modernizing container and general cargo handling mechanisms, and improving storage and release systems outside the port, providing importers and exporters with greater ease and speed in receiving their goods.

The project plays a key role in streamlining operations inside and outside the port through several objectives, including securing strategic depth, providing safe storage areas to ensure the continuity of supply flows during emergencies and crises, facilitating traffic movement, and reducing truck congestion on roads leading to the port.

The project will help protect Shuaiba Port's infrastructure from deterioration caused by the heavy and organised movement of trucks.

The project fully complies with the requirements of the International Ship and Port Facility Security (ISPS) Code issued by the United Nations, which will contribute to improving Kuwait's ranking in global maritime safety and logis-

tics indicators and strengthen its position as a regional trade hub attractive to investment.

The sources said reducing the time required for goods clearance will directly translate into lower logistical costs and reduced shipping expenses, enhancing the competitiveness of Shuaiba Port as an attractive platform for regional and global shipping lines.

Interior sharpens

Al-Wuhaib underscored the importance of holding regular meetings among security officials, considering their role in strengthening communication and understanding among sectors, overcoming obstacles, and unifying efforts to achieve objectives and raise the efficiency of security operations.

During the meeting, several topics related to the progress of work in the security sectors were reviewed, as well as the need to monitor the implementation of approved plans and programs.

They also discussed the development of a comprehensive strategy for the ministry and the establishment of an integrated work system to organize work between departments, enhance institutional integration, and improve performance.

Al-Wuhaib affirmed the need for continuous coordination and integration among all sectors, indicating that they must work as a unified team to develop the security work system and raise the level of preparedness.



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Other Voices

Ambassador Tuba Nur Sönmez will be dearly missed

By Nasser Al-Hajeri

There are very few people I genuinely find difficult to say goodbye to, and Her Excellency Tuba Nur Sönmez is one of them. During her years in Kuwait, I came to know someone who was not only an excellent ambassador, but also a true friend. Her kindness, warmth, and genuine love for Kuwait left a lasting impression on everyone fortunate enough to know her.

After four years in Kuwait, Ambassador Sönmez is concluding her tenure as Ambassador of the



Her Excellency Tuba Nur Sönmez, Ambassador of the Republic of Türkiye to Kuwait

Republic of Türkiye to Kuwait. During her time here, she worked hard to strengthen the relationship between our two countries, but what many people will remember most is the way she treated everyone around her. She was approachable, kind, and always ready to listen. Whether at an official event, a cultural gathering, or even a simple conversation, she made people feel comfortable.

The past four years were important for relations between our two countries. There were high level visits, growing trade, cul-

tural events, and the celebration of sixty years of diplomatic relations. The Turkish Embassy was active throughout this period, bringing people together through exhibitions, concerts, community events, and initiatives that highlighted the friendship between our two nations. These achievements reflected the work of the entire embassy team under her leadership.

Some of the hardest moments also showed the strength of the relationship. After the devastating earthquakes that struck Türkiye in 2023, Kuwait stood beside the

Turkish people with remarkable generosity. Ambassador Sönmez often spoke with appreciation about that support and never forgot the solidarity shown by the people and leadership of Kuwait.

At her farewell reception, one sentence stood out to me. She said that Kuwait had become her second home. Those were not simply polite words. Anyone who met her over the past four years could see that she genuinely meant them. She embraced Kuwait, respected its traditions, and built friendships that will continue long after her departure.

On a personal level, I have always appreciated her warmth, sincerity, and friendship. She represented her country with dignity while also building real human connections with people from every background.

As Ambassador Tuba Nur Sönmez leaves Kuwait, I wish her every success and happiness in whatever lies ahead. Kuwait will always welcome her back, not only as a former ambassador, but as a dear friend who will be greatly missed.

Continued from Page 1

6 decrees

- Decree No. 118/2026 stipulates the withdrawal of citizenship from one individual.
- Decree No. 119/2026 stipulates the withdrawal of Kuwaiti citizenship from nine individuals.
- Decree No. 120/2026 stipulates the withdrawal of Kuwaiti citizenship certificates from one individual.
- Decree No. 121/2026 stipulates the revocation of Kuwaiti citizenship from six individuals.

23 ‘landmarks’

- The firm will also oversee the technical, financial, legal, and environmental aspects of each project until financial closure, in accordance with the provisions of Law No. 116/2014 and its executive regulations.
- KAPP stated that the projects scheduled for re-tendering are:
- Fahaeel Waterfront Development (Al-Kout)
 - Waterfront Phase Five (Marina Mall)
 - Two construction waste treatment plants
 - International Center (United Market)
 - Al-Maseel Market (Grand Market)
 - Al-Watya Market
 - Kuwait Beach 11 (Magic Mall)
 - Farwaniya Slaughterhouse
 - National Market
 - International Golf Club
 - Safat Market
 - Al-Manakh Market
 - International Real Estate
 - Jleeb Meat, Vegetable, and Fish

Market

- Jahra Armored Vehicle
- Mubarakiya Market
- Ahmadi Slaughterhouse
- Jahra Meat and Vegetable Market
- Al-Khaima Mall
- Sulabiya Central Fruit and Vegetable Market

Kuwait, GCC

The Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs said the attacks came despite the Kingdom's efforts to reduce regional tensions and promote stability. It accused Iran-aligned militias of violating international law and the principles of good neighbourliness by launching repeated cross-border attacks.

The ministry reiterated that Saudi Arabia does not seek escalation but would take all necessary measures to defend its sovereignty, citizens and critical infrastructure.

The latest developments prompted a wave of regional diplomatic activity and condemnations.

Kuwait strongly condemned the drone attacks, describing them as a dangerous escalation that threatens regional security and stability. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs said the attempted strike on Saudi oil facilities represented a flagrant violation of the Kingdom's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

The ministry reaffirmed Kuwait's full solidarity with Saudi Arabia and voiced support for all measures taken to protect its security, sovereignty and national interests, including its right to self-defense under Article 51 of the UN Charter. It stressed that Saudi Arabia's security is an integral part of the security of Kuwait and the Gulf Cooperation Council

(GCC).

Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah also held a telephone conversation with Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan to discuss the latest regional developments and ongoing diplomatic efforts aimed at preserving regional security, stability and freedom of maritime navigation.

Prince Faisal also held separate discussions with his counterparts from Kuwait, Qatar and Bahrain on strengthening Gulf coordination to contain the security and economic repercussions of the crisis and safeguard navigation through the Strait of Hormuz and Bab al-Mandab. The ministers condemned attacks carried out by Iran and affiliated militias in Iraq and Yemen and reaffirmed continued GCC coordination.

Qatar condemned the attempted drone attack, calling it a flagrant violation of Saudi Arabia's sovereignty and expressing full support for measures taken by the Kingdom to protect its security and territory.

GCC Secretary-General Jasem Al-Budaiwi likewise denounced the attacks, saying they constituted a dangerous escalation that undermines regional peace and stability. He reaffirmed the GCC's full solidarity with Saudi Arabia.

Lebanon also condemned the attempted attack, expressing support for Saudi Arabia's security and welcoming Iraq's decision to investigate the incident. It further condemned Iranian missile launches toward Jordan, describing them as violations of Jordanian sovereignty.

Egypt described the attacks on Saudi Arabia and Jordan as unacceptable violations of international law and warned they posed a serious threat to regional stability and global energy security.

Meanwhile, Kuwait National Guard (KNG) Undersecretary Lieu. Gen. Ham-

ad Al-Barjas conducted an inspection visit to a site secured by the 3rd Facilities Protection Battalion of the 1st Protection Brigade to assess operational readiness and review ongoing duties.

According to a KNG press release Wednesday, Al-Barjas conveyed the leadership's appreciation and greetings to the battalion's personnel, commending their vital role in protecting the country's key facilities.

He also lauded the personnel's high level of readiness, discipline and commitment to carrying out their assigned responsibilities and duties.

GCC flexes military strength

Separately, Bahrain's Chief of Staff Lieu. Gen. Theyab Al-Nuaimi confirmed on Wednesday that the participation of the GCC armed forces in the Bahrain Shield joint exercise reflects the strength and readiness of the Gulf military force to face various challenges.

This came during Al-Nuaimi's inspection of the exercise conducted by the Bahrain Defense Force from July 28 until 30.

He pointed out that exercise fortifies capabilities; a solid pillar for any attacks or threats against any of the Gulf states, while also affirming the lasting ties among GCC states.

Al-Nuaimi added that the unlawful attacks the region is witnessing require developing joint military and defense cooperation to preserve the security and stability of GCC states and repel any threats to their sovereignty.

Elsewhere, a Kuwait Air Force delegation led by Air Force Commander Major General Pilot Fahad Al-Khurainj visited the Royal Jordanian Air Force on Wednesday to discuss ways to further strengthen military cooperation between the two countries.

According to a statement by the Ku-

waiti Army General Staff, Maj. Gen. Al-Khurainj held talks with Royal Jordanian Air Force Commander Brig. Gen. Pilot Jihad Al-Batoush, during which the two sides reviewed matters of mutual interest and explored ways to enhance cooperation and coordination between their respective air forces.

In Islamabad, Pakistani Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Moham-mad Ishaq Dar reaffirmed his country's strong ties with Kuwait during talks with Foreign Minister Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. The ministers reviewed bilateral cooperation and exchanged views on regional developments, including the evolving situation in the Middle East.

Missile exchange raises fears of wider conflict

Iran launched a barrage of missiles at American forces in the Middle East early Wednesday as the U.S. partnered with Saudi Arabia to strike Tehran-backed militias in neighboring Iraq, killing at least 20 fighters.

The flare-up on multiple fronts, after several days of relative calm, raised the risk of a return to all-out war. It also underscored the difficulty of winding down a five-month conflict that has jolted the world economy and is unpopular among Americans. It was also likely to add to concerns that the U.S. is further drawing down already diminished stockpiles of sophisticated munitions needed to defend its bases and allies.

Saudi Arabia had accused the Iraqi militias of firing drones against its oil facilities over the past two days. An umbrella group of Iraqi militias initially denied the allegations, while another Iran-backed group - the Houthi rebels in Yemen - said they had attacked Saudi energy facilities as part of a separate but related conflict.

Before the latest eruption, mediators had expressed optimism about bringing the U.S. and Iran back to the negotiating table. An interim agreement collapsed in recent weeks over renewed fighting in the Strait of Hormuz, a crucial waterway for global energy supplies that Iranian attacks have again effectively closed.

The renewed hostilities sent oil prices spiking. Brent crude, the international standard, jumped 3.1% to \$84.58 a barrel.

Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard said it fired ballistic missiles at the Muwaffaq Salti Air Base and the headquarters of the U.S. military's Central Command in Jordan, in a statement carried by the state-run IRNA news agency.

Jordan's military said five Iranian missiles had been intercepted and destroyed. There were no immediate reports of casualties or damage.

The U.S. military later announced that American and Saudi fighter aircraft had struck multiple logistics and weapons sites in eastern Iraq in response to the alleged drone attacks on Saudi Arabia. The Saudi Defense Ministry warned that it "does not seek escalation but will respond to any aggression."

The Popular Mobilization Forces, a coalition of primarily Shiite, Iran-backed armed groups that is officially under the command of the Iraqi military, said at least 20 fighters were killed and 32 others wounded in the overnight strikes.

The groups making up the PMF joined in the fight against the Islamic State group after it seized large sections of Iraq in 2014. The Iraqi government later designated PMF as an "independent military formation" within the armed forces, but in practice the militias have significant autonomy, and some have attacked U.S. facilities.



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Liberals remain more likely than conservatives to trust mainstream outlets

New media ecosystem taking root on left, reshaping Democratic politics

NEW YORK, July 29, (AP): Farah Berent, a teacher in Michigan, used to learn about politics from channels like ABC, CBS and CNN. But that changed as she decided that coverage of the war in Gaza was irreparably biased.

“I couldn’t stand all the lies on the stations,” she said, arguing that there wasn’t enough attention being paid to Palestinian suffering. “I started going to Instagram to get my news.”

Berent is among many progressive-minded Americans who have sworn off legacy media institutions. They’re turning to a widening mix of independent podcasts, social media accounts and digital news sites, part of an increasingly influential ecosystem that has boosted this year’s wave of anti-establishment, left-leaning candidates who may not have gotten as much attention otherwise.

Liberals remain more likely than conservatives to trust mainstream outlets, but the splintering echoes how conservatives skeptical of their party created a collection of insurgent news sites years ago. The shift

has elevated individual commentators with opinions on the news, some of whom have proven influential in driving people’s votes.

Ryan Grim, a co-founder of Drop Site News and a veteran of online political debates, said progressive politicians have sought out his platform to reach voters. In a change from previous election cycles, “they have ways to get covered even if the mainstream just basically ignores them,” he said.

One of those candidates is Abdul El-Sayed, who is running for US Senate in Michigan and faces the more moderate US Rep Haley Stevens in the Aug 4 primary.

“I think in a lot of ways, where traditional media has been gatekeepers, we’re watching that gatekeeping function fall away,” El-Sayed said.

These changes have been on display this year in places like New York City, where a slate of progressive congressional candidates endorsed by Mayor Zohran Mamdani defeated establishment-backed candidates.

Sara Hyler, a policy analyst in East Harlem, originally planned to



US Senate candidates Abdul El-Sayed, left, and U.S. Rep. Haley Stevens participate in a televised debate moderated by Roop Raj on July 27, in Southfield, Mich. (AP)

support incumbent Rep. Adriano Espaillat in last month’s Democratic primary. But then Hyler started learning about progressive outsider Darializa Avila Chevalier through YouTube videos and podcasts, in-

cluding from the liberal media company MeidasTouch.

“My actual beliefs are to the left of Democrats. I don’t want a moderate,” said Hyler, who ultimately voted for Avila Chevalier in hopes she could help nudge Congress toward progressive policies.

The rise of independent media has been part of a digital transformation that transcends politics, as chronically online Americans are turning toward news from social media and content creators. But it’s not just the popularity of smartphones driving that change.

“There’s a complete lack of trust in any and all institutions now,” said Mike Nellis, a Democratic consultant who hosts a podcast, writes a Substack and posts political analysis on social media. “That has led people to turn to individuals, and so now you’re picking your flavor of person to listen to.”

Among conservatives, faith in mainstream media and in the more moderate wing of the Republican Party faltered years ago, with the rise of the Tea Party movement paving the way for an alternative right-wing media ecosystem, including sites like the Daily Caller, Breitbart and The Blaze. Trump also tapped into a loose constellation of podcasts, including “The Joe Rogan Experience,” for his successful comeback campaign.

Reece Peck, a media culture professor at the College of Staten Island, said the left-wing version of that has happened slowly, beginning with the momentum of Sen. Bernie Sanders’ first presidential run in 2016. At the time, left-wing, anti-establishment YouTube accounts and podcasts like The Young Turks and Chapo Trap House were gaining attention but didn’t reach the majority of Democratic voters.

Now Democrats have realized their faith in institutions didn’t prevent Trump’s return.

“The ground has been made fertile for an anti-establishment media politics, where it just wasn’t quite there with the voter base in those previous cycles,” Peck said. Even older, moderate liberals, he said, have started to “throw their hands in the air and look for alternatives.”

YouTube accounts like “Secular Talk” and “Breaking Points,” streamers like Hasan Piker and new digital journalism organizations like More Perfect Union and The Lever are among those that have seen their audiences multiply.



Debris and fallen trees cover the ground after a tornado struck the day before on July 28 in Appleton, Wis. (AP)

Powerful tornado leaves widespread damage in Wisconsin

First responders searched homes and buildings on Tuesday for possible victims, a day after a powerful tornado touched down in northeastern Wisconsin, hollowing out homes and toppling power lines as it remained on the ground for more than 20 minutes.

The Fox Cities region, which is home to more than 100,000 people in the cities of Appleton,

Menasha and Neenah, was left in shambles by Monday’s twister, with homes leveled, cars flipped, and power lines and trees toppled.

Despite widespread damage, the timing of the storm could be why there have been no reported deaths. The tornado arrived in the early afternoon, authorities noted, when most people were awake and after warnings

had been issued.

“Everybody was at work. It was the middle of the day,” Menasha Police Chief Matt Albrecht said. “Most people were not at home and at their place of employment.”

Dozens of people were injured, and officers were still going door-to-door a day later in search of possible victims. (AP)

America

US Senator Graham eulogized: Sen Lindsey Graham, the son of pool hall owners who rose to become one of his generation’s more influential US politicians at home and abroad, was eulogized Tuesday as “a true American original” during memorial services in Washington.

Graham’s flag-draped casket arrived for a tribute at the US Capitol, where the Republican served for more than 30 years as an indefatigable dealmaker who talked and laughed and badgered his colleagues into action. Later, President Donald Trump joined foreign leaders for a funeral at Washington National Cathedral, a testament to Graham’s stature on the global stage.

Trump called Graham “a giant of the United States Senate, a true American original who left us much too soon.”

In mostly prepared remarks, Trump described his onetime presidential rival turned ally as “the first person to make you laugh and one of the last people that you’ve really ever wanted to fight.” (AP)



Sen Darline Graham, R-SC, and her husband Larry Nordone pause at the casket of Sen Lindsey Graham, R-SC, in the Rotunda of the US Capitol after a congressional tribute on July 28, in Washington. (AP)

“I am calling on you to directly and verbally address the people of Kentucky and provide proof of your capacity to serve, or resign,” Beshear wrote to McConnell. (AP)

‘McConnell must prove he’s fit to serve’: Kentucky Gov Andy Beshear, a rising national figure in the Democratic Party, is calling on the state’s Republican Sen. Mitch McConnell to either prove that he is fit to continue serving after his lengthy hospital stay or resign from office.

