



Amir congrats Moroccan King Mohammed VI on Throne Day



PM honors Kuwait's top female high school graduates



PM Diwan photos

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah poses for commemorative group photos with Minister of Education Jalal Abdulmohsen Al-Tabtabaie, the top-performing female high school graduates for the 2025–2026 academic year, and their families following a ceremony honoring their outstanding academic achievements.

KUWAIT CITY, July 30: His Highness Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Prime Minister, received today Minister of Education Jalal Abdulmohsen Al-Tabtabaie, accompanied by the top-performing female high school graduates for the 2025-2026 academic year. During the meeting, His Highness honored the students

Tayba Abdulhadi Al-Hajri, Ghaliya Nasser Al-Azmi, and Moudhi Fahd Al-Dosari, who each achieved a perfect score of 100 percent in the science stream, in the presence of their families. He extended his sincere congratulations, praising their hard work, perseverance, and dedication throughout their studies.

His Highness also conveyed the greetings and congratulations of His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, may God protect them, to the outstanding students, and wished them continued success in raising the nation's banner high.

He urged them to carry on their path of excellence and scientific pursuit, stressing that they are the true asset in building and developing the nation. He also expressed his appreciation to the parents for their efforts and vital role in providing an environment that nurtures creativity and distinction.

Iran strike on Chinese facility in Kuwait leaves worker dead

Kuwait backs maritime coalition to secure critical sea lane

By Fares Ghaleb

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff and Agencies

KUWAIT CITY, July 30: Kuwait's Ministry of Defense announced Thursday that an Iranian attack targeted a facility belonging to a Chinese company in northern Kuwait, killing a Nepalese worker and causing extensive damage to the site.

Ministry spokesperson Brig. Gen. Saud Al-Atwan said the relevant authorities immediately initiated response procedures and coordinated with concerned agencies following the incident.

He affirmed that the Kuwaiti Armed Forces continue to perform their duties with the highest level of readiness and efficiency, taking all necessary measures to protect Kuwait's sovereignty, security and stability while ensuring the safety of citizens and residents.

The Chinese Embassy in Kuwait confirmed that the victim was a Nepalese driver working for a Kuwaiti subcontractor involved in a project operated by a Chinese company. The embassy said the worker was killed after the vehicle he was driving was struck during the attack.

Expressing condolences to the victim's family, the embassy condemned attacks targeting civilians and non-military facilities, calling on all parties to immediately halt hostilities, resume dialogue and avoid further escalation.

Gulf solidarity with Kuwait

The Kingdom of Bahrain strongly condemned the Iranian attack, describing it as a violation of Kuwait's sovereignty and a threat to its security and the safety of civilians.

Bahrain's Ministry of Foreign Affairs expressed full solidarity with Kuwait and support for all measures taken to protect its sovereignty, territorial integrity and stability.

It praised the efforts of the Kuwaiti Armed Forces and competent authorities in safeguarding the country's security, while offering condolences to the family of the deceased worker.

Bahrain also called on the international community, particularly the UN Security Council, to take decisive measures to ensure respect for international law and prevent further attacks against countries in the region.

The UAE also condemned what it described as renewed Iranian attacks against Kuwait and Jordan, saying the strikes represent violations of their sovereignty and a threat to regional security.

The UAE Ministry of Foreign Affairs reaffirmed its full solidarity with Kuwait and Jordan and its support for measures aimed at preserving their security and stability. Qatar likewise condemned the repeated Iranian attacks on Kuwait and Jordan, calling them a violation of sovereignty, territorial integrity and international law.

Continued on Page 5

New reporting tool brings justice closer

One tap to report labor violations

By Fares Ghaleb

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, July 30: The Public Authority for Manpower (PAM) launched the 'Your Report Makes a Difference' service through the Sahel app, enabling citizens and residents to report Labor Law violations online.

This initiative aims to enhance oversight of the labor market and protect the rights of both workers and employers.

PAM confirmed that the new service allows users to document violations with photos and submit the report directly through the Sahel app after completing the required information. The actions taken by the relevant authorities can then be followed up.

The new service contributes to the rapid detection and response to violations, reduces abuses, and promotes compliance with Labor Law provisions. This, in turn, supports community participation in labor market oversight and fosters a safe and fair work environment in Kuwait.

Meanwhile, PAM Director General Rabab Al-Osaimi affirmed that the authority continues to fulfill its role in combating human trafficking through the

implementation of the plan of the National Committee for Combating Human Trafficking.

In a statement to journalists on the sidelines of the World Day Against Trafficking in Persons event held Thursday, Al-Osaimi pointed out that the new 'Report Me' service on Sahel application allows everyone to report any suspected case of human trafficking, while guaranteeing absolute confidentiality for both the informants and victims.

She explained that the service aims to raise public awareness on such crime and the importance of reporting it, in addition to clarifying the procedures and rights related to workers and employers.

She revealed that PAM is an active member of the National Committee for Combating Human Trafficking, chaired by the Minister of Justice. She said PAM is implementing several recommendations included in the plan, particularly the awareness campaigns on workers' rights, such as the 'Protect Your Rights' campaign, which delivers simplified awareness messages through social media to inform the workers and employers about their rights and responsibilities.

Continued on Page 5



Photo by Samer Shaqir

Motorists navigate through dusty conditions on Kuwait roads as the country braces for a very hot and humid weekend with temperatures expected to reach 47°C.

Weekend temperatures to reach 47°C

Humidity joins Kuwait's heat parade

KUWAIT CITY, July 30, (KUNA): The Meteorological Department forecasted a generally very hot weather during the daytime and warm to hot conditions at night throughout the weekend, accompanied by high humidity, particularly in the coastal areas, as the country remains under the influence of hot and humid winds.

Acting Director of the department Dhirar Al-Ali told the Kuwait News

Agency (KUNA) that weather maps and numerical forecasting models indicate that the country will continue to be affected by an extension of the Indian monsoon low-pressure system, along with a hot and humid air mass. He stated that winds will be variable, gradually shifting to southeasterly, resulting in higher humidity, some cloud cover, and a slight drop in temperatures.

Al-Ali revealed that the weather on

Friday will be hot, with humid conditions prevailing in coastal areas. Winds will be variable to southeasterly, light to moderate, at speeds of eight to 30 kilometers per hour, with some high clouds expected. Maximum temperatures will range between 44 and 46 degrees Celsius, while the sea will be slight to moderate, with waves between one and four feet.

Continued on Page 4

Commerce orders companies to update ownership records

KUWAIT CITY, July 30: Minister of Commerce and Industry Osama Khaled Boodai issued Ministerial Resolution No. 156/2026, amending certain provisions of Ministerial Resolution No. 4/2023 concerning procedures for identifying the beneficial owners of companies. The move aims to strengthen transparency and enhance compliance with regulatory requirements, reports Al-Seyassah daily.



Boodai

The resolution replaces provisions in Articles 8, 9, and 11 of the previous resolution. It requires legal entities to establish a special register containing beneficial ownership information and maintain it within a period not exceeding 15 days from the resolution's effective date or from the date of the entity's establishment.

Legal entities are also required to update the register and record any changes to the information within

15 days of becoming aware of such changes or from the date they should have become aware of them.

The resolution requires any director or board member acting in the capacity of a nominee member to notify the legal entity of this status and provide the required information within 15 days of acquiring it.

The resolution also grants individuals who acquired this capacity before the publication of the resolution a 15-day period from the date of publication to submit the required notification.

The decision stipulates that legal entities must submit the beneficial owner register, along with the records of partners or shareholders, to the relevant registry within 15 days from the effective date of the decision or from the date of licensing and registration.

Continued on Page 4



8 KFH Group contributes \$13 million to Kuwait Emergency Response Fund and \$6 million to power stations repairs



9 NBK organizes a workshop for Kuwait University students to enhance interview skills and prepare them for the job market

NewsWatch

KUWAIT CITY: Kuwait on Thursday welcomed Ireland's law banning the import of commodities from Israeli occupation settlements built in the occupied Palestinian territory.

In a statement, the Kuwaiti Foreign Ministry valued Ireland's position; consistent with international law, stressing the need for the international community and the UN Security Council to fulfill their responsibilities in addressing Israel's settlement policy, which undermines the prospects for peace. (KUNA)

Lebanon blocks Captagon route to Saudi and Kuwait

KUWAIT CITY, July 30: The Lebanese Internal Security Forces (ISF) have thwarted two attempts to smuggle Captagon pills destined for Saudi Arabia and Kuwait that were professionally concealed inside children's coats, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Two individuals involved in the smuggling operations were arrested, including one suspect in Kuwait.

In a statement issued on Thursday, the ISF Directorate General explained that customs officials at Beirut International Airport seized a postal package on June 26 containing 4.5 kilograms of Captagon pills concealed inside coats. The package was intended to be smuggled to Saudi Arabia through a shipping company.

Continued on Page 4



Prayer Timings

Fajr	03:39	Asr	15:30
Sunrise ..	05:07	Maghrib ..	18:42
Zohr	11:55	Isha	20:10



HH the Amir



King Mohammad VI

Amir congrats Moroccan King Mohammad VI on Throne Day

KUWAIT CITY, July 30, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a congratulatory cable on Thursday to King Mohammad VI of Morocco on the occasion of the 26th anniversary of the National Throne Day.

In the cable, His Highness the Amir commended the achievements made by Morocco under King Mohammad VI's leadership across various fields, while praising the longstanding and strong relations between Kuwait and Morocco.

His Highness the Amir wished the Moroccan King continued good health and well-being, and the Moroccan people further progress and prosperity.

Crown Prince congratulates

His Highness the Crown Prince

Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent a congratulatory cable on Thursday to King Mohammad VI of Morocco on the occasion of the 26th anniversary of the National Throne Day.

In the cable, His Highness the Crown Prince expressed his sincere congratulations to the Moroccan King, wishing him continued good health and well-being, and Morocco further progress, growth and prosperity.

PM congratulates

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah sent a congratulatory cable on Thursday to King Mohammad VI of Morocco on the occasion of the 26th anniversary of the National Throne Day.



Kuwait's Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah meets Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.



Kuwait Foreign Minister Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah meets his Pakistani counterpart Ishaq Dar.

Kuwait, Pakistan realign strategic ties in current scenario

ISLAMABAD, July 30, (KUNA): Prime Minister of Pakistan, Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday received Kuwait's Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

A Kuwaiti foreign ministry statement said the reception saw reviewing historic bilateral relations between the two friendly countries and peoples, discussing means to further strengthen cooperation in diverse fields in a manner that serves both countries' interests. It also discussed latest regional developments aiming at supporting safety and stability in the area. In this regard, Sheikh Jarrah Al-Sabah expressed Kuwait's appreciation to the effective role played by Pakistan, noted the statement.

The visiting Kuwaiti top diplomat also conveyed greeting of the political leadership to President Asif Zardari, Premier Sharif and wishes of progress and prosperity to the Friendly people of Pakistan.

Pakistan Foreign Minister

Kuwaiti Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah held bilateral talks in Islamabad with Pakistan's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Mohammad Ishaq Dar to address strategic relations and key regional developments.

According to a press release issued by the Kuwaiti Ministry of Foreign Affairs, both sides conducted a comprehensive review of the historical ties uniting the two friendly nations and their peoples.

The ministers reaffirmed their mutual commitment to advancing bilateral cooperation across multiple domains, emphasizing the importance of expanding high-level coordination and consultation to elevate partnership mechanisms and serve common strategic interests.

Discussions also focused on evolving regional dynamics, with both officials addressing ongoing diplomatic initiatives aimed at de-escalating tensions and fostering stability.



KUNA photos
Kuwait Foreign Minister Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah shakes hands with the Pakistan's Chief of Army Staff and Commander of the Defence Forces Field Marshal Asim Munir.

Sheikh Al-Sabah expressed the State of Kuwait's deep appreciation for the active diplomatic role undertaken by the Islamic Republic of Pakistan in supporting peace and security throughout the region.

Pakistani army chief

Kuwaiti Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah then discussed in Islamabad with Pakistan's Chief of Army Staff and Commander of the Defence Forces Field Marshal Asim Munir bilateral defense synergies and the evolving regional security situation.

According to an official communiqué released by the Kuwaiti Ministry of Foreign Affairs, high-level discussions held during Sheikh Al-Sabah's official visit centered on consolidating the deep-seated historical bond between the two nations and their respective peoples.

Both sides emphasized the imperative of expanding institutionalized defense frameworks, scaling up high-level bilateral consultations, and deepening strategic military alignment to safeguard mutual national interests.

The two officials further conducted a comprehensive review of pressing regional developments, prioritizing constructive diplomatic avenues to mitigate security volatility and institutionalize long-term stability across the region.

Sheikh Al-Sabah underscored the State of Kuwait's profound appreciation for Pakistan's proactive diplomatic engagement and pivotal defense contribution toward underpinning regional equilibrium and shared security imperatives.

Pakistan welcomes ratification of defense accord with Kuwait

'Vital milestone in long-standing partnership'

ISLAMABAD, July 30, (KUNA): Pakistan Foreign Office on Thursday said that Pakistan welcomes Kuwait's ratification of Pakistan-Kuwait Defense Cooperation Agreement, issued recently in the official gazette.

Addressing weekly press briefing at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Islamabad, Pakistan Foreign Office Spokesperson Tahir Andrabi termed the recent visit of Kuwait's Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah as "important both in regional context as well as in bilateral terms."

Pakistan's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar welcomed Kuwait's ratification of Pakistan-Kuwait Defense Cooperation Agreement, describing it as a significant step towards strengthening institutional defense ties and collaboration between the two

countries, he explained.

Pakistan and Kuwait reaffirmed their strong and long-standing bilateral partnerships, and agreed to deepen cooperation, particularly in trade, investment, energy, Information Technology (IT), agriculture, education, health, and other priority sectors, through sustained high-level engagements and establishment of the joint working groups, the spokesperson noted.

"The two sides also exchanged views on regional and international developments and pledged to continue coordination at the multi-lateral forum and reaffirmed our shared commitment to further advance this important fraternal relationship," he added.

The statement by the spokesperson comes a day after a Pakistan Foreign Office press release welcomed the recent ratification of the Pakistan-Kuwait Defense Cooperation Agreement, signed in June 2023.

"This marks another important milestone in the longstanding defense partnership between the two brotherly countries, dating back to the

early 1980s. It also reflects the shared resolve of both sides to further strengthen bilateral defense cooperation and elevate their security partnership," said the release.

The agreement provides a comprehensive institutional framework for expanding defense cooperation, encompassing military training and education, joint exercises, exchanges of expertise, and other mutually agreed areas of collaboration, it added.

It will further enhance institutional linkages between the Armed Forces of both countries and consolidate the longstanding defense ties between Pakistan and Kuwait.

"Pakistan and Kuwait will continue to work closely to implement the Agreement in accordance with its provisions, thereby expanding bilateral defense collaboration, strengthening their enduring defense partnership underpinned by mutual trust, shared interests, and close institutional cooperation, and contributing to regional peace, security and stability," the release concluded.



The cake-cutting ceremony.



Ambassadors and diplomats attended the celebration.

Plan to hire skilled labor from African nations

Benin, Kuwait eye food, cybersecurity deals

By Fares Ghaleb
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, July 30: Assistant Foreign Minister for African Affairs Ambassador Sameeh Hayat said the relationship between Kuwait and the Republic of Benin has been growing steadily since the establishment of diplomatic ties in 1973.

Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of the celebration that the Embassy of Benin organized marking the 66th Independence Day of the country, Hayat also unveiled plans to sign new agreements covering food security and cybersecurity, while activating existing agreements to strengthen the partnership between the two countries and create broader opportunities for cooperation. He

pointed out that the Kuwaiti-Beninese relations are built on a number of memoranda of understanding and bilateral agreements, which have played a significant role in advancing cooperation between the two nations.

He added that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs continuously reviews Kuwait's relations with African countries, emphasizing that there is a clear direction toward expanding the diplomatic presence of Kuwait in the African continent in the coming period.

He disclosed that Kuwait has already started reinforcing cooperation with several African countries in the area of labor recruitment. He said agreements have been concluded with a number of these countries to recruit skilled and other categories of workers, while efforts continue to ex-

pand this cooperation in line with the needs of the Kuwaiti labor market.

On the other hand, Ambassador of the Republic of Benin Professor Badirou Aguemon reaffirmed the strength of relations between Benin and Kuwait, describing them as steadily expanding at the political and economic levels. He revealed the aspiration of his country to solidify this partnership and widen the scope of cooperation and investment in ways that serve the mutual interests of the two nations.

Aguemon stated that Benin highly values its close ties with the State of Kuwait, praising the wisdom of the Kuwaiti leaders and their vital role in promoting security, stability, dialogue and cooperation at the regional and international levels.

Call for gov't, banking sectors to up relations, support SDGs

KUWAIT CITY, July 30, (KUNA): Minister of State for Development and Sustainability Dr. Reem Al-Fulaij discussed with Kuwait Banking Association Secretary-General Shaikha Al-Essa and representatives of Kuwaiti banks ways to strengthen cooperation between the government and banking sectors to support Kuwait's sustainable development goals.

Al-Fulaij told KUNA on Thursday that the meeting reviewed key national sustainability initiatives and practices, while discussing mechanisms to enhance coop-

eration, exchange expertise and successful experiences, and improve sustainability reporting methodologies in line with international best practices.

She stressed that partnership with the banking sector represents a model of national cooperation that reinforces sustainability principles and institutional practices, affirming the ministry's commitment to building strategic partnerships with public and private entities to advance Kuwait's sustainable development vision.

Other Voices

Cat's eyes and the MPW

By Ahmad alsarraaf

Cat's eyes, those semi-spherical road markers installed along lanes to improve visibility, especially at night, are widely used around the world. They are called "cat's eyes" because they reflect vehicle headlights and glow in the darkness, resembling the eyes of a cat.

I discussed them in a previous article, where I mentioned that British engineer Percy Shaw invented them in 1933. His inspiration came from the reflection of his car's headlights in a cat's eyes on the side of the road during a foggy night, which saved him from veering off the road.

The idea later gained significant importance, particularly during World War II, when "night-time blackouts" were imposed to prevent German aircraft from targeting cities. Cat's eyes became an essential tool for guiding drivers through complete darkness without the need for street lighting. Their use expanded widely after World War II.

However, the Ministry of Public Works in Kuwait has begun using cat's eyes as a "fun toy," following the recommendation of an advisor who believed their widespread installation was necessary for several reasons. I will discuss this issue at the end of this article.

The original and classic design of cat's eyes consists of a metal or rubber body fixed to the road surface. Older designs were often made of cast iron, while more advanced versions use rubber and reinforced polyurethane.

The flexible material allows the reflector to compress and sink slightly when vehicles pass over it, helping to protect it from damage while also allowing the

movement to clean its surface automatically. Inside each unit are glass reflectors positioned at precise angles to reflect vehicle headlights directly towards drivers. Cat's eyes are manufactured in the United Kingdom, their country of origin. Astucia, which inherited the legacy of Reflecting Roadstuds, remains one of the largest manufacturers of these road safety devices.

China has become one of the world's leading producers and exporters of cat's eyes, manufacturing various types made from plastic, glass, rubber, and even solar-powered models.

The United States produces similar domestic versions with some design differences. India, South Korea, and Taiwan are also major manufacturers, particularly for export to Asian and African markets. In Europe, Germany and Italy produce advanced versions, including models that provide their own illumination rather than relying solely on reflected light.

I decided to write again about cat's eyes because of their excessive and unreasonable use by the Ministry of Public Works, particularly on thousands of internal roads, where they are being installed primarily to warn drivers of speed bumps.

The Ministry of Public Works, based on what appears to be irrational specifications, has installed 48 cat's eyes to mark each and every speed bump, despite these bumps having existed for decades without warning devices, color markings, or illumination.

I urge the Minister of Public Works Dr. Noura Al-Mashaan, who has recently not been responding to my observations, to consider stopping this harmful expansion in their use. Despite their benefits, cat's eyes can pose risks to vehicle tires, especially if they become damaged or break and develop sharp edges. There are many cheaper, more effective, and simpler alternatives for warning drivers of speed bumps than installing 84 pieces of cat's eyes in front of every speed bump.



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Iranian evil regime is destined for oblivion

“WE often hear Iranian officials invoke the phrase “an eye for an eye.” By that same principle, reciprocity should also apply to Iran,” columnist Eng. **Adel Al-Jarallah Al-Kharafi** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

“Actions carried out by Iran and its proxies must be met with reciprocity. Iranian aggression must be addressed through legitimate self-defense. One of Iran’s proxies in Iraq, which claimed responsibility for the attack on the Al-Abdali border crossing while the Iraqi Prime Minister was visiting Tehran, must be held accountable.



Adel Al-Kharafi

“Here at the daily, we understand this incident as sending a dual message to both Iraq and Kuwait. The targeting of a border crossing between Kuwait and Iraq by Iranian-backed militias indicates that the attack was premeditated. Targeting civilian infrastructure reinforces Kuwait’s right to respond, particularly as such attacks cannot be justified under any circumstances.

“The pretext that US forces bombed the Iranian Shalamchah border crossing with Iraq does not give Iran, or its proxies in Iraq, the right to target Kuwait.

“As a Kuwaiti citizen whose country has been subjected to repeated attacks, I question the Iraqi Prime Minister’s statement that Iran’s security is Iraq’s security. Is Kuwait’s security not also intertwined with Iraq’s? Should those who violate the law not be held accountable?

“If Iran’s security depends on Iraq, does that justify terrorism being carried out against Kuwait from Iraqi territory? Would Iraqi officials accept a reciprocal response? These questions, and others, arise within the context of the principle of reciprocity. I raise them in light of the Iraqi government’s declarations that sovereignty is an absolute right of the state. Such sovereignty must be complete, and no illegitimate forces should participate in it.