Beshear made the demand in a letter after McConnell’s office said Monday that the 84-year-old senator had not yet been medically cleared to leave the rehabilitation facility where he has been undergoing physical therapy. The office said he would miss a major Kentucky political event and upcoming Senate votes. McConnell was hospitalized June 14 and disclosed weeks later that it was the result of a fall.

Beshear, who is widely viewed as a potential presidential candidate in 2028, first urged McConnell in early July to release more information about his condition after weeks of public silence. His letter Tuesday marked a significant escalation.

Teen gets life without parole: A judge on Tuesday sentenced a teenager who killed two students and two teachers in a shooting at Apalachee High School in Georgia to serve life in prison without the possibility of parole, calling his crimes “deliberate, contemplated evil.”

Colt Gray, 16, had pleaded guilty Friday to 55 counts, including murder, in the Sept. 4, 2024, shooting at the school about 45 miles (73 kilometers) northeast of Atlanta.

Barrow County Superior Court Judge Nicholas Primm handed down the sentence after hearing from family members of those killed and victims, as well as investigators, Gray’s grandmother and a forensic psychologist who had evaluated Gray.

Murder carries a mandatory sentence of life in prison in Georgia, so the only decision Barrow County Superior Court Judge Nicholas Primm had to make was whether Gray should ever be eligible for parole. He decided the teen should never be allowed out. (AP)

US Senate confirms Clayton nation’s intelligence director

WASHINGTON, July 29, (AP): The Senate has confirmed **Jay Clayton** to become head of the nation’s intelligence agencies, putting a permanent director in place weeks after President Donald Trump sought to delay his nomination.

Clayton, the US attorney for the Southern District of New York and a former Securities and Exchange Commission chairman, was confirmed 51-47 along party lines. Republicans had initially hoped to confirm Clayton in June, but Trump delayed his hearing in order to allow his temporary pick for the job, Bill Pulte, to take over for several weeks after former di-



Clayton

rector Tulsi Gabbard resigned.

Senators from both parties have expressed concerns about Pulte, a former housing regulator who had no intelligence experience. Pulte was in charge when Trump delivered a speech from the White House earlier this month doubling down on his false claims about the 2020 election, which he lost, and released classified documents that he said were relevant to his arguments.

Pulte has also said he has presided over a downsizing of the national intelligence office, which functions as a coordinating hub for the U.S. government’s intelligence agencies. He boasted on social media that with a latest round of job cuts, the office is carrying out about a 30% staff reduction from weeks ago. He has not offered details about those cuts, making it hard to immediately corroborate the extent of any reductions.

Ukraine hits two major Russian oil refineries hours after Zelenskyy’s meeting with US President Trump

KYIV, Ukraine, July 29. (AP): Ukrainian forces hit two of Russia’s biggest oil refineries overnight in its latest long-range strikes, officials said Wednesday, as Kyiv deepened its economic, military and diplomatic pressure on Moscow.

Ukraine’s almost daily long-range drone and missile strikes using domestically developed weapons have battered Russian oil facilities for months. The operation has brought a fuel crisis that is embarrassing the Kremlin more than four years after Russia’s all-out invasion of its neighbor.

The overnight attacks started fires at a Lukoil refinery in Russia’s Perm region, more than 1,500 kilometers (900 miles) from Ukraine, and a refinery in Ryazan, about 400 kilometers (180 miles) from the border, Ukraine’s Security Service and General Staff said in separate statements.



Ukraine’s President Volodymyr Zelenskyy stands with a bipartisan group of Senators in the Capitol building on July 28, in Washington. (AP)

The refineries have a combined annual production capacity of around 220 million barrels of oil, according to Ukraine, and make a vital contribution to Russia’s military ef-

fort and its government revenue.

It was not immediately possible to independently verify the claims. Ryazan Gov. Pavel Malkov said only that six people were taken to

hospital after a drone attack. He said drone debris caused fires at unidentified “industrial sites.”

Russian online retailer Wildberries, a major supplier likened to Amazon that Ukraine has targeted in recent days, said it evacuated employees from a facility in Ryazan but provided no further details.

Russia has sophisticated air defenses but its vast territory is hard to comprehensively cover.

The attacks came hours after President Volodymyr Zelenskyy visited Washington on Tuesday for talks with US President Donald Trump to push for more vital American help for Ukraine’s fight against its much bigger enemy.

“Russia must feel that every day of this war will only come at a higher cost for it. We need to weaken the aggressor and keep up the pressure to bring an end to this war closer,” Zelenskyy said on social media.

Russia puts Telegram founder on wanted list over charges of aiding terrorism

MOSCOW, July 29, (AP): Russia charged Pavel Durov, the founder, owner and CEO of the messaging app Telegram, with aiding terrorism and put him on an international wanted list, the country’s main domestic security agency said Wednesday.

The charges against Durov, who was born and began his career in Russia but later moved abroad, came as Russian authorities restrict Telegram, one of the most popular messaging apps in the country. It is part of a long-term effort to bring the internet under the Kremlin’s control that has intensified since Moscow launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

The Federal Security Service, also known as the FSB, accused Telegram’s administration in a statement of failing to remove “numerous channels, chats and bots” allegedly used by “Ukrainian intelligence agencies, terrorist and extremist organizations to prepare and coordinate acts of sabotage and terrorism, mass murder, and cyberfraud” in



Telegram co-founder Pavel Durov appears at an event on Aug 1, 2017 in Jakarta, Indonesia. (AP)

Russia, which resulted in “numerous human casualties.”

The agency accused Ukrainian security services of using a popular dating chatbot on Telegram to lure and recruit Russians for “sabotage

and terrorist activities,” and said 46 users of the chatbot, from 12 to 22 years old, have been detained across Russia since July 2025 for assaulting law enforcement officers, arson and other acts.

New UK leader Burnham vows to fix a ‘broken’ social care system

LONDON, July 29, (AP): British Prime Minister Andy Burnham pledged Wednesday that he will succeed where decades of predecessors have failed and fix a “broken” social care system built on an overstretched public sector and profit-making private firms.

Burnham, 56, said it was a “major dereliction of duty” that his generation of politicians had failed to provide decent care in a way that is affordable for both individuals and the state.

“I think social care in England is as unfair as American healthcare,” Burnham said. “The vulnerable pay with everything.”

The Labour Party leader said he would try to work with other political parties to create a “national care service” to sit alongside the taxpayer-funded National Health Service established after World War II to give free healthcare to all.

Burnham, who became prime minister last week, says it’s his priority to tackle the patchy access to



Britain’s Prime Minister Andy Burnham talks to a resident during a visit to a care home in London on July 29. (AP)

social care for those who need it because of age, illness or disability. It’s a pressing issue in a country with an aging population and a frayed public health system, and one that has haunted previous Labour and Con-

servative governments.

“You’ve probably got a feeling of déjà vu,” Burnham told the audience in a speech at a London care home. “Don’t have that. This time we’re going to do it.”

Death toll rises to 18 as rescuers comb through quake rubble in Japan

KUMAMOTO, Japan, July 29, (AP): Soldiers and emergency workers combed through a badly damaged shopping mall and collapsed houses looking for trapped survivors Wednesday after a powerful earthquake that killed at least 18 people, including a foreigner, in southwestern Japan.

The magnitude 7.1 earthquake that hit a day earlier in the Kumamoto area on the southern main island of Kyushu also left at least 62 people injured, six of them seriously, the prefectural government said. The tally has been steadily growing, fanning fears it may continue to rise.

The sweltering weather heightened worries about the survivors as rescuers braved the heat. It remained unclear how many people might still be missing.

Some of the most serious damage was at the Aeon Mall shopping center in Kashima city, which was bustling with thousands of people when the quake happened. The company said some 3,000 customers were evacuated to a parking lot before a gas explosion happened in another part of the mall, where some people were still working.

The mall's second floor collapsed, trapping people. Witnesses said the explosion shook the area as much as the quake.

Three people remained missing,



A rescue worker walks in front of Aeon Mall, which was damaged by an explosion following an earthquake, is seen in Kashima, Kumamoto Prefecture, southern Japan on July 29. (AP)

while four deaths were confirmed at the mall site, according to Aeon President Akio Yoshida.

"We take it seriously that an explosion happened and precious lives were lost," Yoshida told a news conference in Kumamoto, where he bowed deeply along with two other executives.

Japanese media footage of the mall showed that part of the ceiling

had caved in, and metal pieces and other debris were scattered about as helmeted and masked rescue workers searched the area.

Kiyoshi Matsunaga, 74, who lives in the mall's neighborhood and was at a supermarket just a few blocks away, said he thought he was going to die.

He stopped in his tracks when the shaking began while he was pushing his cart toward a cash register. Things scattered from the shelves. He could not move, he recalled.

"I was frightened," he said.

In nearby Yatsushino, a chimney collapse at a Nippon Paper Industries factory killed five people while seven others were rescued from the debris, according to the Kumamoto prefectural government disaster team.

Four people were still believed to be trapped there, it said.

In the first reported death of a foreign national, a Vietnamese technical intern was killed after a crane fell on him at a factory where he worked, according to the Vietnamese government. He had arrived in Japan in January. Seven other Vietnamese technical interns at the factory evacuated safely.

Separately, a Vietnamese woman married to one of the workers was injured when a wall collapsed and was being treated at a hospital.



A truck works at a gold mine in Solomon Islands, owned by Gold Ridge Mining Limited on Aug 5, 2025. (AP)

Man killed in landslide at Solomon Islands gold mine: police

A man's body has been recovered from the site of a landslide at a gold mine in Solomon Islands, officials said.

The body was found Tuesday, a day after the landslide at the open pit mine on Guadalcanal, the largest island of the South Pacific nation. It wasn't known if other people were still buried and a search operation would continue at the site,

police said in a statement.

The slip spanned 100 meters (328 feet) on an access road leading to the pit, the statement said. The cause of the landslide wasn't known, Prime Minister Matthew Wale told reporters on Monday.

"Of interest to the government, of course, is to find out whether this was a result of poor mining

practices and perhaps the need to strengthen regulations," Wale said. At the time he said no one was confirmed missing or killed.

The mine's owners, Wanguo Gold Group Ltd, said in a statement Monday that none of their employees were hurt or missing and no mining equipment was damaged. Operations at the mine had resumed, the statement said. (AP)

Conservative leader pledges to fight crime with an 'iron fist'

Fujimori inaugurated as Peru's president following narrow election victory

LIMA, Peru, July 29, (AP): Conservative leader Keiko Fujimori was sworn in as Peru's president on Tuesday after winning the June presidential runoff by a margin of fewer than 50,000 votes, a victory that confirmed a regional shift in South America toward the conservative wing.

With the ceremony, Fujimori, a four-time presidential candidate and leader of Peru's largest political party, takes office as the country's ninth president in a decade. The 51-year-old is hoping to stabilize Peru's turbulent politics, reduce crime and boost economic growth.

Over the past decade, only three of Peru's presidents have been elected by popular vote. The rest have come into office after their predecessors resigned or were removed by congress amid protests or corruption scandals.

Fujimori's Popular Force party and its main ally, Popular Renovation, will hold half the Senate seats once the new legislature is installed, making it harder for opposing legislators to attempt to remove her as president.

Fujimori centered her campaign around promises to improve security in a nation where extortion rackets have become a significant problem. She has also promised to develop infrastructure by making it easier for government agencies to form partnerships with private investors.

She is the daughter of former president Alberto Fujimori, who led the country in the 1990s and stabilized its economy while defeating terror groups, but was later imprisoned for human rights abuses committed under his rule by the Peruvian military as his government took an authoritarian turn. He was pardoned in December 2023 and died in September the following year.

During her campaign, Keiko Fujimori pledged to fight crime with an "iron fist," implementing some policies adopted by Salvadorean President Nayib Bukele, and also build a megaprison modeled after the notorious Cecot penitentiary in El Salvador.

To guarantee judges their safety, she has said she will implement reforms to enable them to hide their identities as they oversee criminal trials.

She also said on Tuesday she would reorganize social services to fight malnutrition in rural communities and announced a 15% increase in the nation's minimum wage.

Fujimori said that the nation's military will "temporarily" lead security op-



President Keiko Fujimori speaks after taking the oath of office at Congress in Lima, Peru on July 28. (AP)

erations in crime afflicted areas. And she also said she will focus on preparing the South American nation for the latest onset of El Niño, a weather pattern that warms ocean temperatures and often leads to flooding along Peru's coast.

"My goal is not only to administer the state," Fujimori said. "My main objective is to narrow the enormous social deficit that affects millions of Peruvians."

Opposition leaders have asked Fujimori's incoming government to reverse a series of laws approved by Peru's last legislature, which critics say weaken efforts to fight organized crime.

The laws eliminate preventive arrests and stop prosecutors from processing

political parties involved in corruption under the same statutes as criminal groups. The laws also make it harder for police to confiscate the goods of criminal groups.

Opposition leaders are also asking the incoming government to create a commission to investigate the deaths of 50 civilians during anti-government protests in late 2022 and early 2023 following the removal of former President Pedro Castillo.

During Fujimori's swearing-in ceremony, some opposition lawmakers protested outside the parliament in Lima, Peru's capital, holding photos of people killed during the protests. Relatives of the dead have said they do not recognize Fujimori as president and that they are protesting her inauguration.

Fujimori was widely backed by voters in Peru's capital and along the Pacific coast, but voters in the highlands, where there is a larger Indigenous population, overwhelmingly supported left-wing candidate Roberto Sanchez, an ally of Castillo.

Sanchez challenged the election results, arguing there were irregularities in how votes were counted at Peruvian consulates abroad, but electoral authorities dismissed his complaints.

Despite the political friction, Peru continues to be one of the most stable economies in Latin America. Its central bank has long kept the benchmark interest rate below 5%, and the government is known for a conservative approach toward public spending.

But critics point out a growing gap in living standards between coastal areas and communities in the Andean highlands.

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

Conservatives have won seven major presidential elections in Latin America in the past few years, most of them since the January 2025 inauguration of U.S. President Donald Trump, in a winning streak propelled by concerns over crime, immigration and slow economic growth.

UK to resume army training in Kenya after delay over rights concerns

NAIROBI, Kenya, July 29, (AP): Kenya and Britain on Tuesday agreed to resume military training in the East African nation after a delay in signing a new defense cooperation agreement that were largely attributed to Kenyan legislators' concerns about protecting nearby communities.

Neither government commented on allegations of human rights violations involving British soldiers during previous training exercises.

Kenya's foreign affairs minister, Musalia Mudavadi, said the government welcomed the decision to proceed with the training after a partnership "built over decades on mutual respect, constructive engagement, and a shared commitment to peace and security."

The suspension in training was announced on July 23. Kenyan authorities had denied local media reports that Britain was considering relocating some military training activities to neighboring Tanzania.

The British government in a statement said Kenya's government had



Musalia Mudavadi speaks during his meeting with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov at Zinaida Morozova's Mansion in Moscow on March 16. (AP)

agreed to issue the necessary licenses and permissions and that training would resume later this year. Britain has about 200 military personnel permanently based in Kenya who train more than 1,000 Kenyan soldiers each year before deployment

to neighboring Somalia to combat al-Shabab, al-Qaida's East African affiliate.

The British government has invested more than 1.1 billion Kenyan shillings (\$9.6 million) annually in the partnership.

Protesters storm key energy complex in Libya during rallies over power outages

CAIRO, July 29, (AP): Protesters demonstrating against ongoing power outages in Libya stormed a key energy complex overnight and closed gas lines that fuel power plants, which officials warned could trigger a nationwide power blackout.

Demonstrators in the capital Tripoli, Zawiyah, Misrata and other locations across western Libya have protested for several days over hourslong power outages. They demand better electrical services and have called for the resignation of Prime Minister Abdul Hamid Dbeibah.

As part of the ongoing protests, a group stormed the General Electricity Company's Mellitah Oil & Gas complex about 90 kilometers (55 miles) west of Tripoli. The disruption could cause a complete blackout in multiple areas and ultimately collapse the electricity network, the company warned in a statement Tuesday.

The Mellitah complex is a strategic energy supplier. Gas from the complex is compressed and sent to Sicily through a subsea pipeline, according to Bonatti, an international



This is a locator map for Libya with its capital, Tripoli. (AP)

contractor that provides services to global energy sectors.

The Mellitah complex sends 30 million Standard Cubic Meters of gas to Italy daily, according to Bonatti.

The closure of the lines disrupted operations and caused a severe shortage in gas and fuel supplies needed to operate power plants, pushing a

number of generators out of service, the National Oil Corporation said in a statement Tuesday.

The complex's workers union condemned the closure of the gas lines, warning that the action had created serious technical and operational risks and endangered the lives of workers.



US Amy Pope, Director General of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), briefs the media on Protecting Victims of Trafficking in Online Scam Operations, during a press briefing, at the European headquarters of the United Nations in Geneva, Switzerland on July 28. (AP)

Criminal gangs increasingly lure people to work in online scam centers, UN's IOM warns

GENEVA, July 29, (AP): The UN's migration agency is warning that criminal networks have been trafficking hundreds of thousands of people - many of them educated English speakers - to work in online scam centers, and the caseload is growing.

The International Organization for Migration says victims are often lured by fake job advertisements - mostly through social media - promising work abroad, only to get locked up, have their identity documents seized, and forced through violence, threats and "debt bondage" to participate in the online scams.

"We're seeing so many more of these cases emerge right now," IOM Director-General Amy Pope told reporters in Geneva on Tuesday. "We're seeing victims

from over 80 different countries being trafficked into the scams."

"They're recruiting people who often speak English very well, who often have graduate degrees, some level of education," Pope said, adding that the cases are "specifically playing out across Asia."

The migration agency cited estimates from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime that losses across east Asia, Australia, and New Zealand reached as much as \$114 billion last year, and "scam compounds" across the region could hold hundreds of thousands of trafficked workers.

IOM said it had assisted over 3,500 such victims of forced criminality between 2022 and 2025, people who originated from nearly 40

countries: people from Indonesia, India, Sri Lanka, Ethiopia, Kenya, and Bangladesh were most affected.

Meanwhile, Southeast Asia-based criminal groups are using increasingly integrated networks and technology to build a rapidly growing illicit economy with tentacles that reach far beyond Asia, with scams alone causing estimated combined losses of \$88.3 billion to \$114.1 billion in 2025, a UN report says.

The report by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime outlines how transnational crime that used to be concentrated in Southeast Asia has expanded to other regions, while global criminal groups are increasingly engaging in drug, human and wildlife trafficking in Asia.

Criminals are using new technologies to launder money through global financial systems and using artificial intelligence to steal from victims worldwide, said the report, released Tuesday.

One key finding of the report is the threat to children both from AI and from online gaming, as hundreds of scam compounds scattered across Southeast Asia provide venues for trafficking and selling of child abuse content.

"There is a huge jump in AI-generated child images ... communicated through encrypted communications platforms," said Inshik Sim, UNODC researcher and coordinator for the report, told reporters at a briefing at the Foreign Correspondents Club of Thailand.

A landmark step transforming the consumer banking experience

National Bank of Kuwait launches Kuwait’s first fully digital loan

“Your Loan and Signature In your Mobile” – A Seamless, End-to-End Digital Financing Journey

KUWAIT CITY, July 29: When the history of banking innovation in Kuwait is written, National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) stands out as the institution behind many of the defining milestones that transformed how financial services are delivered and how customers access and benefit from them. Since its establishment as Kuwait’s first national bank, NBK has played a pivotal role in introducing new banking concepts and solutions that have advanced the customer experience and set more progressive standards for efficiency, convenience, and accessibility.

Throughout a journey spanning more than seven decades, NBK’s name has been associated with a series of pioneering achievements that marked significant turning points in the evolution of banking services in Kuwait. It was the first bank to launch online banking, introduce mobile banking services, issue credit cards, and establish specialized banking services for corporate and business customers.

As the pace of digital transformation accelerated, NBK went beyond simply enhancing its services, focusing instead on redefining the banking experience from the ground up. This included introducing a new generation of mobile banking services, enabling fully digital end-to-end account opening, offering instant credit cards against account balances, and launching NBK eSavings Account, in addition to introducing Weyay as Kuwait’s first digital bank, a milestone that reflected NBK’s early vision for the future of financial services.

Today, NBK adds another first to this longstanding legacy with the launch of Kuwait’s first fully integrated, end-to-end Digital Loans service through the NBK Mobile Banking App, under the slogan “Your Loan and Signature In your Mobile”. Customers can now complete the entire financing journey digitally—from submitting the application and uploading the required documents to providing their e-Signature and finalizing all procedures, at any time, from anywhere, and without the need to visit a branch.

This achievement represents another significant milestone in NBK’s sustained journey of digital innovation over recent years and reaffirms its unwavering commitment to redefining the banking experience by harnessing the latest technologies to deliver services that are simpler, faster, and more flexible. It enables customers to meet their financing needs anytime and anywhere, while maintaining the highest standards of security and reliability.

e-Signatures form the cornerstone of the fully integrated Digital Loans experience, enabling customers to approve and sign documents electronically in a secure and legally recognized manner. This accelerates application processing, reduces the time required to complete procedures, and minimizes reliance on paper-based transactions and traditional signatures.

The experience also requires customers to preregister their e-Signature through the Kuwait Mobile ID App, following recent updates introduced by the Public Authority for Civil Information (PACI) to the registration process. These enhancements have simplified the procedures and made them more seamless and accessible, enabling customers to complete their transactions anytime and anywhere with the highest levels of security and reliability.

Speaking on the launch, Mr. Mohammed Al-Othman, CEO, Consumer and Digital Banking Group at National Bank of Kuwait, said: “NBK has long been recognized for introducing solutions and services that have advanced Kuwait’s banking sector and enhanced the customer experience. For us, leadership has never been an end in itself, but rather the natural outcome of our continued commitment to understanding customer needs and our ongoing investment in developing services and platforms capable of keeping pace



Al-Othman:
A step that reflects our commitment to continuing to advancing Kuwait’s digital transformation strategy
We are redefining the banking finance experience in Kuwait through a seamless, end-to-end digital journey that places customers at the heart of every step
NBK’s leadership is a natural outcome of its unwavering commitment to understanding customer needs and its continuous investment in developing services that meet their evolving aspirations
PACI’s leadership and employees have made significant strides in advancing the Kuwait Mobile ID App and strengthening its e-Signature capabilities
e-Signatures form the cornerstone of completing the entire financing journey without the need to visit a branch
NBK has long been the launchpad for milestones that have reshaped banking services in Kuwait



with their evolving expectations. Against this backdrop, the launch of Kuwait’s first fully integrated, end-to-end Digital Loans service represents another milestone that reflects our vision for the future of digital banking. It also reflects our commitment to continuing to support Kuwait’s digital transformation strategy by delivering advanced solutions that simplify financial services and empower customers to complete their transactions with the highest levels of efficiency, convenience, and security.”

He also extended his sincere gratitude and appreciation to PACI’s leadership and employees for their exceptional efforts to advance the Kuwait Mobile ID App and enhance its e-Signature capabilities. He noted that these important developments have further streamlined the customer’s digital journey and serve as a key enabler for institutions across various sectors to accelerate the adoption of digital transformation initiatives and deliver integrated services underpinned by digital identity and electronic signatures, in support of Kuwait’s vision for a more advanced, efficient, and digitally enabled future.

“At NBK, we have worked to redefine the banking finance experience in Kuwait through a seamless digital journey that places customers at the centre of every step. Today, customers can complete the entire financing journey through their mobile phones, from submitting the application and uploading the required documents to providing their e-Signature and finalizing all procedures,

anytime and anywhere, with the highest levels of convenience, flexibility, and security. This service represents a transformative shift in how customers access financing, aligning with their evolving expectations, changing lifestyles, and increasing reliance on digital channels,” he added.

“This achievement builds on our sustained investment in developing our digital ecosystem, which has resulted in the launch of a range of innovative solutions that have advanced the banking experience in Kuwait. These span mobile banking services and fully digital account opening, the launch of Weyay as Kuwait’s first digital bank, instant credit cards against blocked balances, and innovative digital savings solutions, culminating today in Kuwait’s first fully integrated Digital Loans experience,” Al-Othmannoted.

Al-Othman also underscored the importance of e-Signatures to the success of the service, stating: “e-Signatures are one of the key pillars of this service, enabling customers to approve documents and complete their procedures securely and with full legal validity. This helps accelerate application processing and provides a more seamless and efficient experience. Following the recent enhancements to e-Signature services through the Kuwait Mobile ID App, customers can now complete their transactions more conveniently, anytime and anywhere, while maintaining the highest standards of security and reliability.”

He explained that the importance of e-Signatures extends beyond enhancing procedural efficiency, as they also provide customers with greater flexibility and convenience, enabling them to meet their financing needs quickly and easily while reducing reliance on paper-based transactions and conventional branch visits.”

Concluding his remarks, Al-Othman said: “NBK has long been the driving force behind many of the milestones that have reshaped banking services in Kuwait. Today, we continue this legacy with the launch of Kuwait’s first fully integrated Digital Loans experience. We view this achievement as another milestone in our ongoing journey of innovation and investment in advanced technologies, enabling us to deliver smarter and more efficient banking solutions, reinforce NBK’s position as an institution leading the future of banking, and provide customers with more advanced, convenient, and flexible banking experiences.”

NBK Mobile Banking continues to strengthen its position as one of the leading digital banking solutions in Kuwait and the region through the comprehensive banking experience it offers, combining security, convenience and innovation. Through continuous enhancements to its services and features, the application has evolved into an advanced digital banking platform that enables customers to manage a wide range of financial transactions anytime and anywhere. This reflects the Bank’s commitment to keeping pace with customers’ evolving expectations and delivering advanced digital services and benefits that underscore its steadfast commitment to innovation and excellence in the banking experience.

The Digital Loans service enables customers to apply for housing, consumer, and auto loans around the clock and from anywhere through the NBK Mobile Banking App. It delivers a seamless digital financing experience combining speed, convenience, and security, while reflecting NBK’s commitment to continuously developing innovative banking solutions that keep pace with customers’ evolving needs and future aspirations.

Weyay Bank enables digital signature via the 'KMID' app for digital loan application

Weyay Bank has announced the activation of digital signature through the “KMID” app, the official digital identity platform approved by the Public Authority for Civil Information (PACI). This milestone marks another step forward in Kuwait’s digital transformation journey and delivers a more seamless, secure, and efficient banking experience for customers.

The initiative reflects Weyay Bank’s commitment to adopting the latest digital technologies and innovative solutions that simplify banking processes and enhance customer experiences. It also supports Kuwait’s broader vision for digital transforma-

tion by providing advanced digital services that meet the evolving needs and expectations of customers.

Through the new digital signature feature, customers can securely approve and complete banking transactions and documentation using their verified digital identity on the KMID app. This development represents a significant improvement to the customer journey. Previously, updating or registering a banking signature required customers to use a dedicated self-service kiosk. Today, customers can complete the entire process digitally through the KMID app, saving time and effort while enjoying a more convenient



and flexible banking experience.

As part of this launch, Weyay Bank has integrated digital signatures into the employee digital loan application journey within its app. Eligible customers can now complete their loan applications and sign the required documents digitally, creating a fast, fully integrated, and seamless digital borrowing experience.

This enhancement reflects Weyay Bank’s ongoing commitment to delivering innovative solutions tailored to the needs of young customers, offering a banking experience that is fully digital from application submission

through to completion in a secure and convenient manner.

The introduction of digital signatures also simplifies financing procedures, reduces processing times, and improves the overall efficiency of digital banking services, aligning with the expectations of customers in today’s digital-first world.

Weyay Bank continues to invest in innovative digital solutions to provide a secure and fully integrated banking experience, further strengthening its position as one of Kuwait’s leading financial institutions driving innovation and digital transformation.

Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait Group reports strong results for H1 2026 with net profit growth of 17% to KD 37.1 million

KUWAIT CITY, July 29: Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) Group reported strong financial results for the first half of 2026, delivering growth across its key financial indicators and recording a net profit of KD 37.1 million, representing a 17% increase compared to the first half of 2025.

These results reflect the Group’s continued execution of its strategic priorities, disciplined balance sheet management, and resilient operating model, enabling ABK to deliver strong growth and profitability despite heightened geopolitical and economic uncertainty across the region.

The Group’s profitability continued to strengthen, with Return on Equity increasing to 9.98% and Earnings per Share rising to 12 fils. The improvement was supported by disciplined cost management and continued focus on operational efficiency, resulting in a cost-to-income ratio of 43.1%, outperforming both budget and prior year levels. Operating income increased by 10% to reach KD 119.22 million, while operating profit rose by 8% to KD 67.85 million.

The Group’s loans and advances portfolio reached KD 4.92 billion, representing growth of 4.40% during the first half of 2026. Customer deposits stood at KD 4.33 billion, while total assets increased to KD 7.27 billion, reflecting growth of 1.2%. Asset quality remained among the strongest in the sector, with the non-performing loan ratio maintained at a low 1.25% and provision coverage standing at a robust 340%, reflecting the Group’s prudent risk management framework and conservative approach to underwriting.

ABK Group also maintained a strong capital position, with a Capital Adequacy Ratio (CAR) of 18.03%, while shareholders’ equity increased by 9.80% to KD 697.56 million.

Commenting on the results, Mr. Talal Mohammed Reza Behbehani, Chairman of ABK Group, expressed his satisfaction with the Group’s financial performance during the first half of 2026, noting, “The results clearly demonstrate the success of our strategy to maintain sustainable growth while remaining agile in responding to the rapidly evolving regional and global landscape.”

He added that ABK Group achieved balanced growth across its key financial indicators, supported by the continued expansion of its core operations, a prudent risk management approach, and a strong focus on maintaining asset quality. He noted that these results reflect the successful execution of the Group’s strategic plans, its ability to capitalize on promising opportunities, and its commitment to enhancing the value it delivers to shareholders and all stakeholders.

Behbehani further highlighted that the Group’s continued investment in its comprehensive digital transformation strategy, coupled with the adoption of artificial intelligence technologies across its operations, has significantly enhanced operational efficiency. During the first half of the year, the Group introduced a number of advanced digital solutions, including ChatGPT Enterprise, Microsoft Copilot, and Robotic Process Automation (RPA). It also continued to enhance its mobile banking application with new features designed to deliver an exceptional customer experience, meet evolving customer expectations, and keep pace with developments in the banking industry. These initiatives have contributed to improving productivity and elevating the banking experience for customers across all segments. He added that the coming period will see the launch of additional innovative services aimed at further strengthening the Bank’s competitive position in the local market.

Strong Credit Ratings and Industry Recognition

Behbehani noted that the Group maintained its strong credit ratings of A from Fitch Ratings and A2 from Moody’s, reaffirming the strength of its financial position, its resilience in navigating evolving market conditions, and its ability to meet the regulatory and supervisory standards governing the banking sector in Kuwait.

He added that the Bank also received numerous awards and industry recognitions in acknowledgment of its excellence in digital banking, the continuous enhancement of its mobile banking application, and its innovative banking solutions.

Behbehani extended his appreciation to the Board of Directors, the Executive Management, and all employees for their dedication and contributions to the successful execution of ABK Group’s strategic plans and the strengthening of its leading position in the banking sector. He also expressed his gratitude for the continued support provided by the regulatory authorities in Kuwait, Egypt, and the United Arab Emirates, commending their ongoing efforts to foster the development of the banking industry.

Successful Execution of Strategic Plans

For his part, Mr. Giel-Jan M. Van Der Tol, Group Chief Executive Officer of



■ **Talal Behbehani**, Chairman: The results clearly demonstrate the success of our strategy to maintain sustainable growth



■ **Giel-Jan M. Van Der Tol**, Group CEO: The Group’s enhanced performance during the regional fluctuations reflects our successful ability to effectively adapt to developments

H1 2026 Highlights

- Operating Profit up 8% to KD 67.85 million
- Return on Equity improved to 9.98%
- Earnings per Share increased to 12 fils
- Cost-to-Income Ratio improved to 43.1%
- NPL Ratio maintained at a low 1.25%
- Provision Coverage Ratio strengthened to 340%
- Capital Adequacy Ratio reached 18.03%
- Strong credit ratings maintained from Fitch (A) and Moody’s (A2)

ABK Group, said that

“The Group’s performance during the first half of 2026 reflects the successful execution of our strategic plans and highlights the strength and diversification of our business model. We achieved double-digit profit growth while improving returns, strengthening capital, maintaining excellent asset quality and delivering results that exceeded our internal targets despite the challenging regional operating environment.”

He added, “We continued to deliver growth across our key financial indicators, driven by strong operating performance and the continued trust of our customers. At the same time, we remained focused on executing our digital transformation strategy by further strengthening our technology infrastructure and introducing innovative, real-time payment solutions that provide our customers with a seamless, secure, and convenient banking experience.”

Alfouz Draws and ABK Build

Van Der Tol highlighted that the first half of 2026 marked the return of the Alfouz draw account, including the completion of postponed draws to announce winners of a range of cash prizes. The Bank also relaunched the account with a refreshed proposition, introducing an enhanced prize draw structure, a new semi-annual draw, and increased prize values. These enhancements reflect ABK’s commitment to strengthening customer confidence, rewarding loyalty, encouraging a culture of saving, and reinforcing its position as the preferred banking partner in Kuwait.

He further noted that, during the first half of the year, the Bank launched



ABK Build, the first platform of its kind in the Kuwaiti market, designed to support customers embarking on residential construction projects. The platform offers customers access exclusive discounts, expert guidance, and end-to-end support throughout every stage of their building journey, from initial planning through to project completion. This is achieved in collaboration with trusted partners across multiple sectors and in line with the highest market standards.

Advancing Sustainability

Van Der Tol reaffirmed the Bank’s commitment to embedding Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) principles into every aspect of its operations, making sustainability an integral part of its day-to-day business. This commitment was reflected in the publication of the Group’s sixth annual Sustainability Report, which demonstrates ABK’s adherence to international best practices and highlights the continued progress achieved across the Group.

He added that the Sustainability Report was prepared in accordance with the latest Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) Standards and aligns with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Kuwait Vision 2035.