“Trust has been completely eroded. The bombing of the Abdali border crossing, as mentioned earlier, was a message directed at both Iraq and Kuwait. Therefore, Kuwait has the right to respond in accordance with international law and the UN Charter.

“Kuwait has the right to respond in kind, as Iranian officials themselves have stated. Iran’s militias in Iraq must be held accountable. A political response is also essential, through strengthening relations between the two Arab neighbors and preventing Iranian actions from driving a wedge between two brotherly nations. Ultimately, regimes built on hostility and aggression will not endure, while Kuwait and Iraq will endure.”

Also:

“During the difficult phase Kuwait is experiencing in the face of the treacherous Iranian terrorist aggression, I have come to appreciate the importance of strategic planning for the future of our nation,” Kuwaiti writer **Ahmad Abu Al-Ali Bu Abbas** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

“The rapid transformations taking place both regionally and internationally require us to quickly identify our strategic options in these challenging circumstances and pursue the path that best safeguards our future. First, we must understand that pragmatism often prevails in the world, without exception, and that there are those who are willing to compromise without principles, disregarding the humanitarian contributions we have made to the world.

“The State of Kuwait, by the grace of God Almighty alone, has endured various disasters and challenges that threatened its existence throughout history, under the leadership of its rulers.

“Based on my limited perspective and without claiming knowledge of the complexities of international politics, I offer some thoughts and ideas that may be useful in this regard, presented in the form of questions.

“Do we have alliances, organizations, or international agreements that we can join to serve as a bulwark for us in the event of future threats? Are there other countries willing to link their shared destiny with ours? Does Kuwait have the right to withdraw from alliances that have proven ineffective? Is there a way to strengthen the operational framework of the Gulf Cooperation Council so that military and diplomatic efforts are unified under a single leadership and based on complete consensus?

“Do we have an opportunity to diversify our sources of armament and military equipment? Do we have the capacity to expand recruitment and raise the age limit for conscription?

“I have entered my forties, yet I remain fully prepared to stand alongside the loyal young men of our armed forces in defending our nation.

“All citizens hear and obey the directives of His Highness the Amir, Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

“Only God knows what we feel when we hear the sounds of air raid sirens and the explosions from the defenses of our valiant forces. This feeling is not one of fear or panic, but rather a deep sense of anger towards a spiteful Iranian enemy.

“We wanted to retaliate against this heinous aggression many times over and teach them a lesson they will never forget. However, those entrusted with decision-making certainly know best and are committed to protecting the supreme interests of the State of Kuwait.

“I want to speak the truth to those who have been deceived by Iran’s self-proclaimed Islamic Republic. The reality is that the Iranian regime is a racist, terrorist, and barbaric entity that seeks to revive a defunct nationalism in order to dominate and enslave any ethnicity that submits to it. Having failed to revive the failed Shah’s regime, it has followed an even more misguided path, while hiding itself behind a theocratic and religious guise.

“Our enemy suffers from a personal identity crisis. It claims that the Supreme Leader is a descendant of the Prophet’s (PBUH) family, but on the other hand, it practices chauvinism, imposes Persian identity, and kills millions of Muslims. Can there be any doubt that this regime is doomed?

“If you believe in God and His Messenger, remember that this regime will be destroyed, by the command of God, the One, the Almighty.”

□ □ □

“Not all relationships can be repaired, and not every wound of the soul is healed by time or good intentions. Some relationships take more than they give, draining a person in the name of affection and causing pain under the guise of familiarity and love.” Kuwaiti writer **Fatima Nasser Al-Muzayel** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

“In such grey areas, walking away is not a sign of weakness but a mark of deep awareness. Saying goodbye is not an act of escape, but one of the highest forms of self-respect and self-care.

“Collective consciousness has long glorified endurance, as though staying were an unquestionable virtue regardless of the cost. Yet the truth runs deeper. Continuing without purpose is a form of slow erosion, and repeatedly investing in a relationship that neither listens nor changes is not courage, but exhaustion.

“Relationships that lack genuine affection and respect, silence one’s voice, or force one person to carry the burden of constant justification transform closeness into a burden and presence into a quiet form of suffering.

“A mature farewell is not born from impulse or fleeting emotion. It is a decision that takes shape through reflection and emerges only after sincere efforts to understand, reconcile, and repair. It seeks neither justification nor blame, neither exposing faults nor claiming moral superiority. It simply declares - the harm ends here, drawing a clear and dignified boundary where dignity can no longer survive.



Fatima Al-Muzayel

“Honesty with one’s pain is essential to this kind of farewell. Pretending to be strong does not heal, and denying suffering does not bring relief. Acknowledging the loss, the sadness, and the emptiness left by walking away is not the end of healing, but its beginning. When we allow pain to be acknowledged, not to rule us, but to be understood, we give it its proper place and prevent it from growing in the shadows.

“True courage lies in not returning. Not because there is no longing, but because longing can be deceptive, and memory often softens the past while overlooking the wounds it carried. Returning without meaningful change is only a repetition of the same pain. The heart deserves a place of safety and respect, not a constant test of endurance.

“Courage, in this context, is neither harshness nor pride. It is loyalty to the self that has grown weary and respect for the boundaries we learned to draw, even if we learned them later than we should have.

“Ending some relationships is not a sign of failure, but of emotional maturity. It is the choice to protect inner peace over seeking temporary approval, and to value psychological well-being above the expectations of others. In a world that often glorifies enduring suffering for the sake of staying, choosing to walk away with awareness becomes an act of quiet strength, and a dignified farewell becomes an expression of self-respect.

“In the end, value is not measured by the number of people who remain around us, but by the quality of peace we carry within ourselves. When farewell becomes the only path to reclaiming that peace, choosing it is not a loss ... but a salvation.”

— Compiled by Simi K. Kutty



Farwaniya Governorate photo

Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Athbi Nasser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah attended the meeting of governors at the headquarters of the Environment Public Authority (EPA), with Minister of State for Development and Sustainability Affairs Dr. Reem Ghazi Al-Fulajj in attendance.

‘All sectors must be on same page to achieve SDGs’

KUWAIT CITY, July 30: Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Athbi Nasser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah attended the meeting of governors held Wednesday at the headquarters of the Environment Public Authority (EPA), with Minister of State for Development and Sustainability Affairs Dr. Reem Ghazi Al-Fulajj in attendance.

The meeting included a presentation on the sustainability reporting system and its objectives in supporting the efforts of government agencies and promoting the principles of sustainable planning.

It tackled the importance of unifying efforts and integrating roles among various entities for Kuwait to achieve the sustainable development goals.

It also highlighted the significance of strengthening cooperation between the governorates and concerned government agencies to improve institutional performance and yield positive results that align with the direction of the country towards sustainability and development of services provided to citizens.

Water for Africa, Asia, Gaza

Namaa Charity to set up 781 projects: Al-Shamri

KUWAIT CITY, July 30: Khaled Mubarak Al-Shamri, Programs and Initiatives Head at the Namaa Charitable Society, which is affiliated with the Social Reform Society, affirmed that the ‘Your Donation Quenches their Thirst’, campaign does not only aim to supply drinking water, but also to convey a humanitarian message that gives hope to communities experiencing water scarcity.

Al-Shamri revealed that the campaign will give more than 574,000 beneficiaries a new chance at life through the implementation of 781 water projects in Gaza and several needy African and Asian countries.

He stated that millions of people around the world are forced to walk tens of kilometers in search of water that may not even be potable. He added that a large number of students are deprived of their education and their future is lost due to lack of water supply.

He said women bear the brunt of this suffering, as some mothers walk for more than three hours to reach a water source and another three hours for the return journey, carrying heavy containers daily.

He pointed out that villages have access only to contaminated drinking water, making disease a part of their daily lives, and transforming a drop of water from being a source of life into a

cause of illness and suffering.

He disclosed that children are the most affected by this crisis, as unsafe water leads to the spread of serious diseases, which could be prevented by providing a clean water source. He stated that contaminated water causes diseases that claimed the lives of a huge number of children in several African countries.

He explained that the campaign aims to implement 781 water projects, including artesian wells, surface wells and semi-artesian wells, in addition to providing water tankers in crisis areas.

He added that the campaign extends to the Gaza Strip, which is suffering from an unprecedented water crisis due to damages to water networks and infrastructure.

The campaign also includes support for Sudanese refugees in Chad, as well as the implementation of water projects in Yemen, Niger, Somalia, Benin and India, thereby, reaching more than half a million beneficiaries.

Al-Shamri emphasized that the impact of water projects extends beyond quenching thirst, as it includes improving public health, curbing the spread of diseases, enabling children to return to school, alleviating the burdens of women, and supporting family stability.

He asserted that every well drilled is the beginning of a new life, every water tanker that reaches those in need is a message of mercy and hope, and every contribution from donors leaves a lasting impact that can save a life and revitalize an entire village.



Water gushing from a well wets the charity member.



Namaa Charity photos
Gratitude from a local African man.

Gold jewelry seized

Child dies, two injured in 2 separate accidents

KUWAIT CITY, July 30: A vehicle accident on the 600 Expressway towards Umm Safaq resulted in the death of one minor and injuries to another, reports Al-Anba daily.

According to security sources, the vehicle overturned, causing injuries to both occupants. They were transported by Emergency Medical Services to Adan Hospital for treatment. The hospital security personnel were later notified that one of the minors had died from his injuries, while the other remains hospitalized.

In a separate incident, the Ministry of Interior’s Operations Room received a report two days ago about a hit-and-run accident involving a man in his forties in the Jahra market area.

Patrols and paramedics immediately responded to the scene and found that an Arab expatriate had been struck by a vehicle driven by a Kuwaiti citizen, sustaining injuries and fractures. He was transported by ambulance to Jahra Hospital, while the driver was taken into custody.

□ □ □

Gold jewelry confiscated: The inspection team of the Farwaniya Monitoring Department at the Ministry of Commerce and Industry conducted field visits to several commercial establishments, resulting in the issuance of 101 violation reports for various offenses, including commercial fraud, the sale of goods of unknown origin, and the sale of prohibited items, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The ministry explained that the inspections also led to the seizure of gold jewelry from a shop that did not bear the ministry’s official stamp, along with violations including failure to display price lists and failure to indicate the country of origin of products.

A grocery store was found selling subsidized food items and was immediately closed.

A domestic worker recruitment agency was also found to be in violation of ministerial regulations prohibiting cash transactions.

The ministry further stated that 13 violation notices were issued to establishments operating without valid licenses or conducting activities inconsistent with their licensed purposes.

□ □ □

Ignore unknown calls: Security sources urged citizens and residents to avoid responding to phone calls, whether from seemingly local mobile numbers, WhatsApp accounts, or international numbers, in which callers claim to represent security authorities or official entities and request personal or banking information, reports Al-Anba daily.

They explained that such calls are fraudulent attempts aimed at stealing bank balances and carrying out electronic scams. Officers and personnel of the Ministry of Interior do not make such calls and are not authorized to request personal or banking information from citizens or residents through phone calls or messaging applications.

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Other Voices

Can too much choice lead to unhappiness?

By Hala Al Humaidhi

NOWADAYS, people have the luxury of choices. From food to entertainment, from career path to spouse to where to live, the choices are everywhere. Yet, while the existence of options seems like a benefit, studies show that sometimes having too many choices can lead to feelings of dissatisfaction rather than happiness.

If there are only a few choices, it is easier to pick one, and usually, we accept our decision with peace. When there are too many options, however, our brains start evaluating each choice. We are afraid of picking the wrong one and missing out on something better. That is why psychologists call it the “Paradox of Choice”, and more freedom leads to anxiety.

Moreover, after the decision is taken, our minds still cannot stop wondering whether it was the right decision. We keep thinking, “What if I had chosen something else?”, or “Was there a better choice?”. Such thoughts make us dissatisfied even if the decision we took was actually a good one.

It is also worth mentioning that social media is making the

paradox of choice worse. Every day, we see other lives, other careers, other travels, and other partners that seem more interesting than ours.

Thus, social media gives us constant reminders of other options that seem to give us more happiness than what we have now. Because of this, we tend to be less satisfied with our own lives.

However, it does not mean that choices are not a good thing. The freedom to choose is an important element of our independence and mental health.

The problem is that when there are too many choices, it becomes difficult to decide. People get overwhelmed and sometimes do not make a decision at all, or when they take one, they often feel regret.

So how can we solve this problem? One possible solution is that we need to know our priorities in life when we face a decision.

If we do not look for the perfect choice but simply look for a choice that fits us, the pressure would decrease.

In reality, we are not guaranteed to find the best option in life, but we can try to create the best life out of whatever choices we make.

Our happiness lies not in the number of choices we have, but in our ability to be confident about what we choose.



Al-Humaidhi

Kuwait reforms protect migrant workers rights

IOM lauds Kuwait gov’t initiatives as very productive

By Fares Ghaleb

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, July 30: Head of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) mission in Kuwait Mazen Abu Al-Hassan announced that the country has made remarkable progress in strengthening its migration governance framework and enhancing protection for migrant workers.

In an interview with the newspaper, Abu Al-Hassan commended the strong cooperation between the IOM and Kuwaiti government agencies in capacity building, combating human trafficking, and safeguarding the rights of migrant workers.

He said official figures show that expatriates are considered a key component of the local labor market, accounting for around 70 percent of the private sector workforce. He disclosed that workers of more than 100 nationalities contribute to essential sectors like construction, services, healthcare, transportation and domestic work.

He added that the migrant worker protection system of the country continues to develop through a strong legislative and institutional framework. He indicated that several laws serve as the main pillars in protecting the rights of workers, such as Private Sector Labor Law No. 6/2010, Anti-Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants Law No. 91/2013, and Domestic Workers Law No. 68/2015.

He stated that Kuwait introduced a number of positive measures in recent years, which have strengthened the protection system, citing the opening of a shelter for male migrant workers in 2025 as one of the most significant developments.

He confirmed that access to complaint

mechanisms and official authorities has been improved through digital platforms, including the Sahel application and other approved electronic channels.

He stressed that these measures streamlined procedures, increased transparency, and improved response times.

He added that labor inspection mechanisms have also undergone significant development, particularly through the electronic documentation and regulation of working hours and rest periods in accordance with Resolution No. 15/2025.

He revealed that domestic workers constitute a substantial segment of the workforce in the country, with their number estimated at more than 880,000 individuals of diverse nationalities and backgrounds.

He said addressing the issues concerning domestic workers remains a priority in ensuring a safe and dignified working environment for all parties. He pointed out that Kuwait took several important steps in recent years to strengthen protection for domestic workers, including the enactment of Domestic Workers Law No. 68/2015, adoption of standardized employment contracts, expanded awareness programs, and enhanced bilateral cooperation with countries of origin to regulate recruitment and safeguard workers’ rights.

He revealed that cooperation between the IOM and Kuwaiti government agencies led to the implementation of several important initiatives in recent years, aimed at improving migration governance, protecting migrant workers, combating human trafficking, and strengthening institutional capacity.

He cited one of the notable initiatives -- the specialized capacity-building programs fo-

cused on combating human trafficking. “In cooperation with the Ministry of Interior, the IOM organized 21 specialized training sessions that benefited 462 participants from various relevant departments. The training was designed to improve their ability to identify victims of trafficking and implement the relevant national procedures,” he elaborated.

He added that Kuwait introduced a series of reforms and regulatory measures throughout 2024 and 2025, thereby, proving its commitment to modernize the labor market and raise its efficiency.

He said the crucial developments include the advancement of digital systems for issuing work permits and managing labor transfers, along with more structured mechanisms for verifying qualifications and professional classifications. He also highlighted the expanded use of electronic platforms to deliver services and process transactions, indicating that platforms such as As’hal, Sahel and Kuwait Visa simplified procedures, increased transparency, and reduced the time and effort required to complete transactions.

He clarified that the theme of the 2026 World Day Against Trafficking in Persons, “Trapped Behind Fraud,” draws attention to the hidden human cost of cyber fraud and online scams.

He explained that cyber fraud extends beyond financial crimes and cyber offenses, stressing that such schemes may conceal cases of human trafficking involving victims who have been deceived, recruited through false promises, and subjected to coercion.

He confirmed that Kuwait continues to offer excellent employment opportunities and that expatriate workers have been playing an important role in the country’s economic and social development for decades. He advised those considering employment in Kuwait to obtain accurate and reliable information before deciding to travel.



Al-Hassan



Kuwait Dive Team members remove a discarded fishing net dumped on the Sulai-bikhat beach.

Kuwaiti Dive Team clears abandoned fishing nets

KUWAIT CITY, July 30, (KUNA): Kuwait Dive Team of the Environmental Voluntary Foundation removed large quantities of abandoned fishing nets from waters south of Kuwait Bay off the Sulai-bikhat coast as part of efforts to protect the country’s marine environment.

Team leader Waleed Al-Fadhel said Wednesday to KUNA the operation, carried out in cooperation with the Ministry of Interior, removed nets that posed a direct threat to marine wildlife.

He said the nets were transported to designated disposal sites after being re-

covered to help prevent “ghost fishing,” in which abandoned gear traps and kills fish and seabirds.

Al-Fadhel added that the team has intensified cleanup operations in Kuwait Bay because of its importance as a natural nursery for fish and marine life, as well as a key habitat for migratory birds.

He urged sea-goers and fishermen to comply with environmental regulations prohibiting fishing and the disposal of waste or fishing gear in Kuwait Bay, stressing that protecting the marine environment is a shared responsibility.

Continued from Page 1

Lebanon blocks

The Central Drug Enforcement Bureau launched an investigation that led to the identification of the package’s sender in the Riad El Solh area of Beirut. He was arrested on June 29 and identified as a Lebanese national born in 1983.

The investigation also uncovered another smuggling operation, resulting in the seizure of 6.5 kilograms of Captagon pills intended to be smuggled to Kuwait through a shipping company. The pills were also concealed inside cots.

The General Directorate of Internal Security Forces said it coordinated with Kuwait’s Drug Control General Department through the Criminal Security Office at the Kuwaiti Embassy in Lebanon. This cooperation led to the arrest of one of the individuals involved in the case in Kuwait and the seizure of a quantity of drugs in his possession.

Commerce orders

Legal entities are also required to take the necessary measures to maintain and protect these records from damage, loss, or destruction.

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry confirmed that the decision takes effect from the date of its issuance on July 30, 2026. It

will be published in the official gazette, and the relevant authorities have been assigned responsibility for its implementation.

Humidity joins

Friday night is expected to be hot to warm and humid along the coast, with light to moderate southeasterly winds ranging from six to 32 kilometers per hour. Minimum temperatures will range between 32 and 34 degrees Celsius, and the sea will remain slight to moderate, with waves between one and four feet.

For the Saturday forecast, Al-Ali disclosed that the weather will be very hot and humid, particularly in coastal areas. Winds will be southeasterly to variable, light to moderate, occasionally becoming brisk, at speeds ranging from eight to 40 kilometers per hour. Maximum temperatures are expected to range between 45 and 47 degrees Celsius, while the sea will be slight to moderate, with waves between one and five feet.

He added that Saturday night will be hot to warm and humid along the coast, with light to moderate southeasterly to variable winds ranging from six to 30 kilometers per hour. Some high clouds are expected, while minimum temperatures will range between 31 and 33 degrees Celsius. Sea conditions will remain slight to moderate, with waves between one and three feet.



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Continued from Page 1

One tap

She added that PAM intensified its inspection campaigns to ensure compliance with labor market regulations, developed its mechanisms this year, and enhanced its electronic services.

She clarified that the 'Report Me' service allows all members of society to report any suspected human trafficking. She stressed that cooperation between government agencies, civil society organizations, international organizations, and the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI) contributes to delivering awareness messages to various segments of society, especially the workers of different nationalities and languages.

She confirmed that the indicators of PAM are stable, as there has been no remarkable increase or decrease, adding that public awareness has been raised and reporting methods are now easier through the social media and electronic services.

She pointed out that the intensified inspection campaigns over the past year decreased the number of violations, indicating that PAM focuses on balancing the rights of workers and employers, and calls on both parties to adhere to the law and treat each other humanely.

She said the digital transformation has not reduced the number of reports as much as it has facilitated workers' access to PAM and expedited the process of submitting and tracking complaints electronically from anywhere. She emphasized that all reports, including those submitted through the 'Report Me' service, are subject to the highest level of confidentiality to ensure the safety of both the informants and victims.

Furthermore, Assistant Foreign Affairs Minister for Human Rights Ambassador Sheikhha Jawaher Al-Sabah affirmed that Kuwait is committed to commemorating the World Day Against Trafficking in Persons annually.

She said Kuwait has a national strategy for combating human trafficking and migrant smuggling, developed by the National Committee that is chaired by the Minister of Justice, and whose members include the representatives of relevant government agencies, thus, reinforcing the integration of efforts in this area.

She explained that holding the event in a shopping mall aimed to reach diverse segments of society and raise awareness on the rights of both workers and employers. She stressed that awareness is one of the most important tools for preventing human trafficking.

She disclosed that the Anti-Trafficking Law of the country is currently under review to develop and strengthen guarantees and rights.

She said Kuwait has around 1.7 mil-

lion workers in the private sector, as well as about 700,000 domestic workers. She affirmed that guaranteeing and protecting workers' rights is a priority within the framework of the commitment to safeguard human rights.

She stated that the Human Rights Affairs Department in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is working through two main tracks. First is through the membership of Kuwait in the International Labor Organization (ILO), in partnership with PAM, Kuwait Council for the Promotion of Human Rights, and General Federation of Trade Unions.