Growth in the UAE and Egypt

Van Der Tol noted that ABK-UAE was granted a licence by the Abu Dhabi Real Estate Centre (ADREC) to provide Real Estate Escrow Agency Services, becoming the first Kuwaiti and GCC bank to offer this service to customers in Abu Dhabi. This milestone reflects the Bank’s growing presence and the strong level of trust it has earned in the UAE market.

He further highlighted that ABK-Egypt continued to strengthen its branch network with the opening of a new branch at East Hub Mall in Madinat, East Cairo, as part of its ambitious strategy to expand its geographic footprint and enhance the delivery of banking services across Egypt.

The Group continues to benefit from its diversified regional footprint, with Egypt and the UAE contributing positively to earnings growth and supporting the Group’s ability to generate sustainable returns across different economic cycles and markets.

Investing in People

Van Der Tol stressed that the Bank continues to invest in developing its employees through a wide range of training programmes delivered in collaboration with leading specialised institutions across various banking disciplines. The Bank also continues to enhance its employee value proposition, further strengthening its ability to attract and retain top banking talent.

He added that ABK remains committed to fostering an ideal work environment that promotes productivity and enables the continuous enhancement of customer service.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

Van Der Tol noted that, during the first half of the year, the Bank sponsored and supported numerous health, educational, sports and humanitarian initiatives as part of its CSR programme, which continues to evolve to maximise its positive impact and strengthen the Bank’s engagement with all segments of Kuwaiti society.

He continued, “We remain firmly committed to strengthening the protection of our customers’ data as a core pillar of our ongoing participation in the Central Bank of Kuwait and Kuwait Banking Association’s ‘Let’s Be Aware’ banking awareness campaign.”

During the first half of the year, ABK enhanced its Customer Protection Guide to further raise awareness of customers’ rights and responsibilities when dealing with banks. The Bank also continued to improve the banking solutions it offers across all customer segments, while promoting digital services, financial literacy, savings and investment solutions, and services tailored for people with disabilities.

In parallel, ABK promotes educational content across our branch network, website and mobile banking application to reach customers through multiple channels.

Van Der Tol concluded by affirming ABK’s continued commitment to the campaign to ensure the dissemination of noteworthy banking information and to support in creating an inclusive and financially aware society.



The 2025 sustainability report highlighted the bank's CSR programs

KFH reinforces CSR leadership through strategic sustainable initiatives

KUWAIT CITY, July 29: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) Head of Group Public Relations and Media, Yousef Abdullah Al-Ruwaieh, emphasized that KFH continued to lead in social responsibility and sustainability. By expanding programs across education, healthcare, environmental protection, youth empowerment, entrepreneurship, innovation, sports, and volunteerism, the bank deepens its positive impact on community development.

World's Best Islamic Bank for CSR
Al-Ruwaieh highlighted that KFH's recognition as the World's Best Islamic Bank for CSR 2025 by Global Finance marks a major milestone, reflecting its leadership and commitment to high sustainability and community service standards locally and globally.

He added that the Bank's 2025 Sustainability Report highlights over 200 community programs executed under a vision to drive lasting positive impact and community development across multiple sectors with local and international partners.

Broad development impact through strategic initiatives

Al-Ruwaieh highlighted KFH's impactful community initiatives and major social responsibility investments across various societal segments. These efforts reinforce the bank's status as a leading CSR model in the sector and a key partner in achieving sustainable development.

- Among the Bank's most notable initiatives are:
- A contribution of over KD 61 million to settle debts for financially distressed individuals, restoring financial and social stability to thousands of families.
 - A contribution of nearly KD 8 million to reconstruct damaged areas in Al Mubarakiya, preserving Kuwaiti national heritage and boosting local business.
 - Provision of KD 20 million to construct 15 ambulance centers, expanding national healthcare capacity and emergency response speed.
 - Role as the lead donor to the KD 10 million government pandemic relief fund during COVID-19.
 - Support for a sustainable initiative to develop the Al Wataniya area.
 - Funding and equipping of ward 10 at the Addiction Treatment Center, expanding on the facility originally built by the Bank in 2005.
 - A donation of USD 20 million to the Kuwait Red Crescent Society for earthquake relief efforts in Turkey and Syria.
 - Strategic partnerships on community initiatives with the Kuwait Red Crescent Society, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).
 - Continued leadership in funding the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS), the national labour support program, the Institute of Banking Studies, and local community projects.



Yousef Al-Ruwaieh
Al-Ruwaieh: World's Best Islamic Bank for CSR award crowns KFH's pioneering journey in sustainable community development

Leading Environmental Sustainability

Al-Ruwaieh noted that KFH takes a comprehensive approach to environmental awareness and conservation, balancing responsible resource use with community duty. Through its "Keep it Green" campaign, the Bank runs integrated initiatives to raise environmental awareness and promote sustainable practices. These include cleaning beaches and islands, planting trees on a large scale, and leading awareness programs for school and university students.

Among the Bank's notable achievements is collaborating with the Green Vision team to plant over 12,000 trees across 25 native species, expanding vegetation cover and protecting biodiversity in Kuwait's desert environment. KFH also organized community walking initiatives with over 10,000 participants, directing all proceeds toward afforestation projects.

Environmental Sustainability Award

Al-Ruwaieh noted that KFH strengthened partnerships with the Environment Public Authority and Ministry of Social Affairs, organized student environmental competitions with Kuwait University, and established the annual Environmental Sustainability Award at the College of Engineering and Petroleum to drive sustainable development projects.

Digital Initiatives

Al-Ruwaieh noted that KFH's sustainability efforts feature the Digital Print initiative to cut paper use through digital operations, alongside a water conservation program using Atmospheric Water Generator



Sustainability Report 2025

technology to turn air moisture into water for future resource preservation.

At the international level, KFH joined the Global Takaful Alliance, in cooperation with UNDP, to provide Islamic Takaful insurance and empower nearly 100 million farmers worldwide, reflecting the Bank's global commitment to sustainable development.

Empowering Youth and Investing in the Future

As part of KFH's vision, Al Ruwaiehsaid that the Bank prioritizes empowering society through education, innovation, and national youth development. He highlighted the Bank's long strategic partnership with CODED Academy as a model for advancing tech education. Under the CODED Juniors initiative, over 1,700 children have gained programming and creative skills across nearly 50 training programs.

KFH Academy

KFH also builds professional talent through KFH Academy, which delivers advanced training in public relations and media, digital transformation, and business administration to prepare young professionals for the labor market and boost their career readiness.

Supporting Education and Academic Cooperation

The Bank continues to advance education through its strategic partnership in the "Ma'aAttalaba" program to highlight young talent. In cooperation with the Ministry of Education, KFH also hosted the largest ceremony honoring about 140 top performing high school students in Sciences, Arts, special education, and international award winners.

Al-Ruwaieh emphasized KFH's ongoing support for education, student activities, and innovation by expanding partnerships with Kuwait University, Abdullah Al Salem University, Gulf University for Science and Technology, the College of Engineering and Petroleum, alongside other public and private higher education institutions, while supporting student clubs that create impactful initiatives for youth.

He added that KFH continues as the primary supporter of students at Kuwait University's College of Engineering and Petroleum and maintains its strategic partnership with the Engineering Design Exhibition.

Talented Kuwait youth

Al-Ruwaieh affirmed that KFH continuously supports talented Kuwaiti youth by developing their skills and sponsoring their participation in major global athletic, cultural, and social competitions through the KFH Strategic Partnerships initiative.

Promoting Financial Literacy

To enhance financial literacy, KFH held seminars and workshops for hundreds of students, promoting responsible money management, saving, and investment.

Sustainable Partnerships

Al-Ruwaieh credited the Bank's broad community impact to strategic partnerships with government bodies, nonprofits, and international institutions, which maximize the effectiveness and long-term sustainability of its initiatives.

"Increase Good Deeds in Ramadan" Campaign

KFH continues to implement impactful seasonal community programs, most notably its "Increase Good Deeds in Ramadan" campaign, which included distributing thousands of Iftar meals, supporting underprivileged families, organizing health, sports, and awareness activities, as well as Quran competitions and various community initiatives serving different segments of society.

Supporting Innovation

Reflecting its commitment to technological advancement and innovation, KFH continued its participation in the NEXUS Technology Exhibition 2025, one of Kuwait's leading platforms supporting innovation and entrepreneurship.

Digital Sustainability Award

KFH introduced the Digital Sustainability Award to guide Kuwait Codes participants toward building practical skills for eco-friendly apps that meet sustainability standards.

Positive Impact

In conclusion, Al-Ruwaieh reaffirmed KFH's commitment to investing in high-impact initiatives and expanding partnerships across government, academic, community, and international organizations. This aligns with the Bank's vision as a leading financial institution driving sustainable community development in accordance with international best practices.

General index down 24.38 pts

Kuwait bourse edges lower



Boursa Kuwait

KUWAIT CITY, July 29, (KUNA): Boursa Kuwait ended trading lower on Wednesday, with the General Index declining 24.38 points, or 0.28 percent, to close at 8,741.71 points.

A total of 257.9 million shares changed hands through 17,957 cash transactions, generating a turnover of KD 74.5 million (approximately USD 242.4 million).

The Main Market Index bucked the broader trend, rising 18.45 points, or 0.21 percent, to 8,763.99 points. Trading in the index totaled 149.5 million shares across 8,476 transactions, with a value of KD

28.6 million (approximately USD 93 million).

Meanwhile, the Premier Market Index retreated 34.78 points, or 0.38 percent, to settle at 9,190.70 points. A total of 108.3 million shares were traded through 9,481 transactions, valued at KD 45.8 million (approximately USD 149 million).

The Main 50 Index also finished lower, shedding 6.96 points, or 0.07 percent, to close at 10,106.50 points. Trading volume reached 112.2 million shares through 6,133 cash transactions, with a total value of KD 22.8 million (approximately USD 74.1 million).

WTI jumps to \$83.30

Oil surge on Iran strike, then pares gains to 3%

NEW YORK, July 29, (Xinhua): U.S. Crude oil futures prices surged around 5 percent late Tuesday after the U.S. Central Command claimed that U.S. forces intercepted an attack from Iran in the Middle East.

The West Texas Intermediate (WTI) for September delivery gained 5.1 percent to 83.30 U.S. dollars per barrel at one point. Gains in WTI crude oil futures prices later narrowed to around 3 percent.

"At 5:45 p.m. ET today, Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps forces launched multiple ballistic missiles from Iran in an attempted surprise attack on U.S. forces based in the Middle East," the U.S. Central Command wrote on X.

"All Iranian missiles were successfully intercepted," it said, adding

"U.S. forces remain vigilant and at a high state of readiness."

Both WTI and Brent crude oil futures for September delivery extended losses and dropped over 4 percent upon settlement on Tuesday.

The pause in attacks between the United States and Iran weighed on oil prices in the last few days, with investors eying the restart of bilateral negotiations and the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz.

Optimism in the market led to a deep drop in crude oil futures prices in the previous three sessions.

The risk premium in oil prices could be quickly reignited and push prices back above 100 dollars per barrel, according to Nikos Tzabouras, a market analyst with trading platform Tradu.

CBK issues KD 250 million Treasury Bonds, Tawarruq

KUWAIT CITY, July 29, (KUNA): The Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) announced Wednesday the issuance of Treasury Bonds and Public Debt Tawarruq, acting on behalf of the Ministry of Finance, with a total value

of KD 250 million (about USD 825 million).

The CBK said in a statement that the five-year issuance was offered through a competitive auction at a uniform yield of 3.250 percent.

US futures flat to slightly higher

World shares are mixed & South Korea's Kospi share index falls 6%, while oil gain

TOKYO, July 29, (AP): World shares were mixed while South Korea's Kospi stock index dropped 6% Wednesday as doubts over massive investments in artificial intelligence once again led investors to dump chipmakers' shares.

In early European trading, Germany's DAX lost 0.4% to 25,357.69, while the CAC 40 in Paris skidded 0.8% to 8,395.21. Britain's FTSE 100 edged 0.1% lower to 10,865.48.

The future for the S&P 500 gained 0.2% while that for the Dow Jones Industrial Average was little changed.

The latest rout in Seoul was led by a plunge in shares in chipmaker SK Hynix after its operating profit in the last quarter fell short of analysts' forecasts even though it soared nearly sixfold.

The Kospi fell more than 8% earlier in the day, but closed 6% lower, at 5,663.24. The benchmark only recently had topped 9,000 before bouncing back down to its lowest level since early April.

SK Hynix sank 9.4% while shares in Samsung Electronics dropped 4.8%.

Markets have been stricken by spates of selling of AI-related stocks as investors react to various developments including progress in China toward cheaper, advanced AI models.

Elsewhere in Asia, Tokyo's Nikkei 225 lost 1.5% to 61,434.19, giving up early gains. Shares in chipmaking equipment maker Tokyo Electron sank 10.6% and chip measuring and inspection

systems maker Lasertec Corp. fell 8.3%.

Japanese stocks were mixed in their reaction to a major earthquake that rattled the southern Kyushu region a day earlier. A previous earthquake in the region caused severe damage and disruptions for automakers and other manufacturers.

Shares in Nippon Paper, owner of a mill in the disaster zone that was severely damaged by Tuesday's quake, fell 2.1%.

Taiwan's Taixex shed 3.8%.

The Shanghai Composite index reversed early losses to pick up 0.4%. It closed at 3,830.02.

Hong Kong's Hang Seng gained 2% to 25,807.92.

In Australia the S&P/ASX 200 added 1% to 9,038.60 after the government reported that inflation has remained moderate, relieving pressure on the central bank to raise interest rates.

India's Sensex added 1.1%.

In other trading, oil prices that had eased from the two-month high that they hit last week rebounded as a brief pause in fighting in the Iran war was shattered. Jordan's air defenses intercepted five missiles launched from Iran early Wednesday, the country's military said, hours after the U.S. military said it had knocked down an Iranian missile barrage launched against American forces in the Middle East.

The calm persisted for about three days following weeks of escalation over the strategic Strait

of Hormuz, the Persian Gulf waterway and narrow chokepoint through which 20% of the world's traded oil normally flows.

Brent crude, the international standard, jumped 3.3% to \$84.77 a barrel.

Benchmark U.S. crude gained 3.4% to \$81.93 a barrel.

On Tuesday, shares were mixed on Wall Street. The S&P 500 added 0.2% and the Dow industrials jumped 1%. The Nasdaq composite slipped 0.2%.

The majority of U.S. stocks rose after more companies delivered stronger profits for the spring than analysts expected. Coca-Cola climbed 5% after its revenue rose 7%.

Expectations for stellar earnings reports are weighing particularly heavily on stocks of chipmakers and other companies that have been huge winners from the boom in artificial-intelligence technology.

Micron Technology's stock came into the day having more than tripled for the year following gangbuster growth, but its shares sank 8.9%.

Other tech companies helping to keep the market in check were Advanced Micro Devices, down 8.1%, and Applied Materials, down 7.8%.

In currency trading early Wednesday, the U.S. dollar slipped to 163.54 Japanese yen from 163.81 yen. The euro cost \$1.1395, up from \$1.1391.

US cites national security risks in ban on Chinese humanoid robots and robot dogs

HONG KONG, July 29, (AP): The Federal Communications Commission in the U.S. said on Tuesday it would ban the import of foreign-made humanoid robots in a move that targets China, arguing they pose a national security risk.

The decision could strain bilateral relations as the technology race between the two world leaders advances. China makes substantially more humanoid robots than the U.S. and other competitors, and analysts estimate that Chinese humanoid robots' global market share has reached roughly 85%.

The FCC's ban includes new imports of humanoid robots, quadrupeds - often referred to as four-legged robot dogs - as well as foreign-made power inverters.

In making the decision, the FCC said these advanced robots produced in foreign countries pose supply chain vulnerabilities to the U.S. as well as cybersecurity and national security risks.

FCC chairperson Brendan Carr said in a statement that the move was to "secure America's critical supply chains."

The United States has been taking steps to keep Chinese technology out with recent bans on imports, including of Chinese-made drones. The U.S. is also weighing restrictions on Chinese open-source artificial intelligence models, at a time when Chinese AI is rapidly gaining ground.

"It's a steady drumbeat of potential flashpoints heading into (the) Trump-Xi summit planned for September," said Samm Sacks, a senior fellow at the New America think tank focused on Chinese technology policies. U.S. President Donald Trump is expected to meet Chinese leader Xi Jinping in September

following their mid-May meeting in Beijing.

Last year, China accounted for around 85% of humanoid deployments globally, according to Barclays. Morgan Stanley analysts forecast China's humanoid robot market could reach \$15 billion by 2030.

"Chinese manufacturers have been scaling production and reducing costs faster than most overseas competitors," said analyst Kangyuxiao Li at Morningstar.

"Restricting their access to the U.S. removes an important future market and protects U.S. developers from potential price competition," he said. "However, it will not materially slow China's overall humanoid development, given the size of its domestic manufacturing base and opportunities in other export markets."

Of the around 15,000 humanoid robots shipped globally in 2025, Unitree and AGIBOT, two of China's largest advanced robotics companies, each shipped more than 5,000, while their U.S. counterparts like Tesla and Figure AI each shipped a few hundred or less, according to the technology research and advisory group Omdia.

When it comes to global markets, China is also targeting Europe, for example, as a key market for its advanced robots including humanoids, Omdia said.

China has pushed back and defended its technological advancements as an opportunity for the world, rather than a threat, as countries including the U.S. raise concerns over how a "China Shock 2.0" could hurt their economies.

Net loans rise 7.6% to KD 6.3 billion

Gulf Bank records KD 27.4 million net profit in H1, increase of 14.1% compared to 2025

KUWAIT CITY, July 29: Gulf Bank K.S.C.P. announced its financial results for the first half ending 30 June 2026. The Bank reported a net profit of KD 27.4 million, an increase of KD 3.4 million or 14.1% compared to 2025 first half net profit of KD 24.0 million.

In addition, Gulf Bank recorded an operating income of KD 94.3 million for the first half of 2026, representing an increase of 2.7% compared to the same period of last year.

As for the second quarter ending 30 June 2026, Gulf Bank reported a net profit of KD 18.0 million and an operating income of KD 49.2 million, both representing an increase of 22.6% and 2.9% respectively, when compared to the same period of the prior year.

Financial Performance

The improvement in net profit for the first half of 2026 is attributed to the increase in net interest income of 1.0% coupled with a strong growth in non-interest income of 9.6%, specifically in net fees and commissions, that has reached KD 14.7 million representing an increase of 13.3% for the first half of 2026 when compared to the same period of last year.

However, this improvement in operating income has been partially offset by an increase of 8.0% in operating expenses. In addition, the improvement in total provisions and impairment losses, which declined by KD 4.8 million or 24.6% year-on-year, has contributed to the enhancement of net profit for the Bank for the first half of 2026.

As for asset quality, the non-performing loans (NPL) ratio was 1.2% as of 30 June 2026, compared to the prior year level of 1.4%. Additionally, the Bank continues to have significant non-performing loans coverage ratio of 312% including total provisions and collaterals.

Total credit provisions as of 30 June 2026 reached KD 251million whereas IFRS 9 accounting requirements (i.e., ECL or expected credit losses) were KD 177million.

As a result, the Bank has a healthy excess provision level of KD 74 million, above and beyond what is required by the IFRS9 accounting requirements.

Compared to 31 December 2025, total assets increase by 5.1% to KD 8.1 billion, whereas net loans and advances increased by 7.6% to KD 6.3 billion.

On the other hand, total deposits stood at KD 6.0 billion and total Shareholders' equity reached KD 846 million.

The Bank's regulatory Tier 1 ratio of 13.8% was 2.8% above the regulatory minimum of 11% and the Capital Adequacy Ratio (CAR) of 15.8% was 2.8% above the regulatory minimum of 13%.

Economic Resilience

Commenting on the financial results for the first half of 2026, Gulf Bank Chairman Mr. Ahmad Mohammad Al-Bahar stated: "We are pleased with Gulf Bank's performance during the first half of 2026, with net profit reaching KD 27.4 million, representing a positive in-



Ahmad Mohammad Al-Bahar:

- We are proud of the Bank's performance in the first half of the year, despite a challenging operating environment and regional tensions.
- Our results reflect the strength of our banking business, the resilience of our financial position and consistent execution.
- Continued sovereign and domestic debt issuances strengthen funding flexibility and deepen the local debt market.
- Looking ahead, Kuwait's development agenda and capital spending plans provide a supportive backdrop for economic growth.



Sami Mahfouz:

- Our strong growth in loans and advances reflects our ability to grow the business while maintaining discipline.
- The decline in provisions and impairment losses highlights the quality of our lending portfolio and risk management practices.
- Total assets surpassed KD 8 billion, reflecting the continued expansion of our core banking activities.
- We continued to advance our readiness for the transition to Islamic banking, positioning Gulf Bank for its next phase of growth.

crease of 14.1% compared to the prior year.

"This performance is particularly encouraging given the challenging operating environment and regional tensions witnessed since the beginning of the year.

"The results reflect the strength of our core banking business, the resilience of our financial position, and our consistent approach to execution".

He added: "The first half of 2026 reinforced the importance of maintaining strong fundamentals and a prudent approach to growth. Despite ongoing regional challenges, Kuwait's economy remained broadly stable, supported by the Central Bank of Kuwait's decision to maintain the benchmark discount rates unchanged during the period, which supported economic stability and provided greater visibility for businesses and financial institutions.

"At the same time, the continued sovereign debt issuances both domestically and internationally represent an important step in strengthening funding flexibility and developing the local debt market. This is positive for the local economy, as it supports fiscal planning, enhances market depth, and provides additional investment instruments for banks and institutional investors.

"Furthermore, the recently announced State Budget for fiscal year 2026/2027 reflects the Government's commitment to capital spending, with approximately KD 3.1 billion allocated to capital projects.

"This ongoing investment in strategic infrastructure developments is expected to stimulate economic activity and create financing opportunities across the banking sector".

On the current regional developments, Mr. Al-Bahar said: "We continue to monitor geopolitical developments closely.

"While regional tensions may weigh on sentiment and business confidence, Kuwait's banking sector remains well capitalized and liquid.

"We are hopeful that current conflicts will be resolved peacefully, contributing to greater regional stability and stronger economic prospects".

Business Momentum

Commenting on the operational performance of Gulf Bank, Acting Chief Executive Officer Mr. Sami Mahfouz said: "Gulf Bank delivered strong business momentum during the first half of 2026, with net loans and advances growing by 7.6% year to date.

"This growth was achieved while maintaining a disciplined approach to risk management, reflected in a 24.6% decline in total provisions and impairment losses during the first half of 2026 compared to the same period last year.

"Together, these results demonstrate our ability to grow the business responsibly while preserving the quality of our balance sheet".

He added: "The Bank's total assets surpassed KD 8 billion, supported by continued lending activity across key segments.

"This momentum, coupled with a supportive operating environment, provides a solid found-

ation for further growth.

"In addition, we continued to expand and diversify our funding sources to support growth and strengthen the Bank funding profile. At the same time, continued project awards across infrastructure and development sectors are expected to drive demand for corporate financing.

"Combined with healthy liquidity conditions across the banking sector, these developments position us well to continue supporting our customers and capturing sustainable growth opportunities".

Mr. Mahfouz further noted: "Alongside our business growth momentum, we continued to advance our preparations for the transition to Islamic banking, subject to obtaining the required regulatory and shareholder approvals.

"During the period, work progressed across key areas including governance, products, systems and operational readiness, positioning the Bank well for the next phase of the transformation journey".

Credit Ratings

Gulf Bank's financial strength and operational resilience were affirmed by leading credit rating agencies. Fitch Ratings assigned a Long-Term Issuer Default Rating (IDR) of 'A' with a Stable Outlook, while Moody's affirmed the Bank's long-term deposits at 'A3' with a Stable Outlook. Capital Intelligence has also affirmed the Long-Term Foreign Currency rating of 'A+' with a Stable Outlook, further highlighting the Bank's stability and sound risk management practices.

Appreciation

Mr. Al-Bahar concluded: "As we look ahead to the second half of 2026, we remain focused on executing our strategic priorities and capitalizing on opportunities arising from Kuwait's ongoing development agenda. Supported by a strong financial position and disciplined approach, we remain well positioned to deliver sustainable long-term value for our shareholders. On behalf of the Board of Directors, I would like to thank our shareholders and clients for their continued confidence, our employees for their dedication, and the regulatory authorities for their continued guidance and support".

Key Financial indicators for the first Half 2026:

1. First Half 2026 net profit of KD 27.4 million, an increase of 14.1% compared to last year.
2. First Half 2026 operating income of KD 94.3 million, up 2.7% year on year.
3. Net fees and commissions increased 13.3% year on year.
4. Net loans and advances grew by 7.6% year-to-date to reach KD 6.3 billion.
5. Non-performing loan ratio as of 30June 2026 was 1.2%, with a solid non-performance loan coverage ratio of 312% including total provisions and collaterals.
6. Capital ratios as of 30June 2026, Tier 1 ratio was 13.8% and Capital Adequacy Ratio (CAR) was 15.8%.

Federal Reserve is expected to keep rates unchanged for now despite high prices

WASHINGTON, July 29, (AP): Federal Reserve policymakers are losing patience with inflation, but they may not be ready to turn their frustration into action -- not this week anyway.

Meeting in Washington Tuesday and Wednesday, the Fed is expected to keep its benchmark interest rate unchanged. Members of the central bank's rate-setting committee may not be so reluctant to act when they gather again next Sept. 15-16.

Inflation has been stuck above the Fed's 2% target for more than five years. New Fed Chair Kevin Warsh told Congress earlier this month that he had "no tolerance" for elevated inflation. Warsh is presiding over his second policy meeting this week.

Fed watchers Joseph Egelhof and Guneet Dhingra at BNP Paribas Securities say it's possible Warsh's central bank will "release the kraken" with a "shock rate hike" this week. More likely, they write, policymakers will hold off, reluctant to risk disrupting financial markets that aren't expecting a rate increase yet.

Policymakers may also want to see more economic data: On Thursday, the Commerce Department delivers the first look at April-June economic growth and it will also publish the Fed's preferred inflation measure - the personal consumption expenditures (PCE) price index - for June.

Overall, only 29% of Wall Street traders predict that the Fed will raise rates this week. But 76% foresee a rate hike in September. A month ago, only 59% of traders expected a September rate increase, according to the CME FedWatch tool.

"Policymakers' patience with high and persistent inflation is broadly exhausted, meaning there is a significant risk" of a rate hike in September, Egelhof and Dhingra wrote.

Casting uncertainty over the Fed's decision-making is the rising violence in Iran. The price of oil briefly blasted past \$100 a barrel last week on intensifying fighting. It's since settled



Federal Reserve Chairman Kevin Warsh testifies before the Senate Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs Committee to deliver the semiannual monetary policy report to congress, on Capitol Hill, Wednesday, July 15, 2026, in Washington. (AP)

down on hopes the United States and Iran can find some way to reduce tensions.

Yet early Wednesday, Jordan intercepted missiles launched from Iran early just hours after the U.S. military said it knocked down another Iranian barrage launched against American forces in the Middle East, ending a brief pause in fighting.

After the U.S. and Israel attacks on Feb. 28, Iran shut down the Strait of Hormuz - through which a fifth of the world's oil and natural gas pass. That caused the greatest

disruption in oil supplies in history and sent energy prices surging. They've since bobbed up and down depending on the ever-changing state of the conflict and negotiations to de-escalate it, but the average cost for a barrel is \$10 to \$15 more today than it was at this point last year.

Now Iranian-backed Houthi rebels from Yemen are attacking shipping in the Red Sea, attempting to stop tankers carrying Saudi Arabian oil from passing through the Bab el-Mandeb Strait.

The uncertainty puts the Fed's inflation fighters in a bind.

"Sure, it is possible that the latest rise in prices is a transient blip that will reverse in a heartbeat. Then again, it seems equally that the war with Iran will get worse, that the Strait of Hormuz and Bab al-Mandab will remain blockaded for months or longer, and that energy prices will continue to trend up," wrote Carl Weinberg, chief economist at High Frequency Economics.

"Should the (Fed) set monetary conditions on a hope that oil prices will reverse course and stay low ... or should a central bank eschew wishful thinking and do its job of minimizing the probabilities that inflation will exceed target?"

Inflation has exceeded the Fed's 2% target since early 2021 when the U.S. economy overheated as it roared back from COVID-19 lockdowns. Inflation peaked at just over 9% in mid-2022 and began to drop in the face of 11 rate hikes by the Fed in 2022 and 2023. But progress has more or less stalled.

Besides the Iran war, other factors adding to inflation pressure are President Donald Trump's tariffs on foreign goods and a surge of investment in data centers to power artificial intelligence, which is driving up the cost of computer chips and equipment and electricity.

So-called core inflation - which excludes volatile food and energy prices - cooled in June, partly because apartment rents aren't rising as fast as they had been. And a temporary drop in gasoline prices last month also helped contain overall inflation.

But several Fed policymakers have been arguing that the Fed will have to raise rates to return inflation to the 2% target.

"Sternly staring at inflation until it melts before our withering gaze is not an option," Christopher Waller, an influential member of the Fed's governing board, said in a speech this month.

Brand new webs, same broken heart



This image released by Sony Pictures shows Tom Holland in a scene from ‘Spider-Man: Brand New Day.’ (AP)

Marvel ditches mayhem for a more fragile Spider-Man

Are the ears playing tricks on us? Or does Tom Holland’s Peter Parker sound, at the beginning of “Spider-Man: Brand New Day,” like more of a native New Yorker than before?

The cadence, the sort-of Queens accent - it’s striking, as we watch Peter chat on the phone with police captain Jean DeWolff (Liza Colón-Zayas) about the crimes plaguing the city that’ll have him springing into action, because he’s a full-time Spidey now. But behind the chipper banter, there’s an underlying melancholy. Anyone who saw the last movie, of course, knows we’ve embarked on a lonely era for Spider-Man.

When we last saw Peter, he was buying the saddest takeout coffee of his web-slinging life. Girlfriend MJ was at the doughnut shop counter, but had no idea who he was, her memory of Peter erased as part of a sacrifice he’d made to save the world.

“It would be as though you never existed,” Doctor Strange had told him before casting the fateful spell at the end of “Spider-Man: No Way Home.” But Peter was resolute: “Do it.” And now, four years later, he’s paying the emotional price.

Peter lives alone in a drab apartment; beloved Aunt May, of course, died in the last film. He’s been watching via social media as MJ (Zendaya) and best buddy Ned (Jacob Batalon) have the time of their lives at MIT. That was once the dream for all three: living and learning together at school. Didn’t quite work out that way.

These early moments of “Brand New Day” set the tone for a different kind of movie. It’s not the surprise-a-minute, fan-funfest of “No Way Home,” which, in piercing open the multiverse, brought us a hugely satisfying set of reunions. There were



This image released by Sony Pictures shows Zendaya, left, and Tom Holland in a scene from ‘Spider-Man: Brand New Day.’ (AP)

all the old villains - Green Goblin, Doctor Octopus, Electro, Sandman. But nothing beat the return of our two previous Spideys, with Tobey Maguire and Andrew Garfield arriving to bond with Holland over emotional arcs, backaches and web-shooting technique.

Hard to top that, certainly. And “Brand New Day” definitely lags, sorry to say, in its third act, when approaching (and passing, handily) the two-hour mark.

There are, though, rewards of a different kind in director Destin Daniel Cretton’s film, for diehard fans who seek them. Jon Bernthal gives an appealing turn as The Punisher. Mark Ruffalo flexes his muscles here too, and Sadie Sink is a very welcome addition, although telling you more might get us banished to another uni-

verse (mere mention of her character’s name drew applause at my screening.) Likewise, there’s a funny cameo with someone who holds meetings in a public bath, but don’t ask us to elaborate.

The main reward, though, is Holland, who, a decade into the role, seems increasingly human and vulnerable. Holland is also, well, 30 years old, and the natural creases in his face signify layers to his portrayal as well.

We begin, of course, in New York City, which can be the busiest and the loneliest place, all at once. And that’s the best way to describe Peter’s newly anonymous life, on bustling streets where not a soul knows him. They just know that Spider-Man is an ace crime-fighter. Those streets have never been safer.

Alongside the usual urban

crimes, Peter’s been recruited by the Department of Damage Control - and the agency’s head, Bill Metzger (Tramell Tillman) - to help identify an invisible, insidious threat, a plotline that frankly never feels that compelling. It’s the personal stuff that keeps the attention.

To wit: At home, Peter’s been writing a letter to MJ, telling her the story of their love. Then one day he sees Ned, newly graduated from MIT, and follows him to his new apartment, where, wouldn’t ya know, he rooms with MJ. She’s just turned down a job, telling Ned: “Something is just telling me that I’m waiting for something great.”

But is it Peter? MJ does have a new boyfriend. Seeing that, a dejected Peter heads home, letter undelivered.

Don’t we all want to see Spidey

and MJ back together, swinging joyfully around town? Obviously, we can’t tell you what happens between them. Or much of anything else. Such is the challenge - there are more sticky spoilers in Spidey films than there are sticky Spidey webs.

But speaking of those webs ... things start changing, strangely, in Peter’s body. Suddenly, the webs start generating organically, for one thing - à la Maguire’s Peter. And there are blinding headaches. It’s actually a DNA imbalance.

Director Cretton (“Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings”) puts his Marvel experience to good use here, and weaves nicely together a set of subplots - including telepathy and possession - that keep the film moving, though 20-some minutes could easily have been trimmed from the denouement.

The urban cityscapes are lovely, as Spidey swings through the Big Apple. Holland, though, is best in close-up, with the hood off, showing time and again how his is a newly grown Spider-Man.

The story ends on a note of community and interreliance; nobody can go it alone, the message goes. This is driven home nicely in one final image, a simple, sweet handshake with a most unexpectedly poignant punch. After a quarter-century worth of movies, “Spider-Man” still has surprises up its sleeve.

“Spider-Man: Brand New Day,” a Columbia Pictures release, has been rated PG-13 by the Motion Picture Association “for sequences of action/violence and some language.” Running time: 145 minutes. Two and a half stars out of four. (AP)



This image released by Sony Pictures shows Tom Holland, left, and Mark Ruffalo in a scene from ‘Spider-Man: Brand New Day.’ (AP)



Event signage appears above the red carpet at the 77th annual Golden Globe Awards, Sunday, Jan. 5, 2020, in Beverly Hills, Calif. (AP)

HFFPA claims fraud in Globes takeover

LOS ANGELES, July 29, (AP) — Members of the Hollywood Foreign Press, which founded and for decades owned the Golden Globe Awards, have sued Penske Media Corporation and others, alleging they engaged in fraud to acquire the valuable awards show in an attempt to create an entertainment industry monopoly.