She added that the second track is through the National Committee for Combating Trafficking in Persons, emphasizing that cooperation with PAM is witnessing continuous development.

She went on to reveal that the main objectives of the World Day Against Trafficking in Persons include the protection of workers' rights, raising awareness about these rights, adherence to working hours, and ensuring timely payment of wages.

She also stressed the need for workers to have bank accounts, taking into consideration the trend towards reducing the use of cash in financial transactions.

Iran strike

Qatar's Foreign Ministry warned that continued attacks could undermine diplomatic efforts to contain tensions and called for an immediate halt to military actions, a return to dialogue and avoidance of further escalation.

GCC condemns escalation
Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Secretary-General Jassim Al-Budaiwi condemned the renewed Iranian attacks against Kuwait and Jordan, describing them as a blatant violation of state sovereignty and international law.

He warned that the attacks represent a dangerous escalation threatening regional security and stability.

Kuwait stresses maritime security
Meanwhile, Chief of the General Staff of the Kuwaiti Army Lt. Gen. Khaled Al-Shuraiaan emphasized the importance of safeguarding waterways and ensuring the safety of international navigation amid growing regional security challenges.

The Ministry of Defense said Al-Shuraiaan made the remarks while leading the Kuwaiti delegation at a meeting of Chiefs of Staff of the Maritime Defense Coalition to maintain freedom of navigation in the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, held in Saudi Arabia.

Al-Shuraiaan stressed the need to protect international maritime routes, particularly given current regional developments, and highlighted the importance of strengthening cooperation and coordination among participating countries.

He said collective efforts are essential to consolidating security and stability and ensuring the continued freedom of navigation through vital waterways.

Jordan intercepts missiles
Meanwhile, Jordan's Armed Forces said air defenses intercepted and destroyed five missiles launched from Iran toward the Kingdom early Thursday.

The military spokesperson said the missiles were detected at an early stage and neutralized through pre-planned defensive measures protecting Jordanian airspace.

The operation was carried out efficiently, preventing the missiles from reaching their targets, with no casualties or injuries reported.

Jordan's Armed Forces reaffirmed their readiness to confront any threats to the Kingdom's security and sovereignty.

Kuwait, Jordan coordinate response

Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and Jordanian Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ayman Al-Safadi discussed the latest developments during a telephone conversation.

The two sides condemned the attacks targeting their countries and reviewed efforts to enhance regional security, stability and maritime navigation safety.

Saudi Arabia also condemned the attacks against Jordan, expressing solidarity with the Kingdom and rejecting actions it described as violations of international law and good-neighborly relations.

Kuwait condemns Damietta port attack

Separately, Kuwait condemned a drone attack targeting two vessels at Egypt's Damietta Port, which caused a fire onboard the ships.

The Damietta Port Authority said operations continued normally, with all terminals and berths functioning efficiently and vessel movement, cargo handling and logistics operations proceeding as scheduled.

Egyptian authorities confirmed that the attack caused no casualties.

Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah expressed Kuwait's solidarity with Egypt during a phone call with Egyptian Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty, reaffirming support for all measures taken by Cairo to protect its sovereignty and security.

Pakistan urges dialogue
Meanwhile, Pakistan called for renewed diplomatic efforts to ease tensions between Iran and the United States, stressing that dialogue remains the only viable path forward.

Pakistan Foreign Office spokesperson Tahir Andrabi said Islamabad was working to bring the parties back to the Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding to resolve outstanding issues and support de-escalation efforts.

Other Voices

The minister who taught me to teach

By Dr. Fatemah Albader

Long before I became a professor, and long before I was entrusted with leading an academic department at Kuwait International Law School, I learned what it meant to be an educator by watching my grandfather, Dr. Sulaiman Sadoon Al-Bader.

Kuwait knew him as a former Minister of Education and as Dean of the Faculty of Arts at Kuwait University. I knew him first as my grandfather, but also as the person who taught me, largely through his example, that education is one of the highest forms of service to one's country.

To remember him only through the positions he held would be incomplete. Those positions were important, particularly because of the moment in which he was called to serve.

He assumed the responsibility of Minister of Education from 1991 to 1992, immediately after Kuwait's liberation, when the country faced the enormous task of rebuilding institutions disrupted by the Iraqi invasion.

At that time, restoring education was not simply an administrative matter. Schools had to reopen, interrupted academic years had to be addressed and young people needed to regain a sense of stability and direction. Education formed part of Kuwait's national recovery.

During his tenure, the integrated academic year was introduced for the first time in Kuwait, allowing students to resume their education despite the extraordinary circumstances facing the country.

It was an initiative born of necessity, but it also represented something larger, a refusal to allow war to deprive a generation of its future.

His commitment to education, however, did not begin or end with the Ministry. As Dean of the Faculty of Arts at Kuwait University, he also helped shape the country's academic life.

For him, education was not merely a government portfolio he once held. It was a continuing responsibility.

That understanding influenced me more deeply than I realized at the time.

My own academic path eventually took me into law and, more specifically, public international law. Yet the passion to teach came from watching him.

Through him, I came to understand that a classroom is not separate from public service. What happens inside it eventually reaches far beyond it.

The ideas we introduce, the standards we set and the confidence we place in our students help shape the people who will later assume responsibility for our institutions and our country.

My grandfather continued to take an interest in my career throughout his life. He would ask whether I was still teaching and whether I was still writing. These were simple questions, but they revealed what he believed an academic life should be.

He did not treat becoming a professor as a destination that I had already reached. He understood that teaching and scholarship require continuity.

The important question was never merely whether I had earned a title or secured a position. It was whether I was continuing to do the work.



Dr. Sulaiman Al-Bader

Was I still teaching? Was I still writing? Was I still contributing?

Those questions remain with me today.

Now, as Head of the Public International Law Department, I appreciate their meaning even more.

Leadership in academia is not only about administering a department. It is about protecting the conditions in which teaching, intellectual curiosity and serious scholarship can flourish. It is about encouraging younger academics to continue developing and reminding students that education carries responsibilities as well as opportunities.

Although my grandfather's field of public service and my own academic specialization are different, the principle connecting them is the same.

Education is an investment in the future of the state.

Teaching law, in particular, means asking students to think seriously about justice, institutions, responsibility and Kuwait's place in the international community. It means preparing them not simply to obtain degrees, but to participate thoughtfully in the life of their country.

Public legacies are often measured through titles, official decisions and the institutions associated with a person's name. Those things matter.

But an educator's deepest legacy is more difficult to measure because it lives in other people. I witnessed this at our family's condolence gathering following my grandfather's death. Among those who came to pay their respects were former students who still remembered the influence he had exerted on their lives.

One woman's story affected me in particular. She had been inspired by him to continue studying in his own academic field and is now pursuing her PhD in France. Her presence made the meaning of an educator's legacy tangible. Decades after encountering him in the classroom, she was still carrying his influence into her own scholarship.

His work had not ended with the lecture he delivered or the course he taught. It had become part of another person's intellectual path. That is how education travels across generations. An educator's legacy lives in former students who carry a lesson into their professions. It lives in younger academics who adopt the standards they once observed. It lives in the seriousness with which one generation prepares the next.

Sometimes, it also lives within a family, when a granddaughter who grew up watching a life devoted to education eventually finds herself standing before students of her own.

My grandfather served Kuwait at a moment when education was essential to national recovery. His work helped return students to their classrooms after one of the most difficult periods in the country's history. Yet his legacy did not end with that period, nor did it end when he left public office.

For me, it continues every time I enter a classroom, guide a student, work on a new article or consider the future of my department. It continues through the former students who still remember him, and through the scholars whose paths were shaped by his teaching. It continues whenever I remember his questions and measure myself against them.

Am I still teaching? Am I still writing?

I hope that my work will always allow me to answer him in the same way: Yes. Still teaching. Still writing. Still carrying forward what he taught me.



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Dr Anthony Fauci is sworn in before the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee at the Capitol on July 29, in Washington. (AP)

Fauci repeatedly invokes 5th Amendment in contentious Senate committee hearing

WASHINGTON, July 30, (AP): Dr Anthony Fauci on Wednesday repeatedly invoked the Fifth Amendment and declined to answer dozens of questions from senators in a Republican-led committee hearing about his handling of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The decision, at least for now, shielded Fauci from answering questions that could expose him to accusations of lying under oath. Though he received a pardon in early 2025 from Democratic President Joe Biden, some Republicans pursuing a yearslong campaign for his arrest had suggested he could still face charges for any perjury committed during Wednesday’s hearing.

The scientist, who helped lead the nation’s COVID-19 response, was subpoenaed to testify under oath by Republican Sen. Rand Paul of Kentucky, who has long had an antagonistic relationship with Fauci.

In response to angry, sometimes mocking questions from Republican senators, Fauci declined to answer more than 100 times, injecting new drama into partisan divides that have festered for years about the origins and handling of the pandemic. Fauci himself has become a polarizing figure, even receiving death threats that prompted him to seek security.

In his opening statement, Fauci said Paul has an “obvious obsession with calling for my prosecution.”

“The only conclusion I can reach is that the sole reason he is calling me before this committee is to get me to say something, anything, that could vindicate his repeated public pledges that I end up, in his words, ‘behind bars,’” Fauci said, adding that while it pained him to do so, he was following his attorney’s advice by taking the Fifth.

Paul, who has long argued that Fauci should be criminally inves-

tigated, based on his belief that the scientist was dishonest in previous testimony to Congress, announced that the committee will vote next week on whether to hold Fauci in contempt for declining to answer questions.

He did not say whether he would push for a criminal contempt referral to federal prosecutors or another charge. He also raised questions about whether Fauci’s pardon affects his eligibility for Fifth Amendment protections.

In the combative hearing, Paul and other Republicans accused Fauci of lying in earlier testimony about the coronavirus’ origins, something the longtime National Institutes of Health scientist has forcefully denied. Democrats called the hearing a politically motivated attempt at entrapping Fauci and praised the scientist for his work during the pandemic.

Democratic officials in nearly two dozen states file federal lawsuit in Massachusetts

Trump attacks on mail balloting, concerns over delays turn midterms spotlight on Postal Service

WASHINGTON, July 30, (AP): Roughly six weeks before the first midterm ballots are mailed out, the US Postal Service is emerging as a pivotal player in an election season that will determine control of Congress.

President Donald Trump is seeking greater control over mail balloting through an executive order while a change to how the agency processes mail is leading to criticism that it’s failing to deliver ballots on time.

Democratic officials have raised concerns over the past week about how quickly the Postal Service will process ballots after tens of thousands of them in California and hundreds in Wisconsin arrived at local election offices too late to be counted in elections earlier this year. The top election offices in Kansas and Michigan are urging voters who want to cast their ballots early to avoid the mail and instead drop them off in person.

The Postal Service replied to those concerns Tuesday by saying it remains “committed to fulfilling our role in the electoral process.”

“We provide a secure, efficient, and effective way for citizens to participate when policymakers decide

to use mail as part of their elections,” it said in a statement.

The Postal Service faced similar questions about mail delivery in 2024, but the scrutiny this year is heightened because of an executive order Trump issued in March that seeks to create a national voter list to guide the Postal Service in deciding who gets a mail ballot.

The order has sparked multiple lawsuits and federal court orders, leading to a case now before the US Supreme Court in which the administration is asking the justices to allow it to impose its restrictions on mail balloting.

Trump has lied for years about voter fraud to try to explain away his loss to Democrat Joe Biden in 2020, and mail balloting is a favorite target, even though he has used the method himself. During a recent stop in Michigan, he falsely characterized mail balloting as “inherently corrupt” and added, “Hopefully there will be no mail-in ballots.”

A 2025 report from the research group Brookings identified about four cases of fraud for every 10 million mail ballots cast.

Despite Trump’s attacks, the method remains popular with voters



Postal workers and their supporters rally in front of a post office in New York on July 28, (AP)

of both major parties. In 2024, nearly 30% of US voters cast their ballots by mail, according to federal data. In Michigan, where competitive US House and Senate races could help determine the balance of power in Congress, the state said it has sent out more than 2 million absentee ballots for the state’s Aug 4 primary.

“We want to keep vote by mail. We

want to protect it. We want to expand it,” said Jonathan Smith, president of the 200,000-member American Postal Workers Union, which launched a campaign in April promoting it and is opposed to turning the Postal Service into an election administrator.

“Why? Because it works.”

The Postal Service proposed a rule in June in line with Trump’s executive order that would create a national list of eligible voters, based on databases kept by other federal agencies. Only those on the list would be eligible to receive mail ballots.

Democratic officials in nearly two dozen states filed a federal lawsuit in Massachusetts. A federal judge there blocked Trump’s order last month, and an appeals court upheld that ruling, prompting Trump’s appeal to the Supreme Court. But the appeals court for the District of Columbia refused Tuesday to block the order in a separate case, calling a legal challenge premature.

Democratic senators and governors have written to the Postal Service urging it to abandon efforts to implement Trump’s order.

“Donald Trump has shown he’ll stop at nothing to meddle in our upcoming elections,” Wisconsin Sen. Tammy Baldwin said in a statement to The Associated Press. “At best, this new push will exacerbate already severe delays for mail-in voters and at worst, it will stop eligible Americans from casting their ballots.”

Sophia Lin Lakin, ACLU Voting Rights Project director, said she doesn’t believe the Postal Service

has begun implementing anything related to Trump’s executive order while the legal challenges are playing out. But Smith, of the postal workers union, told the AP on Tuesday that USPS information technology staffers who are union members are working on a planned portal for the list of eligible voters “behind the scenes.”

The Postal Service declined to respond to Smith’s statements and said it could not comment about whether it’s moving forward with work related to Trump’s order because of the litigation.

The postal workers’ union opposes the plan for a portal, a national list of eligible voters and using that list to determine who can receive a mail ballot. Smith said it shouldn’t be postal workers’ responsibility “to decide who can vote and who can’t vote.”

The Postal Service has been under financial stress for years and has been consolidating mail processing into fewer regional centers. Mail travels an average of 139 miles (224 kilometers) to reach one and sometimes 500 miles (805 kilometers), according to a recent Brookings report.

Tens of thousands of French wildfire evacuees allowed to return home

LEGE-CAP FERRET, France, July 30, (AP): French authorities gave the go-ahead Thursday for 84,000 evacuees forced out by a monster wildfire to go back to their homes in southwest France, the strongest sign yet that firefighters are turning a corner in their battle against the flames that have burned an area four times the size of Paris.

The authorized returns announced Thursday covered nine localities that had been evacuated. In all, more than 220,000 people were forced to flee their homes since last week.

Higher humidity, cooler temperatures and slight rain raised hopes that Thursday could be a decisive step on the way to vanquishing the fire.

The regional prefecture said returning evacuees must keep their phones on for evacuation alerts and should pack in case they need to leave again.

Nearly two-thirds of the 224,000 people initially ordered to evacuate have now been allowed to go home. Some 60,000 people who had been evacuated from three suburbs of the city of Bordeaux, to the east, were given the go-ahead to return on Tuesday.

Authorities also said the A63 highway that has been closed since the weekend was reopening Thursday afternoon, clearing a major artery for road traffic with Spain and vacationers as France enters its peak



A firefighter creates a controlled burn area to contain a fire near Lege-Cap Ferret, during wildfires in southwestern France on July 30. (AP)

August holiday period.

Local officials reported a “rather calm” night, with a fire that has not grown beyond the 42,000 hectares (about 162 sq. miles) already affected. Fire crews remained at “total mobilization” with 2,200 firefighters and over 20 aircraft.

Sophie Brocas, the prefect for the Gironde region, expressed some optimism that lower temperatures could help.

“If that’s confirmed, we could foresee a return to a more normal life for residents, but also for businesses that need to work,” she told reporters

late Wednesday.

Humidity reached 80% overnight but was expected to drop by midday, authorities said. Some rainfall was expected along the coast that “could reach the fire zone,” Gironde officials said in a morning note.

Temperatures that peaked around 40 Celsius (104 Fahrenheit) a day earlier were set to drop Thursday, topping out at 27 C (80 F) along the coast. An “orange” heat wave alert - the second-highest level after “red” - was lifted shortly before dawn.

The fires in the Bordeaux wine-growing, forested and tourism-heavy region are among the blazes that have swept across pockets of southern Europe in recent weeks, including Spain and Greece.

On Thursday, firefighters were tackling multiple forest fires in four of Turkey’s western provinces, the state-run Anadolu news agency reported.

Blazes in touristic Mugla and Antalya and elsewhere raged overnight as hot weather and strong winds gripped the region. Residents were evacuated as teams with firefighting planes and helicopters battled the fires.

A day earlier, authorities in neighboring Greece said three firefighters had died on the island on Crete, as the wildfire emergency stretched from the Atlantic coast to the eastern Mediterranean.



In this photo provided by the Ukrainian Emergency Service, rescuers search through the rubble at a private house following Russian air attack in Dnipropetrovsk region, Ukraine on July 30. (AP)

Russian missile and drone strikes across Ukraine kill 8 civilians and wound dozens

KYIV, Ukraine, July 30, (AP): A Russian ballistic missile and drone barrage across Ukraine overnight into Thursday killed at least eight civilians, including children, and wounded more than 50 others, officials said.

The blitz expanded Russia’s almost daily bombardment of Ukrainian cities as Moscow apparently looked to exploit Kyiv’s critical shortage of Western-supplied anti-ballistic missile defenses.

NATO member Poland, meanwhile, was looking into Ukrainian reports that a Russian cruise missile entered its airspace during the onslaught in an incident that could deepen tensions between the Western military alliance and Moscow. European countries, mistrustful of the Kremlin’s wider ambitions, fear that the war in Ukraine could spill into their territory.

The barrage spanned regions across Ukraine, including areas by the border with Poland that are far from the front line in the east of the country and where Ukraine is believed to store and manufacture weapons for its fight against Russia’s more than 4-year-old invasion. Its long-range drones and missiles have battered Russia’s oil sector, causing a fuel crisis.

The attack came two days after Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy met in Washington with U.S. President Donald Trump and representatives of American defense

companies, as he pleads for swifter and bigger deliveries of Patriot air defense systems that are the best way to stop Russia’s ballistic assaults.

The Iran war has drained stockpiles of the American-made interceptors. Trump has promised to grant Ukraine licenses to build its own Patriots, but production could take a long time to set up.

“Given the critical shortage of air defense missiles from our partners, our warriors are accomplishing truly incredible things, demonstrating a very high level of professionalism,” Zelenskyy said on social media.

“This Russian terror once again proves that protection against the Russian missile threat is the most important task when it comes to saving the lives of our people,” he said.

Zelenskyy said at least 10 Ukrainian regions were attacked, with dozens of homes, businesses and infrastructure facilities destroyed or damaged.

Russia launched more than 70 missiles, a significant number of them ballistic, he said, along with more than 280 attack drones, of which more than 260 were intercepted.

The Russian Defense Ministry said it aimed at Ukrainian air bases, arms factories and military telecommunications and logistics facilities.

The targets included drone production factories and storage depots, a missile plant, an aircraft repair plant, a factory making electronic components, and a chemical plant,

Europe

Voters in Manchester electing new mayor: Voters in the English city of Manchester are electing a new mayor Thursday to replace **Andy Burnham**, who quit the job to become Britain’s prime minister.

It’s also chance for some 2 million voters to pass judgment on the governing Labour Party, whose sagging popularity Burnham hopes to revive. Polling stations are open from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m., with vote-counting starting Friday morning.

Burnham was mayor of Greater Manchester for nine years until he won a special election for a seat in Parliament last month with the intention of challenging then- Prime Minister Keir Starmer for the Labour leadership.

Burnham’s momentum spurred Starmer to announce he would resign after just two years in office. Burnham was the only candidate in Labour’s leadership election, and he became prime minister on July 20.

He has established a branch of the prime minister’s office in the city, dubbed “No. 10 North,” to help fulfil his pledge to give local leaders more powers and spread economic growth around the country.

Burnham

The Greater Manchester region has a population of about 3 million and includes the city of Manchester and surrounding towns. Burnham won three straight mayoral elections, in 2017, 2021 and 2024, and Labour candidate Bev Craig, the current leader of Manchester City Council, is hoping to retain the mayoralty for the party. (AP)

‘Cyprus ethnic split must be resolved’: Resolving Cyprus’ ethnic division is “absolutely crucial” for stabilizing a turbulent region where persistent conflicts have the potential to escalate, UN Secretary-General António Guterres said Wednesday.

Guterres made a rare, two-day visit to Cyprus to underline his commitment to restarting deadlocked peace talks on a deal to end the 52-year-old rift in which a UN-controlled buffer zone separates breakaway Turkish Cypriots in the island’s northern third and Greek Cypriots in the south.

“I do believe that a solution in Cyprus is absolutely crucial, not only to preserve the interests and the peace of the Cyprus people, but also as a factor of stability in what is becoming a dangerously unstable region,” Guterres told a news conference after meeting with the island’s rival leaders.

Cyprus was split in 1974 when Turkey invaded in the wake of an Athens junta-backed coup whose supporters sought union with Greece. Turkish Cypriots declared independence nearly a decade later, but only Turkey recognizes it and keeps more than 35,000 troops in the north. (AP)

Monsoon rains trigger house collapse in Lahore, killing 9 family members

Raid on Pakistani police post leaves 11 officers and 15 attackers dead: govt official

PESHAWAR, Pakistan, July 30, (AP): The death toll from an overnight deadly militant attack on a police post in northwestern Pakistan rose to 11 early Thursday, police and a government official said.

Security forces killed 15 militants in an hourlong gunbattle after they targeted the Khazina police post in Hangu district in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, which borders Afghanistan, police official Irfan Khan said.