The lawsuit filed in federal court in California on Tuesday alleges that Penske Media and owner Jay Penske colluded with holding company Eldridge Industries and its CEO Todd Boehly to fuel a backlash and boycott against the Globes to devalue it and acquire it, and to deceive the HFFPA about a sale they were pressured into accepting.

“This case arises from a clandestine scheme to fraudulently acquire the prestigious and valuable 80-year-old Golden Globe Awards,” the lawsuit says, “and exert monopolistic control over the Hollywood

trades, awards, and advertising markets, all in violation of state and federal unfair competition and antitrust laws.”

It alleges Boehly and Eldridge hid the involvement of Penske in the 2023 deal from the HFFPA board, which never would have approved it if they had known of it. Penske Media’s assets include Variety, Deadline, The Hollywood Reporter, Rolling Stone, Billboard and Dick Clark Productions, which owns or produces several awards shows including the American Music Awards and is now part owner of the Globes.

The lawsuit says the HFFPA members were promised lifetime Golden Globes tickets and voting privileges, along with other perks, which Penske reneged on by attaching unworkable conditions. And it says the buyers infiltrated the HFFPA leadership to push through the deal.

A representative of the Golden Globes’ current owners said in a statement that the lawsuit “continues the absurdity and irrationality that the industry has come to expect from the defunct organization formerly known as the HFFPA.”

The Golden Globes, long treasured as a glitzy, champagne-soaked opening of Hollywood’s awards season, has had a turbulent 2020s full of lawsuits and public controversies. In 2021, a Los Angeles Times investigation revealed the group had only one Black member.

That brought a public outcry and boycott that led to NBC refusing to air the awards in 2022. The lawsuit claims that Boehly and Penske “surreptitiously instigated” the boycott and used Penske’s publications to fuel it.

After the 2023 acquisition and reorganization of the Globes, the show got a new broadcast home on CBS.

‘Bone Cancer’ highlights importance of early diagnosis, latest treatment methods

‘Be Strong’ Team and WCSS organize forum to raise bone cancer awareness

By Inaas Awadh
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, July 29: The ‘Be Strong’ Team, in collaboration with the Women’s Cultural and Social Society (WCSS), organized its 86th awareness forum titled, “Bone Cancer,” with the participation of several consultants and specialist doctors.

The forum is aimed at raising public awareness about the disease, highlighting the importance of early diagnosis, the latest treatment methods, and ways to manage the associated pain.

Awareness Ambassador, Founder and President of the ‘Be Strong’ Team Laila Jamal indicated that the forum is held in July, which is designated globally as Bone Cancer (Sarcoma) Awareness Month.

She stated that bone cancer may not receive the same level of public attention as some other types of cancer despite the importance of raising awareness about it. She revealed that the symptoms of the disease are similar to those of bone pain and rheumatism, hence, the importance of awareness and early detection.

She added that the August forum will be for raising awareness about leukemia and the latest treatments, especially for children.

Meanwhile, WCSS Treasurer Dr. Fajr Al-Husaini, who also heads the health program, indicated that the forum is part of the ongoing collaboration between the society and the team to promote health awareness within the community.

She said bone cancer requires intensified public awareness, emphasizing



A photo from the event.

Photo by Samer Shqair

that prevention begins with adopting a healthy lifestyle that includes proper nutrition, physical activity, and understanding risk factors, as well as the importance of consulting a doctor if symptoms appear.

Dr. Ashraf Youssef, a consultant orthopedic surgeon, confirmed that bone tumors can be benign or malignant, and their nature is only determined after a medical examination and the necessary tests. He stressed that early diagnosis significantly contributes to easing treatment and improving lifestyle.

He added that the most common types of primary bone cancer are osteosarcoma and chondrosarcoma, disclosing that the disease constitutes less than one percent of all cancers.

Dr. Tariq Rushdi, a consultant orthopedic surgeon, stressed that July is an important month for raising awareness about bone cancer and sarcoma. He said the forum aims to educate the community about early symptoms, methods of diagnosis and treatment.

He explained that bone cancer is divided into two main types: the first originates in the bones themselves, while the second results from metastasis (the spread of cancer cells from another organ to the bones). He stated that each type requires a different approach for diagnosis, treatment and prognosis.

Dr. Hussein Behbehani, a senior anesthesiologist and pain management specialist at Al-Razi Orthopedic Hospital, disclosed that his participation in the forum focused on managing pain associated with bone cancer. He added that the role of a pain physician extends beyond prescribing painkillers, as it includes improving the quality of life of patients and enabling them to lead a normal life.

He indicated that bone cancer can be a primary tumor originating in the bones, but in many cases, it results from metastasis (the spread of cancer from other organs such as the breast, prostate or colon).

Uganda declares itself free of Ebola as Congo continues to struggle with it

KAMPALA, Uganda, July 29, (AP): Authorities in Uganda declared the East Africa nation free of Ebola on Tuesday following the discharge of the country’s last patient in mid-June, a delicate milestone as the virus continues to plague neighboring Congo.

Uganda has maintained since the outset that its cases were linked to the larger outbreak in eastern Congo’s remote province of Ituri, which borders Uganda. The first cases in Uganda were Congolese who crossed the border to seek treatment for an unknown illness before it was known they had Ebola, health authorities have said.

After what health officials believe was weeks of transmission, Congo announced its outbreak on May 15, the same day that Uganda confirmed two Ebola cases - including a man who had already died.

While a total of 20 cases were reported in Uganda, health authorities say there is currently no indication of further spread within the country.

The last patient was released June 16, and Ugandan authorities have waited the World Health Organization-recommended 42 days - or two incubation cycles for Ebola - to declare the country free of the disease.

“Uganda’s 2026 Ebola outbreak arose from a fully documented importation event,” unlike previous outbreaks in the country, the Ugandan Health Ministry said in a statement Tuesday.

It was now possible to declare Uganda free of Ebola after “all identified contacts were institutionally



A health worker, wearing protective gear, stands outside the Ebola Treatment Center at the Bunia General Hospital in Ituri, Congo on July 22. (AP)

quarantined and completed the mandatory 21-day follow-up without evidence of further transmission,” the statement said. “Enhanced surveillance has detected no unexplained community transmission.”

The Bundibugyo type of Ebola virus responsible for the outbreak has no approved vaccine or treatment. The region’s outbreak has been declared a global health emergency.

Ugandan health authorities have experience in acting quickly to address Ebola outbreaks. After the confirmation of Ebola cases in Uganda in May, the president urged Ugandans to “stop shaking hands,” and ordered the postponement of an annual religious event that attracts thousands of pilgrims

- from Congo and elsewhere - who converge around a Catholic shrine just outside the Ugandan capital, Kampala, in June.

Other measures included the suspension of all public transportation and flights between Uganda and Congo, where the outbreak remains worrisome.

Confirmed cases in Congo have reached 3,262, its Health Ministry said in an overnight update. Data by Congolese health authorities showed that 1,437 patients have died, in what officials have said is the fastest Ebola outbreak on record.

The Ebola case number in Congo is likely to top the previous highest toll in the country in the next few days. That outbreak lasted two years, while this one is only 10 weeks in.

Only the 2014-2016 outbreak in West Africa, considered the worst in history, has a higher toll, with 28,000 cases and more than 11,000 deaths.

The speed of transmission in the current outbreak comes amid concerns from residents that many communities in the affected provinces are either unreachable or have been abandoned by responders in recent days over safety concerns amid attacks from angry residents and rebels.

Tracing and isolating Ebola contacts is seen as key to stopping the spread of the disease, which usually manifests as hemorrhagic fever.

A family of fruit bats is believed to be the natural hosts of the viruses that cause Ebola, according to the World Health Organization. Ebola is spread by contact with the bodily fluids of



This photo provided by NASA shows Kieran Wilson, LINK’s principal investigator, and Hunter Robertson, a space systems engineer, both at Katalyst Space, standing next to their spacecraft inside the SES (Space Environment Simulator) at NASA’s Goddard Space Flight Center in Greenbelt, Md, April 17, 2026, ahead of thermal vacuum testing. (AP)

Mission to rescue NASA’s telescope runs into own trouble

The spacecraft rushing to the rescue of an aging and sinking NASA telescope has run into its own problem.

Katalyst Space Technologies said Tuesday that its Link satellite is experiencing thruster problems and has gone into an uncontrollable spin that is disrupting communication.

The trouble struck over the weekend, three weeks after the three-armed robotic spacecraft blasted into orbit.

The startup company said it’s working nonstop to get Link back in action so it can capture Swift and boost the telescope to a higher orbit. Swift will crash back to Earth this fall without help. NASA is paying \$30 million for the rescue effort, which was thrown together in under a year.

Launched in 2004, Swift is descending faster than expected because of recent solar activity. It needs a lift as soon as possible in order to continue scanning the

universe for some of the biggest explosions, including gamma ray bursts and exploded stars. Scientific observations are on hold until then.

Neither Katalyst nor NASA is giving up hope. All of Link’s other major subsystems appear to be doing fine, according to the company.

“The mission remains active and we continue to believe that with these changes, Link has a viable path to rendezvous with Swift,” Katalyst said in a statement. (AP)



A firefighter monitors a firing operation while battling a wildfire called the Bench Fire in Warm Springs, Ore., July 25, 2026. (AP)

Global burning oddly decreasing

Wildfires more extreme in Europe, N.America

WASHINGTON, July 29, (AP): It seems as if the world is afire this summer. But even as wildfires in Europe and North America grow more extreme, key worldwide burning statistics are at a record low largely because Africa and Asia are controlling fire more.

Experts say these seemingly opposite trends are happening at the same time because of what humanity is doing to the planet.

“It does seem like a paradox because we’re talking increases in fires, yet the global numbers have been going down and down. But they’re both true,” said fire scientist Mike Flannigan of Thompson Rivers University in Canada.

Spain’s wildfire is that country’s largest on record at more than 193 square miles (500 square kilometers) while wildfires in Europe have burned just a bit under 2025’s all-time high. In Canada and the United States this summer, land burned by wildfires is at least 25% higher than the 10-year average and more than double what it was decades ago, according to national wildfire centers. Entire chunks of the continent were

choked by smoke, causing unhealthy air quality.

Fires are worsening in terms of size, intensity, speed and frequency, especially in the U.S., Canada and Europe, said University of Colorado fire scientist Jennifer Balch.

“Extreme wildfires are on the rise globally in different parts of the world. And that’s the piece that you know has us shaking in our boots,” Balch said.

And yet the world went into July this year with record low global emissions from burning fires, a key measure of their prevalence, the European climate center Copernicus reported.

That is because fires in Africa and Asia are way down due to changing agricultural practices, fire management and where people are moving to, said Mark Parrington, a senior scientist at Copernicus. Copernicus calculated that this year’s carbon emissions from burning are the lowest since satellites first measured nearly 25 years ago - about half what they were in the early 2000s.

“Africa dominates the global fire

activity,” said UCLA water and fire scientist Park Williams. “So if there’s a trend in Africa, then that’s going to be the trend in the global fire activity. In sub-Saharan Africa, fire activity over the last 25 years has gone down pretty dramatically.”

On average, more than three-quarters of the global emissions from the burning of plant material comes from Africa and Asia, Copernicus statistics show. Less than one-eighth comes from North America and Europe.

Traditionally, huge grassland fires on the African savanna burned each year, compared to more intermittent forest fires in other regions, influencing worldwide fire totals, said John Abatzoglou, a fire scientist at the University of California Merced. But with more land being used for housing and farming, humans are limiting savanna fires, while also creating barriers to prevent fires from spreading, he said.

In Asia and the Amazon fires are often used to clear land for agriculture, experts said. So, Williams said, “it really is all driven by human demographic change.”

Play is essential for young children, including when it comes to learning

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

By Kelley Mayer White
College of Charleston

Prioritizing play offers a variety of benefits for children, from helping them grow their vocabulary to managing their big feelings with fewer behavioral problems.

Play also benefits children’s cognitive and social and emotional development.

But play isn’t always a focus in classrooms, even when it comes to very young children.

My colleagues and I conducted a study in 2019 and 2020 to understand how children from our own play-based lab preschool in Charleston, South Carolina, transitioned to formal schooling for kindergarten or first grade.

Some families at our school, which serves kids ages 2 through 6, choose to keep their child enrolled there for kindergarten. Others leave to have their children complete kindergarten in a more traditional school setting.

We found that attending a play-based early childhood program helped children develop emotional regulation, social awareness and problem-solving skills later on in elementary school.

Research conducted in 2015 found that children who attended a play-based preschool program scored higher on measures of vocabulary and use of grammar, compared to peers who attended a more traditional preschool program.

Another group of researchers conducted in-depth interviews in 2021 with the parents and kindergarten teachers of four children who had attended a play-based preschool. The three kindergarten teachers described the children as self-directed and eager to learn. One teacher spoke of the children’s open-mindedness. The children were also described as adept at navigating social situations, compassionate and empathetic.

For our own research, which we published in 2023, we surveyed 17 parents of children who had completed our program within the past few years. Additionally, we interviewed five parents and two alumni from the school who had reached college age. Although our sample size was small, our findings supported a play-based approach to preschool and kindergarten.

Parents said the play-based program had a significant impact on their children’s empathy and social development. They noted that their children were likely to take the lead in social interactions and frequently stood up for the underdog. Other parents said that the program fostered their children’s imaginative thinking and creativity.

Several parents credited their children’s advanced social skills to the extended time allotted for play. They described their children as being more creative, independent and resourceful than classmates.

While there is no single, agreed-upon definition of play, many agree that it is any activity that is intrinsically motivated, freely chosen and enjoyable. It is also flexible, creative and is not always linear or straightforward.

In part because play is challenging to define, it is also difficult to research or measure, especially in school settings.

Some play is unstructured and often referred to as free play. Think of a child alone in their backyard making a fort out of twigs and branches, or a group of children playing school.

Other play may be facilitated or guided by an adult. This could look like a child building a Lego structure while following step-by-step instructions, or a child playing school alongside his dad, who pretends to be a student.

Play-based learning involves a more structured activity or game with a particular outcome or goal. For example, a child could be playing with buttons and then be asked to sort them by size, shape or color.

There are also different types of play, including dramatic, or pretend, play.

Dramatic play can improve children’s emotion regulation, fuels their language development, and can help children work through anxiety, aggression and fear.

In my own experience teaching kindergarten, I was fascinated to observe children process traumatic experiences, such as 9/11, through reenacting events at the sand table.

Dramatic play also facilitates children’s understanding of narrative, as children create stories that place them in different roles, such as parent, teacher or doctor. Understanding narratives is key to becoming a fluent reader in the later grades.

Research has found that dramatic play can improve children’s social and emotional skills and help them process or understand the world around them, as they take on the role of veterinarian or first responder.

Constructive play, meanwhile, generally describes children building or creating things, such as blocks or art.

Block play can support children’s cognitive development and mathematical understanding. As children plan, test and revise their block structures, they learn critical thinking and develop an understanding of spatial relationships.

Longitudinal research shows that playing with blocks during the early childhood years predicts higher achievement in math in middle school and high school.

Parents of young children may understand play is important but have a harder time hanging on to that notion as their children age. However, play-based learning remains beneficial beyond the elementary school years.

Even middle and high schoolers gain important skills through play.

Sixth graders taught to solve problems through playing bank and supermarket performed better on later assessments of their math knowledge.

High school students given the opportunity to learn about kinetic energy and velocity by building a roller coaster described increased motivation and found it led to deeper understanding of the material.

Research shows that adults can be helpful during play when children experience conflict. Coaching from an adult can keep the play going after a disagreement and help children learn to compromise.

Adults can also help children come up with more complex characters and directions for play.

Guided play, meaning an adult asking open-ended questions to help fuel a child’s play, for example, has even been found to be more beneficial for children’s math understanding than direct instruction. (AP)

Revised measure seeks Big Ten, SEC backing for \$25M player pool

Senate college sports bill boosts athlete revenue sharing proposal

WASHINGTON, July 29, (AP): A re-worked Senate bill designed to regulate college sports proposes to more than double the amount of money schools could share with players as part of a flurry of revisions designed to win the support of the Big Ten and Southeastern Conferences.

Big Ten commissioner Tony Petitti said Tuesday at his conference’s football media days that he was waiting to review the new language in the Protect College Sports Act, and the hope is that the new version of the bill “provides a lot more help than not.”

Among the key changes would be up to \$25 million devoted to a “retention” pool that would allow schools to pay athletes already on their rosters to stay. That would be in addition to the \$21.3 million schools are allowed to spend this season. Some \$5 million of the new money would be devoted to women’s sports.

“That’s all very specific language that has to work together with the (House) settlement, so we need to see the language on all of that,” Petitti said.

The House settlement, which dictates the terms of revenue sharing, calls for 22% of certain revenues to be shared with the athletes. The retention pool figures to drastically change that math. Also uncertain is how it would impact name, image and likeness compensation from third parties, which allows schools to blow past the cap and many agree is the reason costs of assembling football and basketball rosters are spiraling out of control.

Jeffrey Kessler, the plaintiffs’ attorney in the House case, told The Associated Press: “I would have to see the specific provisions of the entire bill to evaluate any issues with the settlement.”

An outline of the changes made to the

bill, a copy of which the AP obtained, also included changes the conferences sought over Olympic and women’s sports; avoiding creation of so-called super leagues; language that would prohibit colleges from paying high schoolers until they enroll; and making sure conferences won’t be required to participate in a media rights pooling arrangement the bill would allow.

Two other key points the conferences seek are refined language about limiting lawsuits over eligibility issues and preempting state statutes that guide NIL payments in favor of one uniform national law.

In speaking about the ramifications of the bill, Tennessee athletic director Danny White told AP this week that the best way to deal with the lawsuit issues is to let players collectively bargain.

“Even if they do act, there’s still a lot of issues that they won’t address and they probably can’t address le-

gally,” White said.

There have been conflicting reports about how likely the bill is to reach the Senate floor, where it will need 60 votes to pass and move on to the House. Last week, Senate Majority Leader John Thune, R-South Dakota, said it was unlikely the bill would reach a vote before the Senate’s begins its recess Aug. 7.

The recent action might have changed the calendar.

“There’s a long list of areas where we’d like to see some improvements, but like the commissioner said, we also recognize that we’re not going to get everything that we’d like,” said Josh Whitman, the athletic director at Illinois who was chair of the NCAA board of directors through June. “And so ultimately, we’d like to see something put together in a package where the benefits outweigh some of the potential negatives.”



In this file photo, Big Ten Conference Commissioner Tony Petitti speaks during a news conference at the Big Ten Conference NCAA college football media days at Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis. (AP)

Broome traded to Clippers

Green agrees to one-year extension with Warriors

SAN FRANCISCO, July 29, (AP): Draymond Green has agreed to a one-year, \$27.7 million deal to return to the Golden State Warriors, a person familiar with the decision told The Associated Press.

Green will sign the contract that essentially matches the deal he opted out of last month before the Warriors made an unsuccessful bid to sign LeBron James, the person said.

The person spoke on condition of anonymity because the deal hadn’t been announced.

ESPN first reported the deal.

Green is now set to play his 15th season with the Warriors and if he plays in 51 games he will join Stephen Curry as the only players in franchise history to appear in at least 1,000 contests.

Green, Curry and coach Steve Kerr are the main remaining pieces of the team from the dynasty that delivered four championships. Golden State last won the title in 2022 and haven’t made it past the second round of the playoffs since then. The Warriors missed the playoffs this past season when they lost to Phoenix in the play-in tournament.

Golden State tried to add James earlier this offseason and Green waited to sign his deal until after James made his decision to sign with Philadelphia to give the Warriors more flexibility. Green, Curry and Jimmy Butler are all entering the final seasons of their current contracts, although Curry could sign an extension starting late next month.

Green has been one of the best defensive players in the NBA since being drafted in the second round in 2012. He has made nine all-defensive teams and was named the NBA Defensive Player of the Year in 2016-17.

He has averaged 8.7 points per game in his career, along with 6.8 rebounds and 5.6 assists. He averaged 8.4 points, 5.5 rebounds and 5.5 assists in 68 games last season for Golden State.

Meanwhile, the Philadelphia 76ers have traded forward Johni Broome and a 2027 second-round draft pick to the Los Angeles Clippers for cash considerations.

In the deal announced , the Clippers will receive the second-most favorable on Philadelphia’s three second-round picks next year.

The move comes on the heels of the 76ers’ free-agent signing of LeBron James to a two-year, veterans’ minimum contract last week.

The 76ers drafted Broome with the 35th overall pick of the 2025, but he was limited to 11 games, spending, most of the season with Philadelphia’s G League affiliate in Delaware. He averaged 21.8 points, 8.3 rebounds, 3.2 assists and 1.5 blocked shots with the Blue Coats.

MINNEAPOLIS, July 29, (AP): Rookie Olivia Miles scored 24 points and the Minnesota Lynx extended their winning streak to eight games with 100- 93 victory over Toronto.

Miles shot 9 for 17 with four 3-pointers for Minnesota (23-6), which owns the best record in the WNBA. She added eight assists and six rebounds.

Kayla McBride scored 18 with four 3-pointers for the Lynx, who were 14 for 25 (56%) from distance. Napheesa Collier had 15 points and Natasha Howard scored 13. Reserve Antonia Delaere scored 12 on 4-for-5 shooting from distance.

Marina Mabrey had 25 points, eight rebounds and six assists for Toronto (10-17), which has lost four straight and eight of its last nine. Maria Conde finished with 20 points and 10 rebounds, and Laura Juskaitė scored 18.

Mystics 92, Sun 84

In Washington, Sonia Citron scored 22 points and Kiki Iriafen added 20 points and 10 rebounds to help the Washington Mystics beat the Connecticut Sun.

Citron sank 6 of 9 shots with two 3-pointers, adding four assists to help Washington (15-12) extend its win streak to three. Iriafen posted her third straight double-double.

Shakira Austin had 17 points and six rebounds for Washington, which moved a season-high three games above .500.

Aneesah Morrow led Connecticut (7-21) with 21 points. Olivia Nelson-Ododa had 16 points and six rebounds.

Fever 105, Storm 95

In Seattle, Caitlin Clark scored 32 points, Kelsey Mitchell added 28 and Indiana won their fourth straight game, beating Seattle.

Clark and Mitchell took over for Indiana (18-10) after Aliyah Boston



Indiana Fever guard Caitlin Clark (22) passes around Seattle Storm forward Jordan Horston, center, during the second half of a WNBA basketball game in Seattle. (AP)

Aces 98, Fire 83

In Las Vegas, A’ja Wilson finished with 28 points and 14 rebounds and Las Vegas breezed to a victory over Portland.

Wilson hit 7 of 10 shots from the floor and 13 of 14 foul shots. The four-time league MVP scored 32 points twice to lead the Aces (19-8) to a pair of road wins over the expansion Fire earlier this season.

Jackie Young scored 25 points on 9-for-14 shooting to help Las Vegas shoot 58% from the floor. Chelsea Gray totaled 17 points and Jewell Loyd added 11 off the bench.

Megan DiLeo topped Portland (11-17) with 20 points and reserve Frieda Buhner scored 16.

Wilson had 10 points and five rebounds in the first quarter and Las Vegas took a comfortable 36-21 lead into the second.

Liberty 113, Sparks 109

In Los Angeles, Breanna Stewart had 29 points and Sabrina Ionescu scored 27 to help New York hold off Los Angeles.

Stewart made 11 of 19 shots and scored 19 points in the second half after New York (16-12) trailed 56-53 at the break. She added seven assists, four rebounds and four steals.

Ionescu shot 9 for 16 with five 3-pointers and had 14 points in the first quarter to help the Liberty lead 36-30.

Rebekah Gardner finished with 15 points for New York and fellow reserves Han Xu and Marine Fauthoux each scored 13.

Rae Burrell had 24 points to lead Los Angeles (10-17), which has lost six straight and nine of 11. Nneka Ogumike chipped in with 21 points and nine assists after posting four straight double-doubles.



Golden State Warriors forward Draymond Green (23) shoots a free throw during the second half of an NBA basketball game against the Sacramento Kings in Sacramento, Calif. (AP)

Belgium mistake stays as US team looks ahead

Freese still haunted by US World Cup exit

CHARLOTTE, N.C., July 29, (AP): Goalkeeper Matt Freese admits he’s not quite gotten over the United States’ abrupt exit from the 2026 World Cup following a 4-1 loss to Belgium in the round of 16.

And quite frankly, he’s not sure he ever will.

“Big losses in tough moments are things you never really get over because they stay with you for the rest of your career,” Freese told The Associated Press ahead of the Major League Soccer All-Star Game coming up Wednesday in Charlotte. “They continue to motivate you for the rest of your career.”

Freese made a costly mistake in the loss when he rushed well out of his box to clear a long ball, then hesitated under pressure to kick it away.

Belgium quickly converted the miscue into a goal to take a 3-1 lead in the 57th minute, all but sealing the Americans’ fate.

American soccer fans haven’t let Freese forget about it.

In his first MLS match since the World Cup last week, the New York City FC goalkeeper was reportedly booed by fans every time he touched the ball during the game in Columbus, Ohio.

“It’s important to not let bad things define you, but I think it’s also important not to let good things define you either,” Freese said. “It’s important to be a consistent presence with consistent energy.”



United States goalkeeper Matt Freese (24) reacts following the World Cup round of 16 soccer match between the United States and Belgium in Seattle. (AP)

Freese is one of four U.S. national team players selected to the MLS All-Star Game.

Another, veteran defender Tim Ream, openly acknowledges he doesn’t have a secret formula for what it’ll take for the Americans to one day reach the World Cup quarterfinals.

He can only point to the one thing he knows that lends itself to success: hard work.

“You put your head down and do as much as you possibly can,” Ream said. “And, at some point you will break through that barrier. It just

takes work, more work and more work. ... Before you know it, you’re past that.”

Ream said he believes better days are ahead despite the loss.

Wing-back Max Arfsten thinks the increased fan attention on the World Cup - with the majority of games played in the United States - will only serve to inspire more athletes in the country to take up the sport.

That, he said, is a good thing.

“The next step for us is to keep growing the sport,” Arfsten said. “The more people that are playing,

the better players there will be. The more competitiveness, the more players playing in the top leagues in Europe is important as well. I feel like all of those combined is going to lead to success.”

Ream added that when it comes to the World Cup, two things can be true: Players can be disappointed over the way they played and “crashed out” against Belgium, but also excited about what they accomplished in the earlier games.

“You can be proud of how much it galvanized the country, the people around it and the sport - and just how much fun it was,” Ream said.

Freese agrees.

“It’s important for us to be aware of the positive outcomes that happened in the tournament as well as use that to inspire new generations to continue to get better - to get past that round of 16, to get past the quarterfinals and make it to the semis and the finals,” Freese said.

Charlotte is hosting the MLS All-Star Game for the first time at Charlotte FC owner Dave Tepper’s Bank of America Stadium, but the league will again be without its biggest star for the showcase event.

Messi, who helped Argentina reach the finals of the World Cup before losing to Spain, is taking advantage of some allotted time off before returning to soccer and Inter Miami CF.

He has been replaced on the roster.

Best of the Rest

Milan completes Diawara transfer: AC Milan signed defender Sankhoun Diawara on Wednesday from Troyes, following the youngster’s breakout season in the French second division.

The 20-year-old Diawara signed five-year deal through July 2031.

“A left-footed centre-back, Diawara combines technical quality, physical strength and personality,” Milan said in a statement.

“These attributes make him a highly promising talent, already proven at professional level in France and ready to continue his development in the Rossoneri colours.”

Diawara progressed through the ranks at Troyes, making his senior debut in November, 2024. He was a key part of the team that won the second division title last season.

It is new coach R ben Amorim’s third signing of the summer after the Rossoneri splashed out a club record fee of around 74 million euros (\$84 million) on forward Gon alo Ramos from Paris Saint-Germain and also brought in defender Mario Gila from Lazio. (AP)

Brazil court ties Gabriel ban to Pec recovery: Inter Porto Alegre defender V ctor Gabriel has been suspended from Brazilian soccer until Cruzeiro forward Gabriel Pec returns to training following recovery from a broken leg.

The sanction was handed down Tuesday by Brazil’s Superior Court of Sports Justice, the country’s highest independent body for sports discipline.

The court deemed a standard penalty insufficient given the severity of the incident. Pec suffered a left tibia fracture in a challenge from V ctor Gabriel in a league game on July 22.

While the court’s suspension is capped at 180 days, it could end sooner if Pec is medically cleared to return to practice ahead of that time. The decision can be appealed.

V ctor Gabriel told the court he had no intention of causing injury to Pec, who played for LA Galaxy in the MLS before joining Cruzeiro for a club-record fee of at least \$12 million during the World Cup break.

“I’ve had sleepless nights praying for him, and I offer a heartfelt apology to everyone at Cruzeiro,” he said.

V ctor Gabriel was charged with violent play under Article 254 of the Brazilian Code of Sports Justice, and received the extended penalty under a provision that allows an offender’s suspension to match the injured player’s recovery time in cases of severe injury.

The ruling was not unanimous. One of the adjudicators, Rodrigo Steinmann Bayer, initially voted for a standard six-match suspension without the time-based extension. (AP)

Qualification dream growing stronger for Southeast Asia

ASEAN Cup has Southeast Asia teams ramping up early 2030 World Cup preparations

SEOUL, South Korea, July 29, (AP): Preparations for the next men’s World Cup have already begun for teams in Southeast Asia, just weeks after Spain clinched the 2026 title.

The ASEAN Cup has kicked off in Phnom Penh, and host Cambodia has already lost its opening games 2-1 to Singapore and 5-1 to Indonesia in Group A.

The biennial tournament features 10 national teams from the region of 650 million, and there’s more on the minds of coaches and players than the trophy on offer in late August.

With Asian qualification for the 2030 World Cup starting next year, Southeast Asia’s soccer powerhouses such as Indonesia - the only team from the region to appear on the global stage, when it competed as the Dutch East Indies in 1938 - Thailand and Vietnam, have an opportunity to start preparations early.

ASEAN Football Federation president Khiev Sameth said getting another team from the region into the World Cup is within reach.

“I firmly believe that our shared dream of seeing a Southeast Asian nation qualify for the FIFA World Cup is becoming increasingly attainable,” he said. “I have every confidence that Southeast Asia will earn its place on football’s greatest stage. When that moment arrives, it will be a proud achievement shared by our entire ASEAN football family.”

From the region, Indonesia went closest to qualifying the 2026 World Cup. It has never won the ASEAN Cup in 15 previous editions despite reaching the final six times.

In January, Indonesia appointed John Herdman, the English tactician who led Canada to the 2022 World Cup for its first World Cup appearance in 36 years, to guide the national men’s team.

After the big opening win over Cambodia, Indonesia faces Timor Leste on Friday, followed next week by games against Vietnam and Singapore.

“Every day I wake up, everything I’ll be thinking about is qualifying this team for a World Cup,” Herdman said ahead of the tournament. “This is the place to be. I want to be here when this country takes that step.”

Indonesia has embarked on an intensive program of naturalizing players from overseas who are eligible to represent the national team. Just in July, Mitch Baker and Luke Vickery, both Australian-born players, attended separate ceremonies in Jakarta to become Indonesian citizens.

Erick Thohir, Minister of Youth and Sports was in attendance with the 19-year-old Baker, who scored a hat-trick and was voted player of the match in his debut at the ASEAN Cup.

“We have ambitious targets for the SEA Games, Asian Games, Olympics, and even the World Cup,” Thohir, who is also the head of Indonesia’s soccer

federation, said. “Through this collaboration, we will continue to improve Indonesian sports and welcome everyone who can proudly raise the red and white flag.”

Kim Sang-sik, head coach of defending champion Vietnam, also has the World Cup in his sights.

“Watching the World Cup, we witnessed so many exciting matches and were truly impressed,” Kim, who represented South Korea at the 2006 World Cup, said. “The players and I watched the tournament together, and we all dreamed of competing right here someday.”

Thailand has the best record in the ASEAN tournament with seven titles. The Thai team is in Group B with Malaysia, Laos, Philippines and Myanmar.

“There’s pressure for a reason and the reason is we have a very good group of players, a great fan base,” Anthony Hudson, who was appointed head coach last year, said. “I believe in the players and I think the fans deserve success because they’ve been crying out for it.”

The top two teams in each group will progress to the semifinals. The winning semifinalists will play off in two-game final series on Aug. 22 and 26.

After that, the teams from Indonesia, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam will turn their attention to the 2027 Asian Cup, which kicks off Jan. 7 in Saudi Arabia.

F1 season finale could move to Europe if Qatar, Abu Dhabi races are disrupted



McLaren driver Lando Norris of Britain, left, leads the field after the start during the Formula One Hungarian Grand Prix auto race, at the Hungaroring racetrack in Mogyorod, near Budapest, Hungary. (AP)

Domenicali delays decision until mid-September

LONDON, July 29, (AP): Formula 1 president **Stefano Domenicali** says the current world championship could end in Europe if the war in the Middle East affects races planned in Qatar and Abu Dhabi at the conclusion of the season.

Domenicali said a decision won’t be made before mid-September.

“For us today, the races in Qatar and Abu Dhabi are confirmed,” he said in comments published by the Formula One website following last week’s Hungarian Grand Prix.

“But of course, if the situation will not be cleared the way that we believe it should be, before the middle of September, we will take the decision,” Domenicali added. “And in that respect, I just want confirm to you that if this will not be possible, that the end of the season would be in Europe.”

Domenicali did not say where exactly the final races planned in November and December would be held if those in Qatar and Abu Dhabi are canceled.

Formula 1 already called off races in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia because of safety concerns related to the Iran war. The Bahrain Grand Prix was rescheduled in Malaysia for Oct. 4.

Looking at the 2027 schedule, Domenicali said: “So far, the calendar that will be presented, let’s say in autumn, it would be as a sort of normal plan. But of course, in the case that the situation in the Middle East would be not solved, we have options.”

He added that in any case plans remain to have 24 Grand Prix races next year.

Hungary was the last race before the mid-season break. The next race is the Dutch Grand Prix on Aug. 23.

Kimi Antonelli tops the standings with a 50-point lead over Lewis Hamilton.

Jayden Seales takes 5 wickets

Windies dominate Pakistan in opening test

TAROUBA, Trinidad, July 29, (AP): West Indies completed a 90-run win in the first cricket test after Pakistan captain Babar Azam made an unbeaten 58 and shared a rearguard stand of 49 with No. 11 Mohammad Abbas to delay the end.