No group immediately claimed responsibility for the assault. Suspicion is likely to fall on the Pakistani Taliban, known as Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan, or TTP, which has stepped up attacks on Pakistani security forces in the region in recent months.

Among those killed was Diyar Khan, a senior police officer who led reinforcements to the scene, according to a provincial police statement. More than two dozen police officers were also wounded in the attack.

Police said the militants attacked the police post with heavy weapons. Reinforcements dispatched to the scene were ambushed en route, damaging an armored personnel carrier before officers fought back, according to the statement.

Pakistan has witnessed a surge in militant violence in recent years, much of it blamed on the TTP, a separate group but a close ally of the Afghan Taliban, who returned to power in neighboring Afghanistan in 2021. Islamabad has repeatedly accused Afghanistan's Taliban government of providing sanctuary to TTP militants, an allegation Kabul denies.

Also:

LAHORE, Pakistan: Monsoon rains collapsed the roof of a multistory house in eastern Pakistan, killing at least nine family members and injuring several others, officials said Thursday.

Pakistan has been experiencing above-normal rainfall in recent years, with scientists linking the trend to climate change. Although the country contributes less than 1% of global greenhouse gas emissions, research shows it is among the nation's most vulnerable to climate change.

The deluges have killed over 100 people in rain-related incidents since late June, including 14 children who died after the roof of a tutorial center collapsed.



Rescue workers search through the rubble at the site where a roof collapsed on a house in Lahore, Pakistan on July 30. (AP)

A loud crash woke up residents of the **Baghbanpura** neighborhood of Lahore, the capital of eastern **Punjab** province, Wednesday night when the house crumpled. Emergency crews arrived at the scene as neighbors tried to pull the victims from under the debris.

The rescue operation lasted nearly

24 hours and emergency responders retrieved the bodies of the three families, according to witnesses and a government statement.

Several of the survivors were buried under a massive pile of rubble, according to Punjab's emergency service. Some are in critical condition.

According to residents, ongoing monsoon rains had weakened the building's upper roof, which gave way because of poor maintenance. They said the impact triggered a progressive collapse, bringing down the lower floors and the rest of the structure.

Authorities have warned they cannot rule out a repeat of the extreme weather that caused Pakistan's catastrophic floods in 2022. The floods submerged about one-third of the country, killed 1,737 people and displaced millions.

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ISLAMABAD: Officials in **Pakistan** administered **Kashmir** on Tuesday accused an outlawed political group of attempting to sabotage elections for the region's constitutional assembly, while also alleging that militants from the Pakistani Taliban infiltrated weekslong protests. The accusations came a day after clashes with security forces killed one paramilitary officer and wounded several others.

The violence erupted when armed, masked protesters at a sit-in opened fire on police and security personnel

deployed to secure polling, the regional government and police said. There were unconfirmed reports that several protesters were killed or wounded, but officials did not immediately confirm any civilian casualties.

Voting in the disputed Himalayan region of Kashmir, which is divided between **India** and Pakistan and claimed in its entirety by both countries, began Monday and is being held in phases through Aug 10.

The now weeks-old protest encampment has overshadowed the election, with residents reporting low voter turnout in Monday's first phase, when polling was held for several assembly seats in the city of Mirpur.

At a news conference in Muzaffarabad, the capital of Pakistan-administered Kashmir, government spokesman **Mohammad Rashid Hanif** alleged that the outlawed Joint Awami Action Committee, or JAAC, sought to derail the elections. He said a "significant number" of Fitna al-Khawarij, the term Islamabad uses for members of the Pakistani Taliban, were also among the protesters.

Fugitive colonel finally jailed in Chilean Víctor Jara's murder case

SANTIAGO, Chile, July 30, (AP): More than half a century passed before some measure of justice was served for the murder of popular Chilean singer-songwriter Víctor Jara.

Chilean police arrested a retired military colonel who had been a fugitive for three years after being convicted of kidnapping and murdering Jara during Chile's military dictatorship and sentenced to 25 years in prison.

Despite the arrest, the musician's family says they are not completely satisfied.

"We learned that retired Colonel Nelson Haase Mazzei, who had been a fugitive from justice since 2023, was found and imprisoned. We appreciate this news," said Jara's daughter, Amanda Jara, in a letter published Sunday night. However, she added, "it is difficult to consider this justice."

The prominent military figure had been sentenced to 25 years and two days in prison for the kidnapping and murder of Jara and then-Director General of Prisons Littré Quiroga Carvajal.

Haase Mazzei, 80, was convicted in 2018 and his sentence was increased in 2023, along with those of six other military offi-



Members of the Funa Commission shout slogans outside the home of Edwin Dimter Bianchi, accused and on trial for the murder of Chilean singer-songwriter Víctor Jara, during a demonstration to publicly shame him in Santiago, Chile, April 22, 2017. (AP)

cers. The crimes are considered to be among the most emblematic examples of the brutality that marked the 17-year dictatorship of late Gen. Augusto Pinochet.

The former official fled before beginning his prison term. He was finally located and arrested this weekend - three years later - with Judge Paola Plaza of the Santiago Court of Appeals ordering his "immediate imprisonment,"

the Judiciary said in a statement. The institution added that Haase Mazzei was the last of those convicted to begin serving his sentence.

One of the symbols of the so-called New Chilean Song, a musical and social movement born in the 1960s, Jara was murdered on Sept. 16, 1973, just five days after the coup that overthrew former President Salvador Allende.

Uganda opp'n leader Besigye unconscious in hospital after collapsing in court: wife

KAMPALA, Uganda, July 30, (AP): Ugandan opposition leader Kizza Besigye has been hospitalized and is unconscious after he collapsed during a courtroom session of his treason trial, according to his wife and others who are urging authorities to set him free after repeated bail denials.

Besigye fell in the dock on Wednesday while protesting his trial without lawyers of his own choosing, after authorities detained his main attorney, Erias Lukwago, and charged him with alleged failure to report acts of treason.

Besigye's wife, UNAIDS Executive Director Winnie Byanyima, said in a post on X that Besigye is unconscious in an intensive care unit at a public hospital in the Ugandan capital of Kampala. "Before he collapsed, he cried out that he was being injured," she said.

Ingrid Turinawe, a close confidant of Besigye, told The Associated Press that she and others were not allowed to see Besigye at the Mulago Hospital.

"He is in the ICU, and he is not responding to anything," she said, adding that Besigye's personal physician was able to see him several hours after he collapsed.

A spokesperson for the Ugandan prison system didn't respond to a re-



Ugandan opposition leader and four-time presidential candidate Kizza Besigye, second left centre, arrives in a civilian court in Kampala, Uganda on Feb 19, 2025. (AP)

quest for comment.

The case against Besigye is controversial as Uganda's President Yoweri Museveni and his son, military chief Gen. Muhoozi Kainerugaba, have already weighed in against him.

Kainerugaba, alleging that Besigye plotted to kill his father, has previously described the opposition figure as "a dead man walking." And

Museveni himself has said Besigye must answer for "the very serious offenses he is alleged to have been planning."

In recent days, prosecutors have moved to present evidence they say will prove Besigye and others plotted to overthrow the government. Besigye's political party says the charges against him are fake and politically motivated.



Men searching for survivors stand atop a mountain of rubble three days after twin earthquakes struck, in La Guaira, Venezuela on June 27. (AP)

After Venezuela's earthquakes, experts say environmental and health risks have just begun

BOGOTA, Colombia, July 30, (AP): More than a month has passed since Venezuela's devastating earthquakes, and the constant sound of heavy machinery still echoes through the hardest-hit neighborhoods of La Guaira on the northern coast.

Dust from collapsed buildings hangs in the humid air. Garbage has piled up. Families camp outside homes deemed too dangerous to enter. Water trucks weave through damaged streets.

"The smell of corpses is very strong" in some neighborhoods, said Carolina de Jesús, Venezuela project director for the humanitarian organization Project HOPE, who has spent nearly every day in the region since the quakes.

Public health and environmental experts told The Associated Press the coming weeks are critical to preventing secondary crises caused by contaminants from the rubble and rebuilding.

Government figures say the 7.2 and 7.5 magnitude quakes on June 24 killed over 5,000 people, injured

nearly 17,000 and left almost 18,000 homeless. Authorities have not said how many remain missing, though estimates put the figure in the tens of thousands. The World Bank estimates the quakes caused \$19.6 billion in direct physical damage.

Survivors are now experiencing the environmental costs in a region where Venezuela's health system was already weakened by years of economic crisis.

There is "hope, but also enormous pressure over what will happen tomorrow," de Jesús said.

Among those still searching for loved ones is Mary Cruz Andueza. The tower where her mother lived, part of a government housing program launched under late President Hugo Chávez, collapsed.

"I don't know if she's alive, if she's dead, if she's in a hospital or still beneath the rubble," the 35-year-old Andueza said.

She said she became sick after spending days near the rubble.

"The dust made me seriously ill," she said. "We've had coughs, aller-

gies, fever and headaches because we're working so close to the collapsed buildings every day."

Managing an estimated 1.2 million tons of debris caused by the quakes is a major environmental challenge. Much of the rubble could be contaminated with fuels, motor oil, paints, solvents, plastics and other hazardous materials released when buildings fell.

That has raised concerns that pollutants could spread if the debris is not properly sorted and disposed of. In La Guaira, steep mountains rise behind densely populated communities, leaving little space.

Authorities are separating contaminated debris from reusable material. Concrete and other recyclable waste will be used in reconstruction, while contaminated material - such as asbestos, chemicals, fuel residues and other hazardous waste - will need to be disposed at specialized facilities, according to Joaquín Benítez, director of Environmental Sustainability at Andrés Bello Catholic University in Caracas.

Benítez said he had seen reports that some debris may have been dumped along the coast or into the sea during the initial emergency response as authorities raced to clear blocked roads. Local journalists said the practice was halted after the first few days.

If debris containing fuels or other hazardous materials reaches coastal waters, contaminants could affect water quality and marine ecosystems. Large volumes of sediment and construction waste could reshape shorelines and damage coastal habitats.

Diego Díaz Martín, president of environmental organization Vitalis, said seasonal rains could trigger landslides on earthquake-weakened hillsides. He also warned that damage to sensitive ecosystems may remain undetected because many affected areas have yet to be assessed.

Martín said the recovery effort should include work to reduce future environmental risks, and called on authorities to rebuild outside landslide-prone areas.

Asia

Hope dwindles for rescue in Japan quake: Rural communities in southwestern Japan were struggling to get their lives back to normal Thursday, two days after a powerful earthquake set off an explosion at a mall, toppled a factory chimney and flattened homes, killing at least 25 people.

Time was running out to find survivors, as rescuers continued to work in the Kumamoto area on Japan's southern main island of Kyushu, where the magnitude 7.1 earthquake hit Tuesday.

The number of those missing was unclear. Of the deaths given in the latest tally, 25 have been confirmed as related to the disaster, but there were nine more deaths under investigation as likely to be connected, the Kumamoto prefectural government said. The quake left at least 86 people injured, five of them seriously, it said.

Survivors spoke about coming home and desperately pulling family members out of the wreckage. Some had suffered injuries and were rushed to the hospital.

Thousands of people spent another night at evacuation centers set up throughout the area in gymnasiums and other big spaces. Some homes were still without water or electricity, while others were simply afraid to go back. (AP)

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Myanmar courts sentence activists up to 37 years: Courts in Myanmar have sentenced nine activists to up to 37 years in prison for involvement in a protest calling for a boycott of the elections last December, an activist group said Wednesday.

May Hnin, a spokesperson for the Anti-Junta Forces Coordination Committee-Mandalay, said eight members including prominent activist



A collapsed building is seen in Yatsushiro, southwestern Japan on July 29, the day after an earthquake hit the area. (AP)

Htet Myat Aung were sentenced to 37 years on Tuesday by two courts in Mandalay, the country's second-largest city, after being convicted under the electoral law and counterterrorism Law.

A ninth activist was sentenced to 27 years after being convicted under the counterterrorism law, she said.

Htet Myat Aung and the others were arrested days after staging a flash protest in downtown Mandalay on Dec. 3 calling on the public to reject the

elections, abolish the military conscription law and release political prisoners detained after the military seized power from the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi in 2021. (AP)

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Student pleads guilty for straw-licking stunt in Singapore: A French student was fined 600 Singapore dollars (\$465) after pleading guilty Thursday to a public nuisance charge in Singapore for filming himself licking a straw from an orange juice vending machine and putting it back in what lawyers described as a social media stunt.

Didier Gaspard Owen Maximilien, 19, admitted to licking the straw and returning it to the vending machine while recording the act for his online followers. It happened at a shopping mall in March and he was charged in April after his video spread rapidly.

Another charge of mischief was taken into consideration during sentencing. The court imposed the fine and did not order any community-based sentence after considering mitigating factors. (AP)

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Death toll from Chongqing landslide in China climbs to 41: Teams recovering bodies from a landslide this month in southwestern China have identified 30 more victims over the past week to bring the overall toll in Chongqing to 41 dead with 20 people still missing, authorities said Tuesday.

Ten people also were injured on July 17 when massive amounts of rock and soil washed down a slope and buried at least 10 residential buildings as well as a passenger minibus in the outer Chongqing county of Pengshui.

Teams have been working their way through four major sections of the disaster site, and have used DNA analysis to identify remains, the county government said. Searchers found the wreckage of the missing minibus late Sunday. (AP)

Kuwait oil price up \$1.93 to \$85 pb

KUWAIT CITY, July 30, (KUNA): The price of Kuwaiti oil rose by USD 1.93 to reach USD 85 per barrel (pb) in Wednesday’s trading, compared with USD 83.07 per barrel in the previous session, Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) said Thursday.

In global markets, Brent crude climbed by USD 6.65 to settle at USD 90.74 pb, while US West Texas Intermediate gained USD 5.20 to reach USD 84.46 pb.

Reaffirming its pioneering national role

KFH Group contributes \$13 million to Kuwait Emergency Response Fund and \$6 million to power stations repairs

KUWAIT CITY, July 30: Kuwait Finance House Group (KFH Group) has announced a USD 13 million contribution to the Kuwait Emergency Response Fund, a national initiative launched by the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED).

Additionally, the Group requested providing USD 6 million to repair damaged power stations, reinforcing its commitment to national and social responsibility, enhancing the country’s readiness, and safeguarding vital infrastructure.

Chairman of KFH, Hamad Abdulmohsen Al-Marzouq said that supporting strategic national initiatives is integral to KFH’s corporate mission and developmental role.

He noted that KFH’s continuous contributions to initiatives promoting sustainable development, security, and

stability are guided by core values of responsibility, community partnership, and its pioneering national role.

Al-Marzouq expressed KFH’s pride in serving as an active partner in major national initiatives that strengthen the nation’s readiness to navigate emerging challenges.

He explained that contributing USD 13 million to the Kuwait Emergency Response Fund and USD 6 million to restore damaged power stations reflects the bank’s belief in building a sustainable institutional framework to address strategic priorities.

This approach enhances emergency response efficiency, safeguards essential services, and underscores the bank’s unwavering commitment to its national role, particularly during exceptional circumstances.

Al-Marzouq emphasized that KFH remains committed to supporting im-



KFH Chairman Hamad Al-Marzouq

Al-Marzouq: Continuous contributions to initiatives promoting security, stability, and sustainable development

pactful national initiatives, strengthening integration between state institutions and the private sector to serve the national interest and advance sustain-

able development in Kuwait.

Strategic contributions

KFH possesses a distinguished track record in supporting national and community initiatives, with key contributions including:

■ Contributing KD 15 million to construct and equip the Cardiac Diseases and Research Center at Mubarak Al-Kabeer Hospital.

■ Constructing the Addiction Treatment Hospital and opening its tenth ward, at a total cost of KD 4.5 million.

■ Contributing KD 8 million for the reconstruction of the area damaged by the fire in Al-Mubarakiya.

■ Contributing KD 20 million to construct 15 ambulance centers to support the healthcare system.

■ Launching a strategic initiative in cooperation with the Ministry of Justice to relieve defaulting debtors,

where the Bank has contributed over KD 61 million since 2019.

■ KFH also participated with a major share of KD 10 million Covid-19 Government Relief Fund, alongside an additional standalone contribution.

About Kuwait Emergency Response Fund

The Kuwait Emergency Response Fund was established by a Council of Ministers resolution as a dedicated account managed by KFAED, with an initial capital of USD 100 million.

The Fund supports national efforts to strengthen the country’s preparedness for emergencies and exceptional circumstances.

The Fund mobilizes and directs financial resources toward priority projects, focusing on rehabilitating damaged infrastructure and supporting national efforts to repair vital facilities in Kuwait.

Eyeing higher gas, light oil output

KOC achieves Jurassic exploration milestone

By Najeh Bilal

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, July 30: Kuwait Oil Company (KOC) recently completed the development of the first phase of unconventional Jurassic reservoirs, say reliable sources.

Sources told the newspaper that this remarkable achievement culminated in the successful drilling of the SA1029 exploratory oil well at the Sabriya field in North Kuwait.

Sources said the company proved the feasibility of producing hydrocarbons from the kerogen reservoir, which is the primary source and origin of oil and gas in deep Jurassic reservoirs. Sources stated “the success of this experiment and the potential for extracting and generating hydrocarbons from this reservoir proves the economic viability of the efforts of the country in exploring and developing hydrocarbon resources.”

Sources pointed out that the Al-Sabriya field is one of the giant fields in North Kuwait, indicating that the success of the first oil well is an exceptional turning point, shifting from total reliance on conventional and easily extractable reservoirs to the exploration of challenging and deep reservoirs that require highly advanced technologies, such as multi-stage hydraulic fracturing and long horizontal drilling.

Sources added that once all the phases are completed, the project will secure the future of the energy sector and support strategic plans that enhance the ability of Kuwait to increase its production of free gas and high-value light oil.

KOC prepares major polymer injection project

By Najeh Bilal

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, July 30: Kuwait Oil Company (KOC) is currently preparing for the launching of a huge technological project using polymer injection technology to enhance oil recovery in the northern and western reservoirs, say reliable sources.

Sources confirmed that this project is in line with the efforts of the company to overcome technical challenges and improve production capacities in accordance with the long-term objectives of Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) for 2040.

Sources revealed that KOC is intensifying its preparations for implementing this project by holding meetings and workshops that bring together key stakeholders, contractors and international technology partners.

They indicated that these efforts aim to build a unified platform that consolidates visions and

identifies logistical and engineering requirements and needs to formulate an integrated implementation strategy that ensures operational flexibility and minimizes risks.

They explained that polymer injection technology is one of the most efficient and cost-effective chemical solutions in the tertiary recovery phase. They said mechanism involves increasing the viscosity of the injected water into the reservoirs to be closer to the viscosity of crude oil, which raises the efficiency of oil leaching and its flow towards production wells and reduces the amount of associated water.

They affirmed that reliance on polymer injection technology solves the most common technical problems in five ways. First is improving the flow rate, as the material increases the viscosity of the injected water to match that of oil.

They stated that polymer injection technology helps eliminate the phenomenon of ‘viscous staining’, especially since the new technology

prevents water from penetrating the oil. They clarified that the polymer solution flows as a cohesive mass that completely covers the reservoir.

According to the sources, the technology contributes to modifying permeability in heterogeneous rocks, as the polymer molecules block highly permeable channels, forcing the water to redirect itself towards narrower layers to extract the oil trapped in the fine rock fractures.

Sources disclosed that the technology reduces the production of associated water, thereby, decreasing the amount of water extracted with the oil and saving substantial costs for water separation processes.

They added that the technology contributes to facilitating an increase in the final recovery factor, indicating that traditional methods leave about 60 to 70 percent of the oil trapped in the rocks, while this technology can extract an additional 10 to 20 percent of the total reserves.

KPC announces LPG prices for August

KUWAIT CITY, July 30, (KUNA): Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) announced Thursday new prices for liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) for August, setting propane at USD 620 per metric ton and butane at USD 640 per metric ton.

KPC said in a statement to KUNA that the new prices will apply throughout

August, with propane and butane serving as key feedstocks for the petrochemical industry as well as fuels for cooking, heating and other uses.

The corporation noted that LPG prices are influenced by fluctuations in global oil prices, which are a key pricing benchmark, in addition to market supply and demand dynamics and other factors.

Zain empowers leaders to drive organizational change through innovation

KUWAIT CITY, July 30: Zain Kuwait organized a specialized workshop titled Leading a Culture of Innovation: Scaling Leadership Impact, bringing together leaders from across the company as part of its ongoing efforts to strengthen leadership capabilities, embed an innovation-driven corporate culture, and foster a workplace that encourages creative thinking and transforms ideas into sustainable organizational impact.

Held over two days at the Zain Innovation Campus (ZINC), the workshop formed part of an integrated leadership development plan designed to give leaders across the organization practical tools and approaches to foster innovation, lead organizational change, and build cohesive, high-performing teams.

The workshop was delivered by Warren Cass, international speaker, leadership and organizational culture expert, and best-selling author. Cass shared practical insights and experiences highlighting the central role leaders play in shaping a culture of innovation, strengthening collaboration, and expanding their influence within their teams and across the organization.

The workshop focused on embedding innovation into everyday leadership practices and creating an environment where employees have the confidence and space to propose, test, and develop new ideas. It also explored how leaders can strengthen their ability to navigate change, motivate their teams, and turn challenges into opportunities for growth and develop-



Warren Cass with workshop participants.



The workshop focused on embedding innovation into everyday leadership practices.



The workshop brought together leaders from across different levels of the organization.

- Leadership expert Warren Cass led a workshop for Zain leaders
- Workshop provided practical tools to drive change and build high-performing teams

cializes in executive leadership and innovation programs. The partnership supports efforts to bring international expertise to Kuwait and deliver world-class programs that translate leading management and leadership concepts into practical, applicable tools.

ment.

The program covered several key areas, including leading a culture of innovation, leadership influence and communication, building high-performing teams, driving organizational change, and creating sustainable leadership impact. The sessions combined interactive discussions with practical tools, allowing participants to exchange experiences and explore approaches that can be applied within the workplace.

Investing in the development of leaders is a fundamental part of Zain’s strategy to build a more agile and future-ready organization. Effective leadership plays a vital role in advancing digital transformation, accelerating the organization’s response to change, and empowering teams to innovate and deliver sustainable results.

In addition, building a sustainable culture of innovation goes beyond adopting modern technologies. It begins with developing the mindsets and leadership capabilities that encourage collaboration, experimentation, and continuous learning, helping make innovation an embedded practice across every area of the business.

The workshop was held as part of the strategic partnership between Zain and ALGAS Events, which specializes in executive leadership and innovation programs. The partnership supports efforts to bring international expertise to Kuwait and deliver world-class programs that translate leading management and leadership concepts into practical, applicable tools.

As part of its ongoing commitment to supporting national youth and developing their talent

NBK organizes a workshop for Kuwait University students to enhance interview skills and prepare them for the job market

KUWAIT CITY, July 30: As part of its ongoing commitment to supporting national youth and developing their talent, National Bank of Kuwait organized a specialized workshop for Kuwait University students, focusing on interview skills, practical tools, and real-world insights to help them prepare for their future careers and enhance their chances of success upon entering the job market.

This initiative reflects NBK’s approach of utilizing its institutional expertise to support national talent by providing practical content aligned with labor market needs and offering exposure to real-world professional experiences. It also underscores the Bank’s commitment to partnering with academic institutions, further helping to prepare young professionals capable of meeting the growing demands of the job market and achieving their career aspirations.

The workshop witnessed significant engagement from participating students, featuring specialized sessions that covered the key fundamentals of successful interviews, effective preparation strategies, and how to present themselves professionally. It also highlighted common mistakes made by job applicants and ways to avoid them. Moreover, the workshop included practical exercises and realistic scenarios simulating actual interview environments, giving students the opportunity to apply what they learned and gain greater confidence and readiness.

This workshop reflects the Bank’s commitment to supporting the educational ecosystem and enhancing its outcomes by providing training opportunities that enrich their academic experience. These opportunities help students acquire the practical skills demanded by the labor market, thereby aligning with their career aspirations and boosting their prospects for future success.

On this occasion, Shereefa AlHooti, Specialist - Talent Acquisition at NBK commented: “We firmly believe that the youth are the cornerstone of Kuwait’s



NBK’s workshop for Kuwait University students.

AlHooti:
We are committed to equipping students with the skills and confidence needed to showcase their capabilities to employers.
We aim to bridge the gap between academic education and job market requirements.
Familiarizing the youth with work environment realities is a crucial step toward building successful career paths.

future, which is why we are dedicated to launching impactful initiatives that prepare and equip them for professional success as per their aspirations and the requirements of the modern labor market”.

AlHooti also added: “Job interviews represent a pivotal stage in the journey of job seekers. Through this workshop, we wanted to equip students with the practical skills and confidence needed to effectively showcase their capabilities and potential to prospective employers”.

AlHooti continued: “We are committed to bridging the gap between academic education and labor market requirements by providing students with practical insights and essential skills that help them prepare for the job search with greater confidence. We believe that familiarizing young people with the realities and expectations of the work environment is a crucial step toward building successful career paths and empowering them to realize their future ambitions”.

Finally, AlHooti emphasized that NBK has an exemplary work environment based on development, continuous learning, diversity, and employee empowerment, which rendered NBK a top employer of choice in the private sector among national graduates, noting that it offers advanced training and professional development programs that provide employees and young talent with ongoing opportunities for growth and career advancement.

It is worth noting that NBK continues to enhance its position as an active community partner by adopting impactful initiatives and programs that foster national capacity building and enhance youth readiness for the future. This workshop underscores the Bank’s commitment to preparing future generations by equipping them with the skills and practical experience needed to meet labor market demands, which further in turn positively influences their career paths and contributes to a more prosperous future for Kuwait.

GCC foreign investors were net sellers in Q2-2026

By KAMCO Invest

Foreign investors, including institutional and retail investors, were net sellers on GCC stock markets during Q2-2026 with net selling of USD 298.3 Mn, after registering net purchases of USD 1.5 Bn in Q1-2026. However, for 1H-2026, foreign investors recorded net buying activity in four out of six months despite intermittent selling pressure. Total net purchases stood at USD 1.2 Bn in 1H-2026, compared with USD 6.9 Bn in 1H-2025, reflecting an 83.1% y-o-y decline. Some of the key factors that affected foreign investment flows in the region included regional geopolitical conflicts, disruptions around the Strait of Hormuz that impacted oil price movements, global interest rate trends, and seasonal factors such as Eid holidays, which reduced market activity and trading volumes.

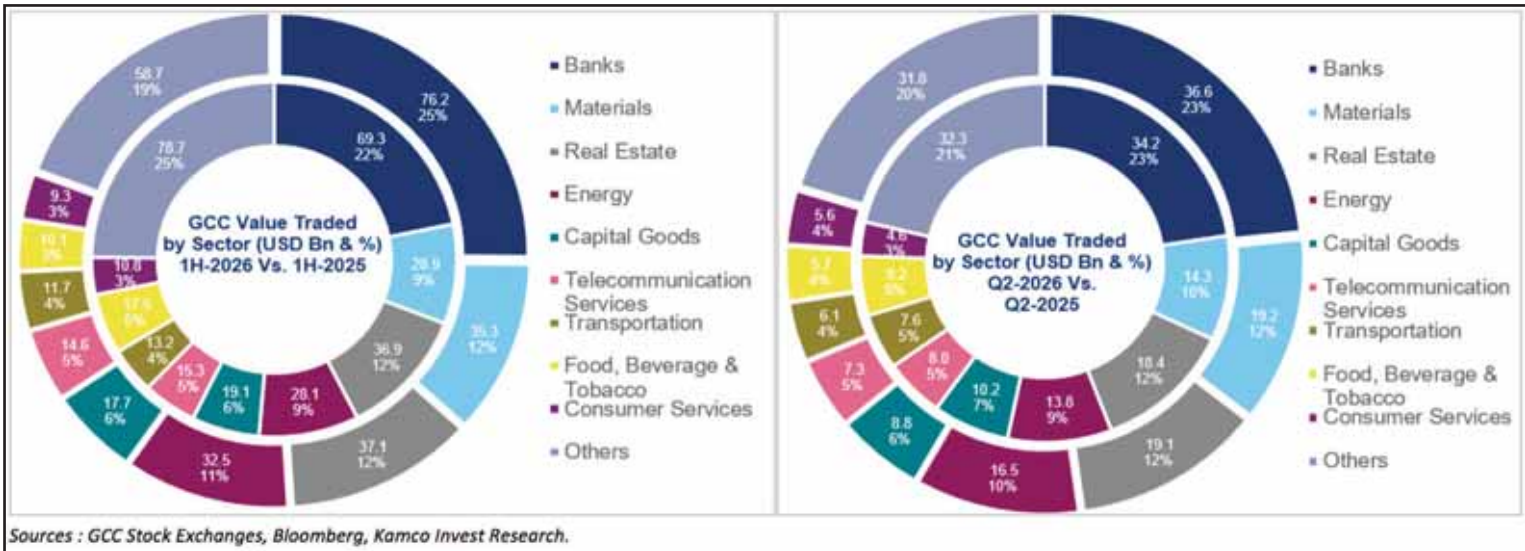
The quarterly data on trading activity on GCC exchanges showed all the exchanges recorded foreigners as net sellers during Q2-2026, barring Saudi Arabia that showed foreigners as net buyers to the tune of USD 1.6 Bn during the quarter, partially offsetting the overall net sales. Foreign investors remained the largest net sellers in the Dubai stock market during Q2-2026, recording net sales of USD 641.5 Mn, following net sales of USD 654.0 Mn in the previous quarter. Kuwait followed with foreign net sales of USD 480.3 Mn, while Qatar and Abu Dhabi exchanges recorded net selling of USD 375.4 Mn and USD 187.3 Mn, respectively. Oman and Bahrain witnessed relatively lower net selling, amounting to USD 161.3 Mn and USD 3.1 Mn, respectively.

Meanwhile, the monthly trading trend (excluding Bahrain due to the unavailability of data) showed that Saudi Arabia recorded consistent net foreign buying throughout all three months of Q2-2026. In contrast, the Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Qatar, Kuwait, and Oman exchanges experienced consistent net selling across each of the three months during the quarter.

Quarterly performance across GCC equity markets was mixed during Q2-2026, reflecting the geopolitical impact on market conditions, investor sentiment, corporate earnings, and sector trends across the region. As a result, local investors were net sellers during the quarter and these shares were grabbed by foreign investors resulting in a broad-based net buy trades by the latter. In terms of m-o-m performance, net buying by local investors peaked in May-2026, reaching aggregate net inflows of USD 1.3 Bn. This was followed by a reversal in trend during April and June 2026, which together recorded net selling of USD 2.2 Bn.

Trading by GCC investors (excluding Bahrain due to the unavailability of data) across GCC exchanges shifted to net buying during Q2-2026. GCC investors recorded net purchases of USD 62.4 Mn, against net sales of USD 269.0 Mn in Q1-2026, indicating a reversal in investor sentiment from the previous quarter. Saudi Arabia recorded the highest net buying by GCC investors during the quarter, with USD 220.7 Mn, followed by Oman at USD 127.2 Mn. Meanwhile, the Dubai, Qatar, Abu Dhabi, and Kuwait exchanges registered net selling by GCC investors during Q2-2026, partially offsetting the strong buying activity recorded by GCC investors during the same period.

In the Saudi stock market, local Saudi investors remained net sellers during Q2-2026, recording net sales of SAR 5.8 Bn, compared with SAR 9.6 Bn in net selling during Q1-2026. Saudi individual investors were net sellers during the Q2-2026, with net sales amount-



ing to SAR 9.0 Bn. In contrast, Saudi institutional investors were net buyers, recording net purchases of SAR 3.2 Bn. On the other hand, buying was seen in trades by non-GCC foreigners and GCC investors to the tune of SAR 4.6 Bn and SAR 1.2 Bn, respectively.

During 1H-2026, foreign investors were net buyers in the Saudi market, with total net purchases of SAR 12.7 Bn, representing a 75.4% increase compared to SAR 7.3 Bn recorded in 1H-2025 supported by broader market access for foreign investors. Investor

sentiment was further boosted by the Capital Market Authority’s decision to open the Saudi stock market to all foreign investors effective 1-Feb-2026, expanding market participation. Although foreign investors turned net sellers in March and May 2026, primarily due to heightened geopolitical tensions in the region, net buying resumed in the subsequent months during 1H-2026.

Foreign purchases reached their highest level in January-2026, totaling SAR 5.0 Bn. During 1H-2026, the highest weekly net buying by foreign investors

was recorded in the third week of April-2026 at SAR 2.3 Bn, while the highest weekly net selling of SAR 1.1 Bn occurred in the first week of May-2026. Meanwhile, Saudi individual investors recorded net selling of SAR 22.3 Bn during 1H-2026, against net buying recorded in SAR 7.1 Bn in the corresponding period last year. Retail investors recorded their highest net purchases in March-2026, reaching SAR 7.3 Bn.

In terms of aggregate trading activity, total GCC trading volume declined by 21.7% q-o-q to 64.0 Bn shares in

Q2-2026, down from 81.7 Bn shares in Q1-2026. During the quarter, trading volumes contracted across six of the seven GCC exchanges compared to the previous quarter, with Kuwait being the only market to record higher volumes. Trading volume on the Kuwait exchange increased by 41.9% q-o-q to 17.2 Bn shares in Q2-2026, compared with 12.1 Bn shares in the Q1-2026. In contrast, trading activity weakened across the remaining GCC markets. Abu Dhabi recorded the sharpest decline, with trading vol-

ume falling 41.8% q-o-q, followed by Oman at 36.3% and Dubai at 34.9%. Saudi Arabia and Qatar also reported lower trading volumes, declining by 24.3% and 18.9%, respectively.

Meanwhile, aggregate trading value across the GCC increased during Q2-2026, despite the decline in trading volumes, reflecting higher average transaction values across several markets. Total value traded rose by 8.8% q-o-q to USD 157.7 Bn in Q2-2026, compared with USD 145.0 Bn in Q1-2026. At the exchange level, Abu Dhabi, Dubai, and Oman recorded q-o-q declines in the value of shares traded, while the remaining GCC markets posted gains. Kuwait reported the strongest increase in trading activity, with the value of shares traded rising from USD 12.1 Bn in Q1-2026 to USD 19.9 Bn in Q2-2026, increasing its share of total GCC trading value to 12.6%, up from 8.4% in the previous quarter. Saudi Arabia also recorded a notable increase, with the value traded rising from USD 77.5 Bn in Q1-2026 to USD 86.4 Bn in Q2-2026. Bahrain and Qatar likewise posted positive q-o-q growth, with trading values increasing by 15.3% and 2.5%, respectively.

Top 10 GCC Stocks by Trading value

Five Saudi-listed companies ranked among the top 10 most traded GCC stocks by trading value in Q2-2026, reaffirming Saudi Arabia’s dominant position in regional equity markets. The UAE followed with three Abu Dhabi-listed and one Dubai-listed company, while one Kuwait listed company also made the list, reflecting the broad participation of GCC markets in regional trading activity. The aggregate trading value of the top 10 GCC-listed stocks reached USD 36.2 Bn in Q2-2026, representing 23.1% of the total value traded across GCC exchanges during the quarter. Al Rajhi Bank topped the list by recording USD 6.9 Bn in trading value, followed by Saudi Arabian Oil Co. (Aramco) with USD 6.01 Bn and Emaar Properties with USD 5.98 Bn. Other actively traded stocks during the quarter included Al Dar Properties, Saudi National Bank, and ACWA Power, further highlighting the strong presence of Saudi and UAE-listed companies among the region’s most actively traded equities.

GCC Value Traded - Key Sector Contribution

The Banking sector accounted for the largest share of value traded, recording a marginal increase of 2.3% to reach USD 36.6 Bn in Q2-2026, compared with USD 34.2 Bn in Q2-2025. Within the sector, Al Rajhi Bank led trading activity with USD 6.9 Bn worth of shares traded during the quarter, followed by Saudi National Bank and Kuwait Finance House, with USD 3.0 Bn and USD 2.3 Bn, respectively. The Materials, Real Estate and Energy sectors also contributed to overall growth in traded value during the quarter. Sector performance was broadly mixed in Q2-2026, with five out of ten sectors recording declines. Among the decliners, the Food, Beverage & Tobacco, Transportation, and Capital Goods sectors fell by 30.1%, 19.0%, and 13.2%, respectively.

Similarly, in terms of 1H-2026 performance, the total value of shares traded declined on a largely broad-based basis. Aggregate traded value reached USD 303.6 Bn in 1H-2026, compared with USD 319.3 Bn in 1H-2025, representing a decline of 4.9%. Trading activity declined in the Food, Beverage & Tobacco, Consumer Services, and Other sectors by 42.2%, 14.3%, and 25.5%, respectively. In contrast, the Banking and Materials sectors recorded strong growth, with traded values rising by 9.9% and 22.2%, respectively.

US Q2 growth slows to 1.5%, business investment remains strong on AI surge

Imports shave 1.5% points off US Q2 GDP

WASHINGTON, July 30, (AP): The U.S. economy expanded at a sluggish 1.5% pace from April through June as rising imports weighed on growth. But consumer spending rose. And the Federal Reserve’s favored measure of inflation grew more slowly last month, but remained above the central bank’s 2% target.

The Commerce Department reported Thursday that growth in U.S. gross domestic product - the nation’s output of goods and services - decelerated from 2.1% in the first three months of 2026 and came in below economists’ expectations. But consumer spending - which accounts for about 70% of U.S. economic activity - increased at a 3.2% annual clip, up from 0.5% in the January-March period.

Business investment, excluding housing, rose

at an 8.4% pace, down from 10.6% from January through March but strong, reflecting a surge in investment in artificial intelligenc e.

Imports are subtracted from the economic figures because GDP is only supposed to count what is produced in the United States. Imports rose at an 11.5% pace, partly on a surge in shipments of computer chips and other products that support AI investment. The imports shaved 1.5 percentage off second-quarter GDP growth.

The Commerce Department also said Thursday that its personal consumption expenditures (PCE) price index, the one favored by the Fed, rose 3.7% last month from June 2025 , down from a 4.1% year-over-year increase in May. Excluding volatile food and energy prices, so-called core consumer prices were up 3.3% from a year earlier, little-changed from 3.4% increase in May.

The Fed on Wednesday chose to leave its benchmark interest rate unchanged for the fifth straight meeting. But three regional Fed presidents dis-

sented, saying they wanted to raise rates to combat elevated inflation.

Higher costs have frustrated Americans ahead of November’s midterm elections, which will determine whether President Donald Trump’s Republicans keep full control of Congress

The American economy has been surprisingly resilient in the face of the Iran war and the spike in energy prices it caused. The job market has bounced back this year from a lackluster 2025, giving consumers the wherewithal to spend. Employers are adding an average 92,000 jobs a month this year, compared with fewer than 10,000 a month in 2025 when high interest rates and President Donald Trump’s erratic use of tariffs discouraged businesses from hiring.

Still, Americans remain frustrated over the high cost of living as inflation remains stubbornly stuck above the Federal Reserve’s 2% target.

Thursday’s GDP report was the first of three Commerce Department estimates of second-quarter economic growth.

US filings for jobless benefits rise to 197,000 last week, but layoffs remain historically low

WASHINGTON, July 30, (AP): The number of Americans applying for unemployment benefits rose last week but layoffs remain in the historically healthy range of the past few years.

U.S. filings for jobless aid in the week ending July 25 rose by 9,000 to 197,000, the Labor Department reported Thursday. The previous week’s figure was revised up by 1,000 to 188,000 but remains the lowest in more than 50 years.

Analysts surveyed by the data firm FactSet forecast 207,000 new applications.

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

Despite surging oil prices resulting from the U.S.-Iran war, the American job market remains healthy. However, analysts say a prolonged war and higher than normal energy costs may eventually upend that, forcing companies to trim their costs by reducing head counts.

Following a 6.6% rise a day earlier, the price for a barrel of U.S. crude fell slightly more than 1% Thursday to \$83.36 a barrel. Gas prices in the U.S.

are also back up above \$4 a gallon on average. Besides squeezing consumers’ budgets, it also hits businesses hard, especially those which are heavily dependent on fuel.

Also Thursday, the Federal Reserve’s preferred inflation metric, PCE, came in at 3.7%, still well above its 2% target. On top of that, the government reported Thursday that the U.S. economy grew at an unexpectedly sluggish 1.5% pace in the April-June quarter.

If inflation remains elevated, Fed officials say they are ready to raise interest rates to combat higher prices, raising costs for businesses and making them less likely to hire.

In its expansive June jobs report earlier this month, the government reported that employers pulled back on hiring, adding only 57,000 jobs. That’s less than half the previous month’s total and a sign that companies remain cautious about adding to their head counts. The unemployment rate dropped to 4.2% from 4.3% in May, though that decline is mostly because many out-of-work people gave up looking for jobs and were no longer counted as unemployed.

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

Weekly jobless aid applications have stabilized in a range mostly between 200,000 and 250,000 since the U.S. economy emerged from the pandemic recession. However, hiring began slowing about two years ago and tapered further in 2025 due to President Donald Trump’s tariffs, his purge of the federal workforce and the lingering effects of high interest rates meant to control inflation.

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

The Labor Department’s report Thursday also showed that the four-week moving average of weekly jobless claims, which softens some of the weekly volatility, fell by 5,000 to 202,750.

The total number of Americans filing for unemployment benefits for the previous week ending July 18 was 1.78 million, a decline of 7,000 from the previous week.

Instagram hits 2 bln DAUs

Meta Q2 profit falls despite revenue beat

WASHINGTON, July 30, (AP): Meta Platforms said Wednesday its second-quarter profit declined even as revenue beat Wall Street’s expectations, as legal expenses and severance costs for recent layoffs weighed on its results.

The Facebook and Instagram parent company earned \$15.85 billion, or \$6.18 per share, in the April-June period. That’s down 14% from \$18.34 billion, or \$7.14 per share, in the same period a year earlier.

Revenue grew 28% to \$60.8 billion from \$47.52 billion.

Analysts, on average, were expecting earnings of \$7.19 per share on revenue of \$60.22 billion, according to a poll by FactSet.

“AI is accelerating our core business today, powering our next generation of products, and opening the door to entirely new enterprise opportunities,” said CEO Mark Zuckerberg in a statement. “The results are already showing, and I’m optimistic about the potential ahead.”

Meta said the number of daily active users on its “family of apps” - Facebook, Messenger, Instagram and WhatsApp and Threads - grew 3% from

a year earlier to \$3.6 billion. Zuckerberg said Instagram reached the 2 billion daily users milestone during the quarter, while Threads has 500 million monthly active users.

The Menlo Park, California-based company had 75,472 employees as of June 30, a decrease of 1% year-over-year. This still includes the roughly 8,000 workers the company said it would lay off. Meta said its third-quarter earnings report will have the updated figure.

“Earnings come just as Meta pushes out an ad campaign and media blitz that aim to clarify Meta’s stance and goals regarding AI. It’s not surprising that Zuckerberg wants to come out with a more cohesive message around the company’s AI ambitions, especially as Meta tries to carve out its own lane,” said Emarketer analyst Minda Smiley. Zuckerberg wrote a glowing op-ed about AI’s future in the Wall Street Journal on Tuesday, arguing that AI may soon deliver “personal superintelligence to everyone.”