After being set 211 to win when West Indies’ second innings ended at 181, Pakistan slumped to 71-9 Tuesday in the face of accurate bowling from Jayden Seales (5-20).

Babar finally found a stoic partner in Abbas and the last pair held out for 12 overs to frustrate the hosts. Abbas was the last batter out for 23 shortly after the tea interval on Day 4 when Pakistan was 120.

Babar’s 32nd test half-century stood out in stark relief against an indisciplined Pakistan batting effort. When he reached his 50 from 81 balls, Pakistan was 88-9 and the rest of its batters had contributed only 38 runs.

“We played good cricket in the last few days but today we were



Jayden Seales

not up to the mark as a batting unit,” Babar said. “We lost back-to-back wickets. We will look to make sure it doesn’t happen in the next matches.”

The second match in the two-test series starts Sunday.

Pakistan’s second-innings batting collapse followed the tem-

plate of its first innings in which it reached 244-4 with a century by Shan Masood then lost its next six wickets for 38 runs to be all out for 282, conceding a 29-run first-innings lead. West Indies made 311 batting first.

In two Pakistan innings, Masood’s was the only century and there were half-centuries by Imam-ul-Haq, who made 63 in the first innings, and Babar. Otherwise, only six Pakistan batters reached double figures. Abbas’ 23 was the joint fourth-highest score by a Pakistan batter.

Masood sustained a hand injury while batting in the first innings and was forced to drop from No. 3 to No. 8 in the order Tuesday, which was a major setback for Pakistan.

West Indies resumed Tuesday at 126-7, with a lead of 155 runs. Shamar Joseph went from 22 to 38 and Kemar Roach from 5 to 18 as West Indies pushed its lead beyond 200 runs.

That proved more than adequate as Pakistan lost Imam-ul-

Haq (3) in the third over to set the visitors’ second collapse of the match in motion.

Babar provided solidity at one end but, of Pakistan’s top six batters, only Mohammad Rizwan with 11 reached double figures. Taking out Babar and Abbas, the Pakistan scoreboard read 3, 3, 0, 11, 0, 2, 3, 4 and 0.

Pakistan folded in the face of Seales’ early assault and contributions of 2-27 from Roach and 2-12 from Justin Greaves. Seales returned to make the final breakthrough, trapping Abbas lbw in the 41st over to finish with his fifth five-wicket haul in tests.

Greaves, who took 5-27 in Pakistan’s first innings, was voted player of the match.

“We came in and tried to be just as disciplined as possible,” Greaves said. “I mimicked Mohammad Abbas’ fuller lengths when he bowled against us in the first and second innings and it pretty much worked out for us.”

Abbas had returns of 3-63 and 5-22 for Pakistan.

Real Madrid breaks revenue record with \$1.3 bln earnings

MADRID, July 29: Real Madrid has reached a historic financial milestone after generating record revenues of \$1.3 billion during the latest season, excluding income from player transfers, according to Spanish newspaper AS following a recent club board meeting, Florentino Pérez, said.

The report revealed that the club’s revenue increased by 3.1% compared with the previous year, surpassing \$1.296 billion for the first time – a record figure unmatched by any sports organization. The growth was largely driven by the club’s directly managed commercial activities, with stadium-related revenues rising by 11% and marketing income increasing by 6%, helped by renewed sponsorship deals and new commercial partnerships.

Real Madrid also confirmed that its overall revenues have grown by 61% over the past seven years, during which stadium income has doubled. The club recorded operating earnings before depreciation and amortization of \$310.4 million, representing an 18% increase from the previous financial year.

After taxes, the Spanish giants posted a net profit of \$28.4 million, maintaining an impressive streak of 26 consecutive seasons with positive financial results and reinforcing their position as one of the world’s most financially successful sports institutions.



Real Madrid president, Florentino Pérez,

Best of the Rest

Jakob to compete in 5,000m at Euros: Two-time Olympic champion Jakob Ingebrigtsen confirmed he’ll compete in the 5,000 meters at the European championships next month, marking his return from surgery on his left Achilles tendon.

The 25-year-old Norwegian, who had surgery in early 2026 to clean up scar tissue on the protective sheath around the tendon, has been ramping up his training recently.

“What better way than to return to the European Championships, where I have so many golden memories. I’ll be lining up for the 5000m August 10th,” Ingebrigtsen wrote on Instagram.

The 5,000 final will be held on Day 1 of the European championships (Aug. 10-16) in Birmingham.

Ingebrigtsen’s post did not mention the 1,500 meters. He’s won both the 1,500 and 5,000 at the past three European championships: 2024 in Rome, 2022 in Munich and 2018 in Berlin. (AP)

Wimbledon reaches record-high attendance: Wimbledon reached a record-high attendance of 550,151 over the Grand Slam tournament’s two weeks, up slightly over last year, the All England Club said.

Attendance at the 139th edition of tennis’ grass-court major was aided by the first rain-free Championships since 2019. The total attendance was 1,381 more than in 2025.

Wimbledon still trails in total attendance compared to the other three Grand Slams.

The main draw of this year’s Australian Open attracted more than 1.1 million fans. Last year’s U.S. Open drew more than 900,000 and the main draw for the 2026 French Open was 589,500.

The other three feature main-draw competition over 15 days; Wimbledon remains at 14 days. The rival tournaments also hold their qualifying events on site in the week prior, allowing them to host more fans and boost revenues. (AP)

Amateur cricket match goes viral after cheating allegation

SALTBURN, England, July 29, (AP): An amateur cricket match in England has become a viral sensation after allegations of cheating were shared on social media.

A video, which claims to show a fielder clicking his fingers to imitate the sound of a bat connecting with the ball before a player is called out, has been viewed millions of times on X.

The person who posted the video described it as “about the worst case of cheating I’ve ever seen in cricket.”

The video of a match involving North Yorkshire and South Durham Cricket League team Saltburn, has been greeted with outrage online and generated headlines around the world.

TV presenter Piers Morgan weighed in, describing the player involved as the “biggest cheat in cricket history” and wondered how many batsmen’s days “has he ruined?”

Cricket has had its share of scandals, ranging from the so-called “Sandpapergate” ball-tampering episode in 2018 that led to suspensions for three Australian international players, to spot fixing scandals that have led to lengthy bans.

But at the amateur levels of the game, such as this so-called village cricket competition in England, umpires have no access to video replays to make decisions and there’s a level of trust required from players when claiming catches.

A cricket umpire could be fooled into calling a player out if they believed they heard the sound of the ball clipping the edge of a bat before being caught.

The league said in a statement on X that it had received a formal complaint regarding a game on Saturday, but did not reveal which teams were involved.

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NEWS



Cerezo Osaka's Ryosuke Inoue, left, challenges for the ball with Borussia Dortmund's Takato Yamamoto during a friendly match between Cerezo Osaka and Borussia Dortmund in Osaka, western Japan. Cerezo won 1-0. (AP)

Sports

Al-Salmiya adds Congolese defender Tresor, Al-Arabi claim first friendly win in Turkey

German Knoll completes Kazma's foreign signings ahead of new season

By Hassan Mosa
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, July 29: Kazma has finalized their foreign player recruitment with the signing of German striker Torless Knoll, completing the "Orange" squad's overseas lineup for the upcoming season.

The 28-year-old forward joins Yemeni midfielder Nasser Mohamoud, Algerian Idriss Shaabi, Brazilian Patrick Robson, and Senegalese Amath Ndao as Kazma's foreign contingent.

Knoll previously played for Saudi club Al-Tai in the Yelo League, where he made 31 ap-

pearances and scored 17 goals. He has also gained experience in Croatia and Germany's third tier and is expected to join Kazma's training camp in the coming days.

Kazma is currently holding their preseason camp in Izmit, Turkey, which will run until August 14 and includes four friendly matches as they prepare for the new campaign. The team will also compete in the Gulf Champions League.

Al-Salmiya has strengthened its squad with the signing of Congolese defender Tresor Tshipiobua, making him the



German striker Torless Knoll

club's fourth foreign player.

Tresor, born in 1998, joins Uzbek Shahzod Azmiydinov, Bahraini Abdullah Yusuf, and Syrian Mahmoud Al-Aswad on the foreign roster.

The defender arrives with previous professional experience, while Al-Salmiya is waiting for the arrival of a Brazilian player to complete their foreign signings.

Coach Ali Ashoor's side will travel to Turkey tomorrow for a training camp featuring several friendly matches as part of their preparations for the new season. Al-Arabi recorded its first win

of its Turkish camp after defeating Amedspor 4-0.

Palestinian forward Zaid Qanbar scored twice, while new arrivals Talal Al-Qaisi and Brazilian Lucas Chalon added a goal each.

The "Green" side had earlier drawn 1-1 with Van Spor and suffered a 3-1 defeat against Erzurumspor.

Al-Arabi's camp will continue until early August before the team heads to India to face East Bengal in Kolkata on August 12 in the AFC Champions League Two playoff round. They will then return to Kuwait to prepare for the Zain Premier League

season.

Meanwhile, Kuwait Club continued its intensive preparations with morning and evening training sessions during its camp in London.

The defending league champion is preparing for its title defense, with the new Premier League season set to begin on August 25. The club is also gearing up for its AFC Champions League Two campaign.

Elsewhere, Al-Qadisiya's new Moroccan signing Ayoub Lakhdar has joined the team's delegation at its training camp in Yalova, Turkey.

Infantino sets deadline for \$20 mln FIFA offer in Kushner-backed World Cup plan



In this file photo, FIFA President Gianni Infantino waves when arriving with President Donald J. Trump, Mexico President Claudia Sheinbaum and Canada Prime Minister Mark Carney for the awards ceremony after the World Cup final soccer match between Spain and Argentina in East Rutherford, N.J., near New York. (AP)

AFC voices disappointment over investment plan disclosure

GENEVA, July 29, (AP): FIFA President Gianni Infantino set a Sept. 19 deadline on Wednesday for the 211 member federations to accept one-off \$20 million offers as part of a project to sell stakes in the World Cup to private investors.

The \$20 billion FIFA subsidiary, bankrolled by the brother of Jared Kushner, was blasted by international soccer organizations. European soccer body UEFA aims to call its 55 member federations to an emergency online meeting, likely on Thursday.

"But having held discussions with many stakeholders across the game, UEFA knows there is significant and growing opposition to FIFA's scheme," the organization said in a statement.

The effort also marks Infantino's latest effort to align with those in the orbit of U.S. President Donald Trump: by creating the FIFA peace prize, letting Trump intervene in a process that led to United States forward Folarin Balogun playing at the World Cup, and now trying to lock in Joshua Kushner's investment firm to a 12-year ownership deal with the Switzerland-based not-for-profit soccer body.

Infantino set out the "singular and unique funding opportunity" in a letter detailing why he wants to create the \$20 billion FIFA subsidiary - 20% owned by private investors - that would run the soccer body's competitions and events like World Cups and Club World Cups.

"It is my duty and responsibility

as FIFA president to present such game-changing opportunities to you, our members," Infantino wrote in the letter seen by The Associated Press.

The proposal revealed Tuesday and backed by Joshua Kushner's investment firm Thrive Capital was met with immediate fury from Infantino's former colleagues at UEFA, which said the World Cup "is not FIFA's to sell."

One option open to European soccer is threaten a boycott of FIFA competitions - a tactic used in 2021 when UEFA-led opposition helped stop Infantino's plan to play the World Cup every two years instead of four.

FIFA's private equity plan is the latest ambitious project proposed during Infantino's 11-year presidency in which he has increasingly seemed to be an executive leader acting without consulting with soccer's major stakeholders.

Previous plans include creating a FIFA Peace Prize - awarded to Trump in December at the World Cup draw - and trying to push through a secretive \$25 billion private equity plan in 2018 to create new and bigger men's competitions. That was resisted by UEFA.

Concerns about the latest and previously secret plan were aired Wednesday by the continental soccer bodies for Asia and the North American region known as CONCACAF.

"We are deeply concerned by the lack of due process," CONCACAF said in a statement.

The Kuala Lumpur-based Asian Football Confederation said it was "disappointed that a matter of such significance entered the public do-

main before the AFC family had been afforded the opportunity to examine and discuss it."

Continental bodies that organize their own international club and national-team competitions - such as the Champions League, European Championship and Copa America - likely will see threats to those events from FIFA wanting to increase revenue and value for investors by playing World Cups and Club World Cups for men and women more often, along with adding more teams.

The influential, 850-member European Football Clubs group - which has a joint venture with UEFA to manage the Champions League - said it "learned about this proposal in the same way as most global football stakeholders - without warning and through the media."

Inviting in private investors could also, sports governance academic Antoine Duval suggested Wednesday "incentivize FIFA to further commodify the World Cup (think more hydration breaks and dynamic pricing) in a drive to increase its revenue."

If the FIFA Forward Enterprise subsidiary is approved by a majority of the 211 members, they also each are promised \$20 million in funding from the four-year commercial cycle tied to the men's 2030 World Cup.

That would lead, Infantino wrote, to "a pool of diverse international investors" joining Joshua Kushner's Thrive as the anchor investor: "This process will be led by J.P. Morgan."

If Infantino's plan is rejected, those members will get their previously promised \$10 million over the next four years, his letter stated.

The cash difference on offer Wednesday to FIFA members ap-

pears to be \$86 million over 12 years compared to about \$36 million in existing promised funding for rejecting the private equity deal.

The rushed deadline to claim an initial \$20 million "says everything you need to know about this plan," UEFA said. "FIFA cannot continue to use our sport to enrich themselves and their friends."

Dozens of member federations typically rely on FIFA for funding, have national teams with little realistic chance of qualifying for World Cups, and whose best players rarely, if ever, join clubs playing at the highest level of international competitions.

FIFA's one-member, one-vote democratic system means the most powerful soccer nations on the field easily can be outvoted by those who rarely play top-level games.

FIFA's plan met quick opposition from British Prime Minister Andy Burnham, whose government is preparing to support hosting the 2035 Women's World Cup in England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland. FIFA is set to confirm that lone bid for 2035 at an online meeting in November.

"Football does not belong to investors," Burnham, a longtime soccer fan, said in a video message on Instagram. "Once you have sold a piece of (the World Cup), you have sold out. Football belongs to the fans. It always has, and it always will."

Resistance by British lawmakers - including threats of legislation by then-Prime Minister Boris Johnson in 2021 - previously helped stop the divisive European Super League project that was an existential threat to UEFA's Champions League, and which Infantino had discreetly supported. J.P. Morgan

Kuwait's Al-Enezi builds international coaching reputation in Montenegro

BELGRADE, July 29: Waleed Al-Enezi continues to enhance his growing reputation in European handball, serving as a strength and conditioning coach and performance analyst with Montenegro's national teams. He is currently in Serbia with the Montenegro U-18 squad competing in the M18 EHF EURO, adding another chapter to his expanding international coaching career.

His latest assignment comes shortly after completing duties with Montenegro's U-20 national team at the European Championship in Kosovo. The campaign followed an intensive preparation program in Montenegro, featuring specialized training camps and fitness sessions designed to prepare the team for continental competition.

Al-Enezi has become an integral member of Montenegro's technical staff, overseeing players' physical development while providing detailed performance analysis. His blend of academic knowledge and practical experience has earned him the trust of the federation, leading to continued roles across multiple national age-group teams.

His sustained presence in European handball reflects the growing recognition of Kuwaiti coaching expertise on the international stage. It also demonstrates the ability of Kuwaiti



Waleed Al-Enezi

professionals to excel in highly competitive sporting environments while serving as a model for aspiring local coaches seeking to broaden their experience abroad.

The M18 EHF EURO brings together Europe's top emerging handball talent, making it one of the continent's premier youth competitions. For Al-Enezi, the tournament offers another valuable opportunity to expand his international résumé and further establish his credentials in elite European handball.

Zidane appointment is about success, not money, says French FA President

PARIS, July 29: French Football Federation president Philippe Diallo has revealed that salary was never a topic of discussion during talks with Zinedine Zidane over taking charge of the national team, as all parties shared the desire to see him succeed Didier Deschamps as France coach.

"Honestly, this is not about money," Diallo said during an interview with France Inter when asked about Zidane's potential salary with Les Bleus.

Under new reforms to professional sports approved in France on July 21, salaries for officials of sports federations will be limited to a maximum of €450,000 annually, unless exceptions are approved by the government.

Diallo stressed that supporters are focused on results rather than financial details, saying: "I don't think this is what our fans are waiting for. They want to see Zidane on the touchline, they want to see the French team win, and they want the national team's identity - uniting the French people through victories - to be preserved."

The FFF president was also cautious when discussing expectations for Zidane, emphasizing that every match must be treated with importance to avoid a decline similar to Italy's recent struggles.

"When we enter a major tournament, the first step is to qualify," Diallo said. "Looking at some of our neighbors, such as Italy, who have missed three consecutive World Cups, shows that we must always remain alert and never take qualification for granted."



Newly-appointed France national team coach, Zinedine Zidane

Best of the Rest

Harrington named vice captain: Three-time major champion Pádraig Harrington has been named a vice captain for Europe's team at the 2027 Ryder Cup. The Irishman joins brothers Edoardo and Francesco Molinari in Luke Donald's backroom team. The competition will be played at Adare Manor in Limerick, Ireland, from Sept. 13-19 next year.

Team Europe will be seeking a third consecutive Ryder Cup title following wins in 2023 and 2025. (AP)