But Smiley said the “optimistic, positive tone he’s striking stands in stark contrast to the negative sentiment that’s building toward social media

companies over claims that they’ve harmed and addicted kids. This juxtaposition could make it more difficult for Meta to build credibility in an area where it’s already a laggard.”

For the current quarter, Meta is forecasting revenue in the range of \$61 billion to \$64 billion, the midpoint of which is lower than the \$63.14 billion that analysts are expecting.

Meta also raised the lower end of its expense outlook to incorporate the \$2.4 billion in legal expenses. It now expects total 2026 expenses to be in the range of \$165 billion to \$169 billion.

Expenses for the second quarter were \$42.03 billion, an increase of 55% year-over-year. Meta said this includes \$2.40 billion of charges related to legal proceedings and \$1.18 billion of severance expenses in connection with the layoffs announced in May.

The company’s free cash flow - money left over after paying operating costs and capital expenditures - dropped 91% to \$784 million from \$8.55 billion a year earlier.

Meta’s shares fell \$24.76, or 4.2%, to \$560.85 in after-hours trading after the results came out.

Microsoft beats Wall St expectations with \$90 bln in revenue

WASHINGTON, July 30, (AP): Microsoft posted strong results for its quarterly earnings on Wednesday, beating expectations and showing strong growth in its cloud computing platform and a boost in paid AI users.

The Redmond, Washington, company earned \$90 billion, or \$4.81 per share, in the April-June quarter. That is up 18% from the same period a year earlier. Analysts surveyed by FactSet Research had expected the company to earn \$4.24 per share on revenue of \$87.62 billion this quarter.

Microsoft Cloud revenue was \$59.3 billion this quarter, up 27% year-over-year. That growth reflects the demand across Microsoft’s cloud computing platform Azure, as well as its first-party AI applications and services. Azure and other cloud services revenue increased 43%.

For the full fiscal year, which closed out at the end of June, the company brought in \$331.8 billion in revenue.

“This year, Azure revenue surpassed \$100 billion for the first time, and Microsoft 365 Copilot

reached over 30 million paid seats, reflecting the confidence customers are placing in us to power their AI transformation,” CEO Satya Nadella said in a statement Wednesday.

The concurrent Azure and Copilot growth indicate that Microsoft is “winning on both fronts,” Michael J. Wolf, founder and CEO of Activate Consulting said in a statement. Microsoft is doing so by “supplying the cloud infrastructure for enterprise AI while monetizing the AI tools embedded in the products workers use every day.”

Semiconductor unit drives most of profit

Samsung reports record profit as South Korean chip giants benefit from global AI boom

SEOUL, July 30, (AP): South Korean technology giant Samsung Electronics on Thursday reported a record operating profit of 89.5 trillion won (\$62 billion) for the April-June period, a day after cross-town rival SK Hynix also reported record earnings, as the world’s two largest memory chipmakers continue to ride the global artificial intelligence boom.

Despite their soaring profits, the companies’ shares have fallen sharply this week in South Korea’s volatile stock market, where retail investors often drive sharp swings in share prices, as concerns grow over their plans to spend massively on increasing manufacturing capacity and the prospects of intensifying competition from China.

Samsung’s second-quarter operating profit was a more than 19-fold increase from a year earlier, and nearly all of it came from its semiconductor business, which benefited from rising chip prices driven by demand for AI servers and increased shipments of advanced high-bandwidth memory chips used to power AI applications. That outweighed an operating loss in its mobile, TV and home appliances division, partly due to higher component costs.

Samsung’s quarterly revenue of 171.5 trillion won (\$119 billion) was also an all-time high. The company said it expects demand for its memory products to remain strong in the second half of the year, driven by continued expansion of AI infrastructure and broader adoption of agentic AI. Demand for server chips is expected to accelerate further, keeping the market undersupplied, it said in a statement.

Samsung’s report came a day after SK Hynix also reported a record

second-quarter revenue of 60.5 trillion won (\$42 billion). However, SK Hynix’s profit was still below the loftier market expectations and the company’s shares declined by more than 9% on Wednesday. Samsung’s share prices have also declined this week.

Kim Jaeyune, an executive of Samsung’s memory chip division, said the company expects the gap between chip supply and demand to widen further in 2027. He said Samsung plans to begin construction of its second semiconductor fab in Taylor, Texas, before the end of this year, with the goal of starting production by 2030.

Kim said Samsung has secured long-term chip supply contracts with what he called the “five major global data center clients” - a possible reference to Amazon Web Services, Google, Meta, Oracle and Microsoft -- and is in talks with other major technology companies as demand for AI infrastructure surges.

“Despite our efforts to increase production, demand growth is outpacing our efforts,” he said in a conference call.

Samsung and SK Hynix together produce about two-thirds of the world’s memory chips. While the companies have embarked on major investments in semiconductor manufacturing facilities and data centers as South Korea expands its AI ambitions, some analysts say there are growing concerns about whether such massive spending will ultimately generate sufficient returns.

Shares of South Korean chipmakers have also been pressured by concerns over intensifying competition from China, with reports that a state-owned Chinese company had begun mass-producing

BoE keeps key rate at 3.75% for the fifth time this year

LONDON, July 30, (AP): The Bank of England kept its key interest rate on hold for the fifth time this year on Thursday after a bigger-than-expected drop in the inflation rate last month gave policymakers breathing space to assess the fallout from renewed fighting in Iran.

The bank’s monetary policy committee voted 6-3 to keep the rate at 3.75%, in line with the expectations of most economists. Policymakers have kept the rate at that level since December after four rate cuts in 2025.

The split decision highlights growing tensions within central banks around the world about how to respond to stubbornly high inflation and concerns that the war in Iran will lead to another round of price increases. The U.S. Federal Reserve on Wednesday kept its key rate at a range of 3.5% to 3.75%, with Chairman Kevin Warsh saying the Fed “will not hesitate to act” to keep inflation under control.

“The impact of the energy shock on the UK economy remains uncertain,” the committee said in a summary of its deliberations. The interest rate changes required to meet the inflation target “will depend on the scale and duration of the shock, and how it propagates through the economy,” it added.

But three policymakers disagreed, saying the potential inflationary effect of the recent surge in energy prices was too great to ignore, even though price spikes earlier in the war haven’t yet pushed up prices and wage demands in Britain. All three voted to raise rates by a quarter point to 4%.

“I remain concerned about more insidious second-round effects driven by catch-up dynamics in

wage and price setting,” committee member Huw Pill said. “While these may be slower to emerge, they could prove more lasting and create greater intrinsic inflation persistence.”

Adjusting central bank interest rates, which serve as a benchmark for loans and credit cards, is the primary tool central banks use to control inflation. Higher rates make it more expensive to borrow money, tending to reduce spending and lower prices. Lower rates make it cheaper to borrow, tending to increase spending and boost prices.

Consumer price inflation in the U.K. slowed to 2.6% in the 12 months through June from 2.8% the previous month, according to the latest figures from the Office for National Statistics. While the drop was bigger than economists expected, inflation remained above the bank’s 2% target for a 21st consecutive month.

Renewed attacks by the United States and Iran in the Middle East sent oil prices soaring this month due to concerns about the continued disruption of traffic in the Strait of Hormuz, through which a fifth of all crude oil and natural gas traded once passed in peacetime

Brent crude, the benchmark for world oil prices, jumped to more than \$100 a barrel on July 23 from less than \$71 three weeks earlier as the ceasefire between the U.S. and Iran broke down. Brent crude traded for about \$92 a barrel on Thursday.

In Britain, economists are also closely watching the tax and spending policies of new Prime Minister Andy Burnham to see if his efforts to shield consumers from rising prices and spur economic growth are likely to add to inflation.

Brussels aims to narrow AI gap

EU unveils €10 bln AI gigafactory plan

BRUSSELS, July 30, (AP): The European Union is offering 10 billion euros (\$11.4 billion) in funding for firms to erect seven AI gigafactories as it seeks to close the AI gap with U.S. and China, the 27-nation bloc’s executive said on Thursday.

The European Commission said it would like the public financing to draw an additional 20 billion euros (\$22.8 billion) in private investment.

“Access to the raw scale of computing power within AI gigafactories is a strategic necessity for Europe as AI development accelerates,” said Henna Virkkunen, the Commission executive vice president overseeing tech sovereignty.

The efforts by Brussels to establish “tech sovereignty” have gained urgency as leaders worry about dependence on technologies from foreign providers, which they say could be “weaponized” against Europeans. U.S. President Donald Trump has railed against the EU over its tech regulations and China has limited the supply of minerals critical to the sector.

Firms can now bid for contracts to build gigafactories that are planned to have at least 100,000 cutting-edge AI chips, making them roughly four times more powerful than the data centers currently running in the EU.

The EU’s current computing power - delivered by a network of 19 AI data centers from Finland to Spain - will more than double when these seven gigafactories come online.

Europe lags far behind the U.S. and China in crucial sectors for the development of AI, according to a 2025 assessment by the U.S. Federal Reserve. China has an enormous electrical power capacity for data centers while the U.S. bags the lion’s share of private AI investment.

Europe doesn’t manufacture many of the millions of components need-

ed for data centers and electricity in the EU can cost double or triple what it does in the U.S. and China, according to a Commission report presented to European Parliament in June.

“European businesses and public authorities will continue to rely on US AI providers to the detriment of European service providers struggling to work at the frontier,” said the report, which listed the bloc’s top five cloud service providers as all American. “Dependence on hyperscale cloud and AI computing service providers, particularly for highly critical use cases, will continue to expose data to third-country access and carry risks to service continuity, endangering operational autonomy.”

France’s Mistral now runs the one of the largest AI data center in the EU so far at its campus in Paris. Mistral makes the Le Chat chatbot but it hasn’t kept pace with American AI companies like OpenAI, maker of ChatGPT, and Chinese rivals like DeepSeek.

While political leaders like French President Emmanuel Macron have raised the alarm about Europe lacking homegrown AI companies, deep anxieties run rife across the continent about the economic disruption and privacy implications of the nascent technology.

The Commission said AI products developed with the growing network of data centers will “follow EU standards on data protection, safety, security and ethics,” perhaps referring to the bloc’s Digital Services Act and its Digital Market Act.

In June, 40 mayors around the world signed a pact to curtail the negative impact of the construction of AI data centers on the natural resources, energy prices or climate targets of cities from Phoenix to Melbourne.

domestically developed immersion deep-ultraviolet (DUV) lithography machines, a key technology for advanced chipmaking. Investor concerns were also heightened by the strong stock market debut of Chinese memory chipmaker ChangXin Memory Technologies, some analysts say.

Samsung and SK Hynix last month announced plans to invest a combined 800 trillion won (\$554 billion) in a new chipmaking hub in the country’s southwest to capitalize on surging AI-driven demand.

The chiefs of Samsung, SK and South Korean automaker Hyundai joined President Lee Jae Myung on his San Francisco trip last week, where they announced hundreds of billions of dollars in planned cooperation with major U.S. technology companies, including AI firms OpenAI and Anthropic and chip designers Nvidia and Broadcom. The agreements span chip technologies, data centers and other AI infrastructure.

In a roundtable with foreign media last week, Kim Yong-beom, Lee’s chief policy adviser, said the initiatives reflect how global technology companies are rushing to secure long-term partnerships with South Korean chipmakers as they seek reliable supplies of memory chips for AI.

However, the volatility of the companies’ stock prices, along with those of other global tech firms, shows that investors are shifting their focus from short-term earnings to long-term sustainability, Son In-joon, a semiconductor analyst at South Korea’s Eugene Securities, said in a report this week.

Kurosawa's period drama arrives in US cities after Cannes buzz

Japan's horror auteur takes sword-swing into history

TOKYO, July 30, (AP): Kiyoshi Kurosawa, the Japanese director known as "the master of horror," was a bit nervous about how viewers might react to his first samurai film.

He needn't have worried. "The Samurai and the Prisoner," opening in New York and Los Angeles on July 31, followed by a rollout in major U.S. cities through August, received an enthusiastic response when it premiered at the Cannes Film Festival in May.

It's turning out to be Kurosawa's most popular film to date, if its reception in Japan, where it opened earlier this year, is any indication.

That's saying a lot for a director who counts to his credit dozens of respected works, including the 2020 Venice Film Festival's Silver Lion-winning "Wife of a Spy." His 2008 "Tokyo Sonata," about heartbreaking family conflict, won Un Certain Regard Jury Prize at Cannes.

"Filmmaking remains a mystery for me," Kurosawa said.

It's a complex undertaking that requires bringing together the real world, or what's being filmed, and what's not real, the story that must be depicted, he said.

"I don't understand it. And that's why I keep making films," he told The Associated Press in a recent online interview from New York.

Why can't I do what Yasujiro Ozu did? Why can't I do what Alfred Hitchcock did? Those are the questions he keeps asking himself, he said.

Kurosawa's past films, like his 1997 "Cure," starring Koji Yakusho playing a detective chasing a serial killer, tend to be driven by a frightening creepiness that unfolds in a mundane world.

But the samurai genre already presupposes a fictitious otherworldly place, and everyday normalcy simply doesn't exist there, Kurosawa said.

The story of "The Samurai and the Prisoner" centers around a rivalry between warlords, those familiar Shakespearean plot twists that characterize samurai films.

"There is, first of all, power. A feudalistic society is built on a hierarchical relationship of those at the top and those at the bottom. Then there's betrayal," said Kurosawa.



This image released by Janus Films shows Masahiro Motoki in a scene from 'The Samurai and the Prisoner.' (AP)

"People try to grab power, and in so doing get thrown into confusion. That exists in any society, historically and perhaps even today. And so this is also about what's eternal."

Kurosawa acknowledged he didn't know what to expect in tackling a samurai movie, starting with the basics like how to direct the actors. Unlike modern dramas, he felt there were no predefined parameters on how actors' lines should be delivered, for instance.

It's common wisdom that a di-

rector doing something new ends up disappointing fans, who tend to want more of the same. Adding to the challenge was the fact that, these days, even many Japanese find the old-style samurai genre alien as much as does the Westerner.

But everything fell in place, once things got started. It happened naturally. The set, costumes, props, wigs and makeup all worked together to transport the actors to that otherworldly spot. He was lucky to be able to shoot in old temples and cas-

tles in Kyoto.

Kurosawa kept his trademark long shots and almost claustrophobic dialogue scenes, in which nothing appears to be happening but chills shoot up the viewers' spine in anticipation of what unimaginably horrific thing might happen next.

His latest has all the look of an orthodox samurai film, known here as "jidaigeki," staying true to its legacy of depicting the horrors and pathos of war.

There are even wide shots of war-

rriors in armor lined up on a hilltop, evocative of "Ran" and "Kagemusha" by Akira Kurosawa, who is not related to Kiyoshi Kurosawa.

Making "The Samurai and the Prisoner" was so fun, Kurosawa would like to make another samurai film, this time with more spectacular sword-fighting scenes à la "Zatoichi," a popular film series of the 1960s and 1970s about a heroic blind swordsman.

He also wants to tackle new genres, perhaps a musical. And he

promised to keep making horror films, if people aren't bored with his style of having nothing happen for what feels like forever.

He's worried that may appear dated.

The works popular these days, both in Japan and elsewhere, have one explosive thing happening after another, to keep the audience on the edge of their seats.

"A scary thing generally doesn't happen every five minutes in my films," Kurosawa said.

Variety

NEW YORK: K-pop powerhouse BTS said they will not submit their music for consideration at the forthcoming 2027 Grammy Awards.

All seven BTS members - RM, Suga, j-hope, Jimin, V, Jung Kook and Jin - shared the same note Wednesday.

"We hope our music can be heard and loved for what it is, rather than being divided by region or language," the coordinated message read. "We thank Army and everyone who has always stood by us."

Wednesday's announcement came just over a month after the Recording Academy announced five new Grammy categories, which include best Asian pop music performance, meant to celebrate releases across K-pop, J-pop, C-pop and beyond.

Some fans viewed the new category as a racialized barrier for Asian performers.

A representative for BTS offered no additional comment.

BTS has never won a Grammy, though they've been nominated for five: three times in the best pop duo/group performance category as well as album of the year (for their contributions to Coldplay's "Music of the Spheres") and best music video for "Yet to Come." (AP)

LONDON: Irish singer-songwriter Glen Hansard, who won an Academy Award for the 2007 film "Once," died in a motorcycle crash on the outskirts of Dublin early Wednesday, his management said. He was 56.

ATC Management told broadcaster RTE Hansard's family was "deeply shocked and heartbroken."

News of his death brought tributes from fellow musicians including Bruce Springsteen,

who said on Instagram he was "heartbroken" at the loss of "a great musician, a good friend and a generous and gracious man."

Irish police said a man in his 50s died in single-vehicle motorcycle crash in Lucan, on the western outskirts of the Irish capital, before 4:30 a.m. Wednesday. The man, who they did not name, was treated at the scene but pronounced dead a short time later.

Hansard combined acting and a musical career. He played a member of a Dublin soul band in the hit 1991 movie "The Commitments" and won an Oscar in 2008 for the song "Falling Slowly," which he co-wrote for the indie musical "Once" with co-star Markéta Irglová. (AP)

NEW YORK: Four women have accused Jared Leto of sexual misconduct when they were teenagers, to which the actor and musician responded Wednesday that he has "never sexually assaulted anyone."

"I have never sexually assaulted anyone in my entire life. These claims are absolutely and categorically false," Leto, 54, said in a statement to The Associated Press.

The BBC documentary "Jared Leto: Hollywood's Dark Secret," released Wednesday, details allegations including those from four women who accused the actor of sexual misconduct and assault between 2002 and 2016, when they were teenagers and Leto was an adult. One said she was 17 when she was sexually assaulted, while another accused Leto of statutory rape as she was also 17. One woman said she was 19 when Leto threatened her with sexual assault and another said she was 16 when Leto made sexually explicit phone calls and propositioned her. (AP)



Korean pop band BTS attends the 2019 Variety's Hitmakers Brunch in West Hollywood, Calif., on Dec. 7, 2019. (AP)

The Conversation

As AI reshapes newsrooms, leading media outlets are charting different paths for its use

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

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By Erik P. Bucy, Texas Tech University and Milad Jalalian Ebrahimi, Texas Tech University

A labor dispute erupted at The Guardian's London headquarters in December 2024, with nearly 500 journalists going on strike to protest the proposed sale of the Guardian-owned Observer.

With the newsroom hobbled, the British publication's management allegedly deployed generative AI tools such as ChatGPT and Claude to suggest headlines and write descriptions of photos for people using screen readers. The National Union of Journalists cried foul, calling this move a clear attempt to undermine collective bargaining.

As media and communication scholars, we saw the outrage over management's use of AI as more than routine wrangling over adherence to labor law. The incident showed how AI is becoming integrated into daily news work through translation, interview transcription, research, writing and audience analytics. At the same time, the incorporation of AI in newsrooms has raised new worries about accuracy and bias.

In our recent research, we examined how three different media outlets - Reuters, the BBC and The Guardian - were deploying AI in their workflows.

We conducted a comparative case study, analyzing public documents published through 2025, including official AI policy statements, editorial guidelines, trial reports and industry presentations.

We found that there is no single story about AI's integration into newsrooms. Instead, the way the technology is used appears to reflect the funding, values and mission of each outlet.

Reuters is a global wire service that syndicates news to other outlets.

Its coverage of financial markets and other fast-moving sectors, such as foreign exchange trading and corporate earnings, means that even a 30-second delay in reporting a central bank decision or a market-moving news event could cost traders significant sums of money.

For this reason, the company has heavily incorporated AI to speed up its workflow.

For example, the newsroom uses an AI tool the company developed called Lynx Insight to analyze financial data in real time, and another internal tool, Fact Genie, to process corporate press releases.

Thanks to these tools, Reuters has expanded its earnings coverage and can publish some breaking financial alerts in just six to eight seconds, turning what was once a race measured in minutes into one measured in seconds.

Reuters sees automation as a way to produce more content for different markets. Operating at speed, however, makes accuracy all the more challenging.

Reuters acknowledges that AI tools can introduce factual errors and requires its journalists to verify any AI-generated claims before publication. In other words, the high volume of AI-generated news alerts does not preclude editors from checking them for accuracy before they go live.

While speed always comes with risks, Reuters may also be well positioned to manage them because financial markets provide an immediate feedback loop, with traders quickly identifying and reacting to incorrect information. The same approach, however, could create greater challenges in political or investigative journalism, where errors may not become apparent for days, months or even years.

The BBC operates under a clear system of accountability. The publicly funded U.K. broadcaster depends on editorial impartiality for its credibility. Unchecked automation could put this core value at risk.

As a result, the BBC has taken a cautious approach to AI integration. Its main AI tools - At a Glance and BBC Style Assist - are used for tasks such as summarizing long articles and reformatting local news stories to match the BBC's house style.

At a Glance creates bullet-point summaries of existing articles, while BBC Style Assist helps edit regional stories in the broadcaster's signature style and voice.

Rewriting a story to match BBC house style can take about 30 minutes, and BBC Style Assist is designed to cut that time down substantially. The outlet also uses AI translation tools to reach audiences in Poland, Hungary and Romania.

No AI-assisted story is published until a journalist reviews and approves it, a step that reflects the BBC's emphasis on accountability. The BBC has acknowledged the limits of AI in its current form, publishing a study with the European Broadcasting Union in October 2025 showing that AI assistants misrepresented news content - through faulty sourcing, fabricated details or outdated information - 45% of the time. Rather than downplaying such findings, the BBC published them in an article on its media center and went on to create AI labels - a hexagon icon paired with the phrase "How we used AI" - that now appear at the top of content.

When we conducted our research, The Guardian had an AI policy that barred the use of generative AI tools to create text or images intended for direct publication outside of exceptional and specific circumstances.

But in March 2026, The Guardian updated its guidance. The revised policy now permits limited use of generative AI for tasks such as suggesting alt text for images, analyzing parlia-

mentary documents or transcribing audio into text, provided the tool aligns with The Guardian's editorial standards, is subject to human oversight and receives explicit permission from a senior editor.

"Our approach to generative AI framework is designed to support our journalists' expertise, never replace it," the outlet told The Conversation. "Our journalists are always accountable for the journalism they create, and use of these tools requires absolute rigour and responsibility."

In our view, The Guardian's ownership model helps support a more cautious approach to AI. The outlet has been structured as a trust since 1936 to safeguard the paper's editorial independence. There are no shareholders or sole owners. The outlet relies heavily on voluntary reader contributions in order to remain free to read.

This reader-funded model helps insulate The Guardian from commercial and political influence, allowing it to prioritize long-term editorial independence over short-term gains. Its principles on AI are clear: Any use of AI must help readers and respect both the public interest and creators' rights.

When the paper's management locked horns with workers during the 2024 strike, many staffers saw the use of AI to cut costs or counter labor actions as a betrayal of these principles. The incident highlighted the conflict that can occur when an organization's values clash with pressures to keep things running.

Reuters, the BBC and The Guardian each take a different approach to journalism, revealing unique ideas about the role of news in a democracy.

In our view, Reuters is more prone to view journalism as a business. The BBC is more likely to treat it as a public good. The Guardian's approach to journalism is intertwined with its long-term values.

For these reasons, we argue that AI won't uniformly change the news industry. No matter where it's deployed, the time reporters and editors spend verifying AI's accuracy can create what we call a "verification tax," which can lessen the technology's value. If newsroom staffers spend more time correcting chatbot errors than writing their own stories, the technology ends up being more trouble than it's worth.

That said, the technology will likely accelerate differences already underway. Commercial news organizations will use more automation. Public broadcasters will include more human oversight. And independent outlets will focus more on stories written and reported wholly by people.

In the future, we think the most influential and successful newsrooms will not necessarily be the fastest or have the best AI tools. Instead, they will be those that use the technology wisely, balancing speed with accuracy, treating workers fairly, and protecting the trust and integrity that make journalism a valuable resource. (AP)

Technology



A Realbotix humanoid robot, center, speaks with attendees at a Realbotix booth during the CES tech show Jan. 8, 2025, in Las Vegas. (AP)

‘Sally’ benched over privacy

School halts plan to deploy humanlike AI robot teacher

NEW YORK, July 30, (AP): A school district in a rural corner of upstate New York is hitting pause on plans to deploy an AI-powered, humanoid robot in the classroom after state education officials, teachers and local residents raised concerns, including the maker’s ties to a company that produces hyper realistic sex bots.

The Salamanca City Central School District’s board approved the nearly \$60,000 purchase from Realbotix with visions that “Sally,” as the stationary robot with long dark hair has already been nicknamed, would enhance the education of high school students studying robotics and technology fields.

“Having a difficult time programming an Arduino board? Don’t even know what an Arduino board is? Ask Sally and she can explain it,” Superintendent Mark Beehler, said Tuesday. “The robot also provides opportunities for students to learn how the robot is maintained, how it is updated with new approved content, and how to troubleshoot issues.”

But as news spread in the small community located on the Seneca Nation of Indians reservation, parents and teachers worried about how students’ personal information would be used. Unionized teachers took aim at Realbotix’s sex doll sister company, even as district officials and the company itself stressed the two manufacturers operate independently.

“A robot built by a company associated with sex dolls has no business in our classrooms,” said Melinda Person, president of the labor union New York State United Teachers.

For now, the robot pilot remains on hold as the district works through “enhanced student data privacy agreements” with the state education officials and continues outreach to the community, according to a statement the district posted Friday on its Facebook page.

State Education Commissioner Betty Rosa said she remained concerned about the robot’s role in the classroom even after her staff met with district officials.

“Although you confirmed that the robot would not have any role delivering classroom instruction, a recent presentation to the board characterized the robot as a ‘tutoring platform,’” Rosa wrote in a letter to the district Friday.

She also echoed residents’ concerns about what data privacy and security protections would be in place.

Unionized teachers, meanwhile, suggested the effort was a first step toward replacing, flesh-and-bone educators. “Sally” will be able to move her arms and hands but have nonworking legs.

“Our students don’t need robots,” Person said. “They need real relationships with caring adults.”

Beehler stressed the pilot, which also includes rollout of a virtual, AI-powered teacher’s assistant and at-home tutoring program, is not about replacing staff.

“There is no possible way a robot can replace a human in a school,” he said Tuesday. “Even if it were possible, it would in no way be in the

best interest of students. Teaching is a human-to-human process.”

Beehler, who was connected to Realbotix through a former colleague, said the Las Vegas-based company was a natural fit because its robots are already programmed with WozEd, a curriculum from Apple co-founder Steve Wozniak that the district uses.

Last year, a San Diego charter school rolled out two AI-powered robots purchased from Engineered Arts, a robotics company based in the United Kingdom, for \$500,000.

Salamanca Schools, in social media posts, stressed that “Sally” won’t be collecting students’ personal information, recording audio or video of its interactions or sending data back to Realbotix.

The robot also has been programmed to steer clear of inappropriate topics such as sex, violence and gambling, and it won’t be able to search the public internet or draw answers from unvetted generative AI services.

Instead, all information on “Sally” will be stored locally, with the life-sized robot consuming roughly the same amount of energy as a laptop, according to the district.

Realbotix added Tuesday that student authentication would be handled through the district’s existing systems, and any student-linked information would remain encrypted and under the district’s control.

The company also pushed back at suggestions that “Sally” was simply a repurposed sex doll, saying it was a “newly manufactured, purpose-built educational unit” with no modified hardware.

The school’s robot comes from Realbotix LLC, which focuses on healthcare, education and other non-adult commercial applications. A sister company, Intima LLC, holds an ownership stake in RealDoll, a long-time maker of sex dolls, including a line of AI-powered models billed as the “world’s most advanced sex robot.”

“Realbotix LLC and Intima LLC have different product offerings with no crossover,” the company said in a statement last week. “The two subsidiaries maintain their own management, personnel, payroll, facilities, manufacturing operations, product development, and market strategies.”

Beehler argued that it is crucial for isolated districts like Salamanca, which is located along the Allegheny River near the Pennsylvania state line, to find new ways to introduce cutting-edge products into classrooms.

“In most cases, our students need to travel 1-2 hours to have opportunities to see emergent technology,” he said Tuesday. “One of the intents of the robot is to help level the playing field and motivate students to continue studying robotics, AI, and STEAM related career pathways.”

Some Salamanca residents, though, remain unconvinced.

Joplin Ficek, who graduated from Salamanca High School in 2024 and now works at a daycare, said she doesn’t see any reason to have robots or AI take such a prominent role at her alma mater at all.

Strout returns with another heartfelt tale

James, Stuart top Booker contenders

LONDON, July 30, (AP): Booker Prize winners Marlon James and Douglas Stuart are in the running again for the prestigious fiction award, alongside Dublin gangs, dystopian science fiction and the New England characters of Pulitzer Prize laureate Elizabeth Strout.

Judges read 163 novels to come up with the 13 semifinalists announced for the 50,000 pound (\$66,000) Booker Prize, a list described by historian Mary Beard, head of the judging panel, as literary “dynamite.”

The list includes James’ “The Disappearing,” about a group of gay men in a hostile 1980s Jamaica; Stuart’s “John of John,” a story of father-son secrets on a remote Scottish island; and Strout’s heartfelt small-town tale “The Things We Never Say.”

James won the Booker in 2015 for “A Brief History of Seven Killings” and Stuart won in 2020 for “Shuggie Bain.” Strout’s “Oh William!” was a finalist in 2022. She won the Pulitzer Prize for fiction in 2009 for “Olive Kitteridge.”

They sit alongside lesser-known names on a Booker longlist that includes authors with roots in Britain, Ireland, Jamaica, Mexico, Turkey and the United States.



Marlon James poses with the award after his book ‘A Brief History of Seven Killings’ was named as winner of the 2015 Booker Prize 2015 for Fiction, following the award ceremony at the Guildhall in London, Tuesday, Oct. 13, 2015. (AP)

Three of those on the list are debut authors: Turkish-American writer Kenan Orhan for family history story “The Renovation,” British author Rebecca Perry for Medieval-to-modern tale “May We Feed the King” and Ireland’s Djamel White for “All Them Dogs,” a thriller set in

the Dublin underworld.

White, at 28, is the youngest author in the running. The oldest is 81-year-old M. John Harrison, whose postapocalyptic tale “The End of Everything” is a rare science fiction novel to make the Booker list.

The other contenders are “The Shad-



Douglas Stuart poses for a portrait on Wednesday, April 29, 2026, in New York. (AP)

ow of the Object” by Chloe Aridjis, “Black Bag” by Luke Kennard, “The Vivisectors” by Missouri Williams, “Switz” by Emma Cline, “Helen of Nowhere” by Makenna Goodman and Gwendoline Riley’s “The Palm House.”

Beard said the five jurors, who include Pulp frontman Jarvis Cocker and American novelist Patricia Lockwood, tried to look beyond the idea of a typical Booker winner - “slightly serious, about to be classic.” Instead they chose novels that are “trying to expand the boundaries of how we can think about ourselves in completely different ways.”

Artisans pour molten metal into molds to create church bells

Austria’s ancient bell-making tradition meets modern tech

INNSBRUCK, Austria, July 30, (AP): Wearing protective gear to shield from the extreme heat of molten bronze, workers at one of the last bell foundries in Europe are casting bells weighing several tons.

One after another, the artisans carefully pour the molten metal into special-shaped molds held together with steel bands to create 12 bells for churches in Italy, Germany and Romania.

Founded in 1599, the Grassmayr Bell Foundry, in Innsbruck, western Austria, has survived wars, famines, epidemics and economic challenges.

These days, the family business is run by brothers Johannes and Peter Grassmayr. During the Renaissance in the late Middle Ages there were hundreds of bell makers in Europe, while today only a handful remain across the continent.

The Grassmayrs’ secret to success: tenacity combined with innovation such as 3D-printing, scanning, lasers and computer simulation apps.

“Certain things are just like they were 400 years ago. But we innovated a lot. Especially within the last 20 years, we’ve changed a lot,” Johannes Grassmayr told The Associated Press.

The production cycle for making a bell takes three to four months. In the past cleaning a freshly cast bell and polishing it made up 30% of total production time. Nowadays, with the help of modern tools, that process takes only a tenth of the time.

Grassmayr keeps some of its most innovative production steps a secret, such as a special chamber in which



Anto Bastianovic polishes a bronze bell at the 400-year-old, family-owned Grassmayr bell foundry in Innsbruck, Austria, Friday, July 17, 2026. (AP)

the bells are cleaned with a high-pressure sandblaster, not to mention the special apps used to calculate the sound of each particular bells.

Even with modern technology, the process of designing and forming the molds for a large bell can take up to six months.

“The important thing is that you have calculate, form and then cast the bell as a musical instrument,” Jo-

hannes said, adding that the biggest difficulty during the creation of the bell is the possibility that the pressure of the molten metal destroys the mold.

When the workers cast a large bell weighing several tons, the liquid bronze creates up to 125 metric tons (137 tons) of pressure inside the molds, he said. To ensure the integrity of the mold, only high-quality clay is used, which is then encased in

steel sleeves designed to withstand extreme pressures.

But it’s not only the difficulty of the production, that has Grassmayr worried. The modern bell-making industry is under pressure as fewer churches are being built, which means the demand for bells is changing. Rising energy costs due to the war in Ukraine are not helping, and labor costs have risen 30% since the pandemic in 2020.



Employees use a melting furnace at the 400-year-old family-owned bell foundry Grassmayr in Innsbruck, Austria, Friday, July 17, 2026. (AP)



Jotka Omar unpacks a bronze bell as he works at the 400-year-old, family-owned Grassmayr bell foundry in Innsbruck, Austria, Friday, July 17, 2026. (AP)

AI Tokenmaxxing loses steam as the industry rethinks AI usage

WASHINGTON, July 30, (AP): A corporate fad of “tokenmaxxing” on artificial intelligence technology is hitting its limits as workplaces throwing AI at everything are seeing the costs rise without a similar spike in productivity.

What started as tech industry-fueled springtime hype over squeezing as much AI-generated work as possible out of products like OpenAI’s ChatGPT and Anthropic’s Claude has shifted to a summertime backlash.

“It’s very easy to create something you don’t need with AI,” said Vincent Gusdorf, head of AI analytics at Moody’s Ratings and author of a new report that recommends a more disciplined approach.

“Tokenmaxxing” refers to maximizing usage of tokens - the building blocks of generative AI that correspond to small pieces of text that an AI system reads or writes. Each to-



Pages from the Anthropic website and the company's logo are displayed on a computer screen in New York, Feb. 26, 2026. (AP)

ken is about three quarters of a word. And there’s typically a limit to how many you can use, with pricier versions of AI products offering higher caps.

“As bills started to pile in, people realized that those new tools are quite expensive and you need to use them wisely,” Gusdorf said.

Just a few months ago, Silicon

Valley executives were promoting high token consumption as a signal of high-performing employees. The stereotypical tokenmaxxer was staying up late - perhaps ignoring their significant other - while orchestrating an army of 24-hour AI agents performing work on their behalf.

OpenAI CEO Sam Altman said in May he was “excited to see what will happen with tokenmaxxing startups, both for how they work internally and the products they can build.”

Nvidia CEO Jensen Huang said “if you’re \$500K engineer isn’t burning \$250K in tokens, something is wrong.” Facebook parent Meta had an internal competition rewarding token usage.

The trend boosted revenue for leading AI large language model developers like Anthropic and OpenAI, but it fizzled as it became apparent it wasn’t necessarily the best strategy

for everyone else.

Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella has admitted that tokenmaxxing can be addictive but warned in a recent blog post that customers of those models are paying twice for AI, first in spending on tokens and second by feeding all their proprietary data to them. While promoting Microsoft’s own approach, Nadella’s comments were unusual in the way he raised doubts about the data protection assurances of leading AI providers.

Palantir CEO Alex Karp went further, telling CNBC earlier this month that something had gone “completely wrong.” He said he was channeling the voice of American businesses privately “livid” about paying so much for tokens that create no value.

“The basic view among enterprises in this country is, ‘I’m going to chillax and waste my time with tokens. I’m going to get no value and

they’re going to get my IP,’” Karp said.

Bain & Company management consultant Jue Wang said many of the big businesses her firm advises have been taking a closer look at returns on their AI investments.

“The token cost for them has been doubling, almost every other month,” she said. “Let’s say \$200 per developer per month. Multiply that by 20,000 developers, which is often what we’re dealing with at these companies, and that quickly gets you to a number that is not a line item that any general manager has planned for.”

Sometimes that just means not using the AI equivalent of a sledgehammer to crack a nut.

“Not everything needs a Claude Opus 4.6,” she said of one of Anthropic’s more capable models suited to software engineering or deep research. “And yet you see so many

companies, so many users, default to using Opus for everything, including generating emails.”

That’s led to a search for tools that do AI “model routing” - in which easier queries get automatically sent to cheaper and more efficient AI systems and more complex tasks go to more powerful models.

Software developer Hassan El Mghari said companies’ sticker shock over the “ridiculous amount of money” spent on subscriptions to AI products from leading U.S. companies has led many away from rewarding high usage.

“It’s better to kind of just empower employees on how to use this stuff and let them use AI when and however much they need to,” said El Mghari, who leads developer experience at the startup Together AI, which supplies developers with a variety of “open-source” AI models.

Improvisation and creativity good for brain: research

What I found when I scanned the brains of kids creating tunes on the piano

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

By Karen Barrett
University of California, San Francisco

Research shows that improvisation and creativity are good for the brain. In an episode of the Greater Good Science Center’s “Science of Happiness” podcast, host Shuka Kalantari talked to Karen Barrett about what happens in the brain when people improvise music. Barrett is an assistant professor in the Institute for Health & Aging at the University of California, San Francisco who researches the effects of music on aging and health.

Shuka Kalantari: What led you to improv?

Karen Barrett: My dad was a scientist and classical guitarist, and my mom played piano. So I actually started playing piano when I was 5 years old and ended up going to Wellesley College to double-major in music and neuroscience.

I did my master’s in piano performance and then found out about

this Ph.D. in music cognition which could blend music and neuroscience. That’s how I got started on this career path.

Then, I started my postdoc at UCSF with Charles Limb, who’s a jazz musician. He was a big improviser and was already studying it. I found it a little bit magical and fascinating because it’s not something I do very easily.

I think improv has made me less rigid. There’s no right or wrong way; there just is. If you make a mistake, do it over and over again, and it’s no longer a mistake. It can lead you to your next motive.

Kalantari: What happens in the brain when a person is playing something memorized versus improvised?

Barrett: Music is what we call multimodal. It activates all sorts of domains in the brain: the listening center, pattern perception, visual, emotional, motor and proprioception areas. It is biologically powerful that way.

Charles Limb’s original study from 2008 took expert jazz pianists and had them either improvise or play something that they had memorized. When they improvised, they

deactivated a portion of the brain called the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex, which is like turning off self-judgment. They activated a portion of the brain called the medial prefrontal cortex, which is involved when you want to increase your own artistic voice.

We found that when you’re improvising, you have a different set of activities in your brain compared to when you’re playing. In other words, improvisation is a form of generative creativity. You’re suddenly on the spot, within a certain context, trying to create music. And so that’s why we have unique neural areas that are involved in improvisation.

Kalantari: Recently you published research on musical improv with children. How did it come about that you went from studying trained professionals to children?

Barrett: There’s all this work in creativity about expertise. These trained musicians have had years of practice. They have all these schemas and licks in their brain from having studied for so long that they can pull out when they’re playing. But what about the beginners? What

about kids?

From a neuroplasticity and a brain activity perspective, we know that kids are highly able to learn new things, right? They don’t operate the same way adults do, and I wanted to see if I could capture the kind of raw creativity that kids have.

We prepped them a lot for the fMRI, a special type of MRI machine that allows us to image the brain. I had them play the “statue game” to show them how still they needed to be. And I had this little mini-keyboard hooked up to my laptop, and I kind of acted like their first piano teacher. First, I taught them a scale. Then, I had them play the notes in whatever order they wanted.

Kalantari: Tell us what you found, and how that affects the way that you think about creativity.

Barrett: First off, like many of the other studies from our lab, we found that improvising was a very different process from playing the scale. That in itself shows that maybe there’s something innate about this creativity.

The main thing about their brains when they’re improvising as op-

posed to playing that scale is that it’s mostly about deactivation. When we plot this in brain maps, we use red to show activation and blue to show deactivation. Their brains were mostly blue.

The places that they were deactivating are all sensory hubs, meaning they’re not having some sort of artistic voice that’s coming out. Unlike the jazz musicians, where the medial prefrontal cortex just activates to show their own artistic voice, these kids are just kind of doing this activity, and they’re not doing it from this artistic place.

But then on top of that, those structures are actually all areas of the brain that are involved in creativity in adults. The kids haven’t had a chance to develop the way adults have, so maybe these areas are the beginning of the creativity network that we eventually see in adults.

The most surprising finding was that improvisation engages reward structures more than playing that scale. And that wasn’t found as easily in the jazz musicians. What does that tell us about creativity being something possibly built into how the brain works, rather

than something that’s learned through training?

I think the fMRI scanning kind of captures the beginner’s mind and shows that we all have a capability to be creative without training at all.

Kalantari: What is your coolest takeaway from the study?

Barrett: I think what I want people to realize is that doing the arts is inherently valuable, but also very good for the brain and health. We can leverage the fact that creativity and music uses these unique parts of your brain for our own health and benefit.

My biggest takeaway is that we need to get out of our own way, turn off that critic and be creative. Maybe it’s not music; maybe it’s coloring, painting or embroidery. Just doing it is rewarding for the brain, so I’m going to do it, and I don’t need to be good at it.

Knowing we all have the capacity to be creative has really taken off a lot of these shackles that I would normally put on myself. When you realize that improvisation is really fundamental to all our lives, that we’re doing it all the time, it makes it a little easier to do. (AP)

India’s capital part of aggressive electric vehicle targets in bid to curb air pollution

NEW DELHI, July 30, (AP): In an affluent neighborhood in Delhi, electric vehicle charging stations near a popular shopping area were busy with drivers powering up their scooters, trucks and cars.

India’s capital city is in dire need of more charging facilities, EV drivers say, to implement an ambitious plan to phase out gas vehicles in one of the world’s most polluted cities.

“Charging facilities are not up to the mark yet,” said Shyam Singh, a marketing executive who owns a two-wheel electric scooter, adding that it is hard for long-distance drivers to switch to EVs because the current battery range is not enough.

Delhi adopted a new policy on July 1 that aims to make the vast majority of newly registered vehicles electric by 2027. While existing gas-powered vehicles won’t be banned, their numbers are expected to dwindle in the coming years.

Energy experts say the plan is one of the country’s most ambitious electric-vehicle policies and a significant step toward improving the city’s air quality and reducing pollution.

The policy provides EV buyers with subsidies and waivers on registration fees and some road taxes, incentives to scrap gas vehicles, and it offers plans to expand the charging infrastructure. It also targets two- and three-wheelers that make up nearly 70% of vehicles in the city: Starting in 2027, any newly registered three-wheeled vehicles and small trucks must be electric, with two-wheelers the following year.

Currently, only about 5% of the 8.7 million vehicles registered in Delhi are electric. But EV registrations have been increasing, with over 100,000 in the past year, most of them two- and three-wheelers. Registrations for new gas-powered cars and bigger trucks will still be allowed for the time being.

The plan, which is expected to cost the local government 150 billion rupees (\$1.5 billion), will offer cash amounts of up to 50,000 rupees (\$522) for residents who purchase EVs and up to 100,000 rupees (\$1,044) for those who scrap their old gasoline-powered vehicles.

“Delhi’s EV policy is one of the most ambitious policies that I have seen in India,” said Jaideep Sarawat, who leads work on clean power and electric mobility at the Vasudha Foundation. The deadlines, he added, send a signal to automakers and consumers that change is “inevitable.”

While states including Maharashtra, Karnataka, Telangana and Tamil Nadu have offered incentives for electric vehicle owners and manufacturers, cut taxes and pumped money into setting up charging stations, Delhi is the first to phase out gas-powered vehicles.



Electric buses move through dense traffic alongside other vehicles and scooters in New Delhi, India on July 14. (AP)

Study suggests threat of mold-associated illnesses may be underappreciated

NEW YORK, July 30, (AP): A first-of-its-kind US study suggests invasive mold infections may be an underappreciated - and potentially deadly - threat.

The researchers detected about 450 cases in Atlanta-area hospitals over five years. About a third of the patients died in the hospital.

The findings, published this week by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, come from an attempt to better gauge how common these kinds of illnesses are. The government does not require doctors to report the illnesses.

“It’s kind of the first time we’ve had an estimate like this,” said the CDC’s Dr. Jeremy Gold, the study’s senior author.

And it’s important to understand it now, because the problem may grow in the future, he added. Mold exposure is a recurring problem in the wake of hurricanes, floods and other natural disasters influenced by climate change, researchers have found.

“I agree that the frequency of fungal infections will likely increase with climate change,” said Dr. Jeffrey Jenks, an infectious disease researcher at Duke University.

Meanwhile, there’s a growing population of older people who are more susceptible to such illnesses, Gold said.

Invasive mold diseases are rare in-



This 1967 chest x-ray photo provided by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention shows pulmonary aspergillosis caused by a fungal organism of the genus Aspergillus. (AP)

fections caused by certain species. Most people who get infected inhale mold spores, but they can also enter the body through cuts or wounds or from contaminated medical equipment.

The spores don’t cause health problems for most people, but they can be life-threatening to some, including the elderly, cancer patients and others with weakened immune systems. Previously, CDC researchers estimated more than 15,000 hospitalizations a year could be tied to invasive mold disease.

To better understand how common cases might be at a local level, the research team worked with four Atlanta-area hospitals and their affiliated outpatient clinics to look for potential cases from 2020 to 2024.

They initially identified nearly 1,000 potential cases, but winnowed the number down to about 450 by ruling out patients who may have had signs of exposure but didn’t qualify as having invasive mold disease.

American Red Cross declares second-ever nat’l blood supply crisis

LOS ANGELES, July 30, (Xinhua): The American Red Cross has declared its second-ever national blood supply crisis after blood donations fell to a four-year summer low.

The Red Cross said Monday that it had begun limiting type O blood distributions to individual hospitals as demand continued to outpace donations. It now has less than a one-day national supply of type O positive blood, the organization said in a statement.

Type O positive blood is the most commonly transfused blood type, accounting for some 60 percent of Red Cross blood distributions and can be safely given to about 80 percent of patients, it said.

Extreme heat, poor air quality and widespread foodborne illnesses are contributing to lower donor turnout this summer, further straining the nation’s blood supply, said the statement.

Chris Hrouda, president of Red Cross Biomedical Services, said the organization, the largest single provider of blood products in the United States, has “worked tirelessly” to strengthen the blood supply for its hospital partners.

“Every donation has the potential to help save lives, and we urgently need everyone who is eligible to make an appointment



Hrouda

to give blood as soon as possible,” he said.

The Red Cross declared its first national blood crisis in January 2022 as the United States grappled with the lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Also:
CANBERRA: Chronic and mental conditions are having a growing impact on the health of Australians, according to a government report published.

The comprehensive biennial report on **Australia’s** health for 2026 from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) found that 61 percent of Australians, or 15.4 million people, were living with at least one chronic long-term health condition in 2022 and 38 percent were living with two or more.

It said that Australians lost an estimated 4.9 million years of healthy life due to chronic conditions in 2024, accounting for 84 percent of the total national dis-

ease burden.

The top five leading causes of disease burden in 2024 were all chronic conditions, including dementia, which became Australia’s leading cause of death for the first time.

Data previously released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics revealed that dementia accounted for 9.4 percent of all deaths nationally in 2024, surpassing heart disease at 8.7 percent. The AIHW report said that dementia deaths rose by 39 percent between 2015 and 2024, while heart disease deaths declined by 18 percent in the same period. Zoran Bolevich, chief executive officer of the AIHW, attributed the rise in dementia deaths to Australia’s aging population.

According to the report, 22 percent of Australians aged 16-85 reported experiencing mental health conditions in the last 12 months in 2022. Since 2007, the proportion of Australians aged 16-24 who reported mental health conditions increased from 26 to 39 percent.

Despite the growing impact of chronic and mental health conditions, the report found that health outcomes in Australia are continuing to improve, with life expectancy at birth hitting 85.1 years for females and 81.1 years for males in 2022-24.



Carl Skau, acting executive director of the World Food Programme (WFP), (second from left), meets with frontline workers and WFP staff at the Rwampara Ebola treatment center in Ituri, eastern Congo on July 29. (AP)

Death toll tops more than 1,500 in fastest-growing Ebola outbreak in history, says Congo

BUNIA, Congo, July 30, (AP): The fastest-growing Ebola outbreak has killed more than 1,500 people in eastern Congo, official data released on Thursday showed, marking a 50% increase in around a week that shows the emergency continuing to outpace response efforts. As of Tuesday, 3,442 cases had been recorded, with 1,521 deaths, according to the latest government update.

The outbreak, which was declared on May 15, has been linked to the Bundibugyo virus, for which there is no approved vaccines or treatments.

There are currently 797 patients in isolation or hospitalized, while a further 615 patients have recovered, the data showed. Contact tracing continues to lag, with only around 78% of known contacts monitored nationwide, well below the 95% target health officials say is needed to interrupt transmission.

The outbreak is mostly concentrated in eastern Congo’s remote Ituri province, which accounts for

nearly 90% of cases, but there have been others confirmed in five provinces including one of the country’s largest cities, Kisangani.

Neighboring Uganda declared itself free of Ebola on Tuesday following the discharge of the country’s last patient in mid-June.

Ebola is rare, but highly contagious and can be contracted via bodily fluids such as vomit, blood or semen. The disease it causes is severe and often fatal.

The latest outbreak has killed more people at a quicker rate than any previous outbreak, including in 2014-2016 when 28,000 cases were reported, of which over 11,000 people died. That outbreak took about eight months to reach 1,000 deaths.

The speed of transmission in the current outbreak comes amid public concern 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.

International partners supporting the Ebola response in Ituri’s Nyakunde health zone temporarily withdrew after a July 15 attack on a hospital and a treatment center, sparked by a patient’s death.

Officials say the withdrawal of aid groups including the World Health Organization, Africa CDC, Samaritan’s Purse and Mercy Corps, has disrupted surveillance, contact tracing and supplies.

Local health officials say security has since stabilized and are urging partners to return, with Africa CDC saying teams could redeploy as soon as next week.

The Ebola outbreak is leaving thousands more people hungry in eastern Congo, a region engulfed in conflicts and a fight over precious minerals, the head of the UN food agency warned on Wednesday.

The World Food Program’s acting executive director, Carl Skau, told The Associated Press during a visit

to the hard-hit Ituri province that the outbreak is a “crisis on top of a crisis” that has compounded a catastrophic situation with over 5 million Congolese already experiencing emergency-level food insecurity.

The long-running conflict in eastern Congo has driven nearly 10 million people into crisis or emergency levels of hunger, with Ituri - the epicenter of the Ebola outbreak - among the most affected with 1.9 million in need of food, according to the WFP.

“My number one message is that this situation requires much, much more attention” Skau later told a video news conference with U.N. correspondents. “This is the fastest growing Ebola crisis ever.”

Since the outbreak was declared on May 15, it took just over two months for 1,000 people to die of Ebola in eastern Congo, compared to the 2014-2016 outbreak in West Africa that had been considered the worst in history and when it took about eight months to reach that number.

Six years in Japan now required for top eligibility

Japan rugby passport rule sparks legal battle for foreign-born players

TOKYO, July 30, (AP): Timothy Lafaele is among the rugby players who have made their lives and playing careers in Japan, and hold Japanese passports even though they were born outside the country.

In Lafaele's case, he has played 28 times for Japan, including a monumental victory over Ireland in the 2019 Rugby World Cup, which Japan hosted.

He was a star back then as Japan's rugby prowess shocked many.

But under new rules proposed by local rugby officials that are set to go into effect in December when the Japan Rugby League One season opens, Lafaele and the other local passport-holders will be classed as foreigners, clouding their future in Japan.

This limits their playing opportunities on domestic teams where Japan-born players will get preference.

Seiji Makino, a lawyer who is representing the 24 players - who all have Japanese passports - in a suit pending before several Japanese courts, said he's hopeful changes can be made before the season opens - through the courts or through negotiations with rugby officials.

"This is a very simple story," Makino said Thursday. "It is about players who built their lives and careers in Japan under one set of rules and are now having the ground moved from under their feet."

He and Lafaele spoke on Thursday in Tokyo at a news conference at the Foreign Correspondents Club of Japan.

Lafaele said the rule change came "out of the blue." He declined to discuss any link to current politics around immigration in Japan, and also declined to talk about the affect on his contract.

The rugby rule change comes as Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi has been pushing tougher policies on immigration and foreigners. Many Japa-



Rugby player Timothy Lafaele, right, and lawyer Seiji Makino, left, attend a press conference at the Foreign Correspondents Club of Japan, in Tokyo. (AP)

nese complain of struggling with stagnant salaries, rising prices - and some link it to a surge in foreigners to sustain a shrinking workforce as Japan's population declines.

Lafaele, who is Samoan-born, came to Japan at 18, played for a Japanese university, and now has a Japanese passport. But that's no longer good enough to guarantee playing time in Japanese rugby's top professional league.

The new rules specify that players had to reside in Japan for "at least six of nine years" of elementary school and junior high school to qualify for the highest category of eligibility.

Makino pointed to the unfairness for the 24 players.

"The passport says Japan," Makino said. "His national team is Japan but because of where he went to elementary school the league will now treat him differently from the Japanese players."

Lafaele also spoke of the unfairness and the disappointment.

"I probably could answer for all the boys that are represented on this case," Lafaele said. "To come to Japan, having given so much to the rugby here and the community and being treated this way, it just saddens us."

"Insulted is a strong word as well. To me, when this first rule came I did feel insulted."

Of the 24 players who filed the case, only five want to be identified. Many fear that speaking out could cause more problems.

Makino was asked if there was a racial element to the new rules, and he said he didn't think "of it as racism" at the core of the dispute.

"It's been a hard time for the players these last couple of months," Lafaele said. "Some players are forced into retirement. Some players are just waiting at home at the moment for this decision to change so they can have the opportunity to provide for their families and get playing contracts. It's been a tough time for most of the players."

Reese's double-double lifts Dream over Wings



Atlanta Dream guard Rhyne Howard (10) shoots against Dallas Wings guard Paige Bueckers (5) during the first half of a WNBA basketball game in Arlington, Texas. (AP)

Copper powers Mercury past Valkyries

ARLINGTON, Texas, July 30, (AP): Allisha Gray scored five of her 25 points in the closing seconds and the Atlanta Dream overcame a 15-point deficit to beat the Dallas Wings 82-81 in the first game for both teams since the All-Star break.

Angel Reese had 22 points and 12 rebounds for her 18th double-double of the season for the Dream (17-10). They have won four in a row and five of six following a five-game losing streak.

Arike Ogunbowale led Dallas (18-10) with 24 points. Azzi Fudd scored 20 points, Paige Bueck-

ers had 16 points and Jessica Shepard had 16 points and 14 rebounds for her WNBA-leading 19th double-double of the season.

Ogunbowale was called for a Flagrant Foul 1 on Gray's 3-point shot with Dallas leading 81-77 and 18.7 seconds left. Gray hit all three free throws, then took the ensuing inbounds pass and hit a contested jumper in the lane to give Atlanta its first lead of the second half with 15 seconds remaining.

Awak Kuier missed a corner 3-point shot before Shepard's putback attempt at the buzzer missed.

Mercury 91, Valkyries 89

In Phoenix, Kahleah Copper scored 27 points and Phoenix overcame a 13-point deficit to beat Golden State in the return from the All-Star break

for both teams.

Alyssa Thomas had 25 points, nine rebounds and eight assists, and DeWanna Bonner added 17 points, 10 rebounds and three blocks for the Mercury (11-18). They have won three straight following a five-game losing streak. The Valkyries (19-9), who lost 90-82 at home to Washington last time out, have lost back-to-back games and fell a half-game behind second-place Las Vegas.

Copper was called for her sixth foul with 1:45 to play, the Mercury challenged and, after replay review, the call was upheld. Nine seconds later Kayla Thornton hit a 3-pointer that tied it at 82, but Bonner answered with two free throws with 1:27 remaining to take the lead for good.

Vozinha faces jersey name battle in Chile

SANTIAGO, Chile, July 30, (AP): Vozinha is cashing in on his new-found fame by promoting the new Spider-Man film. The 40-year-old World Cup star's arrival to his new club in Chile, however, was caught up in old-fashioned paperwork.

The Cape Verde goalkeeper was scheduled to be with Colo Colo by Wednesday, but Chile's biggest and most successful club says Vozinha's trip has been delayed because of paperwork. They're hopeful of a Thursday arrival.

Vozinha was still able to wear a jersey Wednesday though - by donning Spider-Man gear as part of a Sony Pictures Brazil campaign promoting "Spider-Man: Brand New

Day." On Instagram, Vozinha encouraged his 29.6 million followers - up from under 50,000 before the World Cup - to go see the film.

Meanwhile, Colo Colo is also racing to resolve some issues regarding Vozinha. The most pressing concern is the name that will appear on the goalkeeper's jersey. Regulations from the Chilean National Association of Professional Football (ANFP) require players to use their surname. This means that Vozinha - whose real name is Josimar José Évora Dias - would not be allowed to use the nickname that made him famous around the world.

That would be a setback not only for the player - whose moniker

means "grandma" in Portuguese, a tribute to the woman who raised him - but also to the personal brand he has built worldwide.

According to ANFP regulations, "nicknames, appellations, or sobriquets will not be permitted" in the domestic competition. Players who fail to comply face an administrative yellow card, while their clubs can be fined up to \$875.

Colo Colo has requested an exemption from the Council of Presidents, the body comprised of the top executives of Chilean clubs. The board is expected to vote on the matter Friday, and the decision must be unanimous for Vozinha to wear his nickname.



Cape Verde goalkeeper Vozinha gathers the ball ahead of former Mexican soccer player Luis Hernandez during a FIFA legends soccer match being played two days ahead of the World Cup final in New York. (AP)

US Biathlon pushes back Ski & Snowboard merger

CHICAGO, July 30, (AP): The U.S. Biathlon board of directors voted Wednesday to push back a planned merger with U.S. Ski & Snowboard in order to review the details after facing opposition from its community.

As part of the motion, the board said it supports the principles of a rare consolidation between two Olympic sport organizations. But the board also wanted a "definitive agreement that more specifically defines them and ensures governance autonomy for U.S. biathlon."

A working group is being set up and will present a draft by late August.

The board's decision followed a long closed-door meeting to decide whether to remove the board's chair, Bob Hall, over an ethics claim. It was dismissed.

The integration became necessary, officials said, to boost biathlon's revenues and performance. It also drew concern among athletes who felt it might hurt the sport. Hall said the alliance means a \$3 million improvement to its budget over the next four years.

Athlete representative Jake Brown said the board recognizes there could be good opportunities with the merger, but added, "we also need to do it right and do it with the membership, the community, athlete support."

U.S. Biathlon Association's board of directors began working on the proposal in March after the U.S. again failed to win a biathlon medal at the Winter Olympics, and told members in May.

Leading into the vote, U.S. Biathlon CEO Jack Gierhart told members the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Committee was cutting 22% of its funding and sponsors were pulling back. That led the board to consider an offer to join USSS, where biathlon would have access to more money and could add athlete services and expose more skiers to biathlon.

But the effort has sparked push-

back and ethics complaints from longtime biathletes and supporters, who spoke out during town halls and started an opposition website, saying the board has fast-tracked a plan that threatens the sport's future. The concern was biathlon would get lost among larger, more popular sports like Alpine skiing, they said. Decisions would be made by people who don't know the sport and many fear losing financial support for the national team.

"I don't want to see biathlon disappear into another organization," said Art Stegen, author of the book, "Unique and Unknown: The Story of Biathlon in the United States."

Merging Olympic sport organizations is rare. USSS CEO Sophie Goldschmidt tried to take over USA Surfing last year but dropped the bid after opposition from members. She's now in talks with USA Skateboarding, she said.

In April, USSS brought the U.S. Para Nordic ski team - cross-country skiing and biathlon - under its umbrella. The move continued the expansion of Para sports within the U.S. ski team.

Gierhart said USBA worked carefully to comply with federal law and ensure US Biathlon's independence while taking advantage of a USSS collaboration.

USSS is a powerhouse in winter sports, overseeing 11 sports and 250 elite athletes, including Alpine ski champion Mikaela Shiffrin and snowboarding superstar Chloe Kim. They have a budget of \$70 million and 40,000 members, compared with biathlon's \$4 million budget and 1,407 members. Biathlon, which combines cross-country skiing and rifle shooting, has never won an Olympic medal. It's wildly popular in Europe.

Cross-country ski Olympian Kikkan Randall, who's on the USSS board, said the collaboration would benefit both groups.

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Supporters deserve to feel welcome and respected

Seattle apologizes over co-owner's fan exchange

SEATTLE, July 30, (AP): The Seattle Storm apologized Wednesday for an exchange that took place between one of its co-owners and two fans during the team's 105-95 loss to the Indiana Fever. The Storm didn't elaborate on the nature of the incident and didn't say which Storm co-owner was involved.

"We are aware one of our co-owners made comments to two fans in attendance at last night's game. We apologize that this happened," Storm majority owner Ginny Gilder said in the statement released Wednesday. "Everyone who attends a Storm game deserves to feel welcome, and we remain com-

mitted to creating an inclusive environment where every fan is treated with respect." The incident occurred Tuesday night during an evening that began with a demonstration outside Climate Pledge Arena. The team didn't say if the exchange was related to the protest.

Ahead of the game, a crowd of a few dozen gathered to both support Fever guard Sophie Cunningham and to promote a statewide ballot initiative, IL26-638, that would bar transgender students from participating in girls' athletics at Washington schools.

South Korean named MVP

Son scores 2 as MLS All-Stars edge LIGA MX All-Stars

CHARLOTTE, N.C., July 30, (AP): It was a night worthy of a picture or two for Son Heung-min.

Son scored two goals in a three-minute span in the first half off assists from Carles Gil to propel the MLS All-Stars past the LIGA MX All-Stars 4-3 in Major League Soccer All-Star Game.

The Los Angeles Football Club forward celebrated both goals with his signature “camera” celebration - mimicking holding an old-fashioned camera, framing the shot with his fingers and then pretending to snap a picture.

Son was named the game’s MVP.

“I had great players, amazing players around me and that made my job easier,” said Son, who played for South Korea in the World Cup. “Scoring two goals makes the night really special.”

Chicago Fire’s Philip Zinckernagel and FC Cincinnati’s Evander da Silva Ferreira also scored for the MLS All-Stars in front of 35,197 at Bank of America Stadium.

Luis Gabriel Rey sent a running header off a free kick past Matt Freese, the United States men’s national team goalkeeper, 10 minutes into the game to give Liga MX a 1-0 lead.

Then Son took over.

The LAFC forward fielded a pass from Gil on the left side of the pitch, settled the ball and slid a well-placed shot past a diving Carlos Acevedo to even the score at the 20-minute mark.

Son gave MLS the lead for good just moments later when Gil hustled to stop the ball from going out of play and fired a pass back in front of the goal. Son buried the shot in the back of the net.

“He’s an unbelievable player,” said Hany Mukhtar, a midfielder for Nashville FC, said of Son. “He’s a world class player for a reason. He shows it every week, and we all know how good he is. We see it in training, and I’m not surprised at what he did.”

Zinckernagel made it 3-1 MLS in the 42nd minute when he scored off a rebound.

Liga MX got to within 3-2 early in the second half on a goal by Salomon Rondon, before Ferreira’s goal in the 58th minute gave MLS some cushion. Jose Pareda added a late goal in extra time for LIGA MX to make it 4-3.

MLS’ biggest star, Lionel Messi of Inter Miami, did not play.

Messi was not at the game after Argentina made a deep run in the World Cup before falling to Spain in the finals. Messi has 12 goals and eight assists for Inter Miami at the All-Star break.



MLS All-Star Son Heung-min (7) shoots against Liga MX All-Star Carlos Acevedo (1) during the MLS All-Star soccer game in Charlotte, N.C. (AP)

Four-way promotion battle heats up in Kuwait First Division League



Players vie for the ball during Al-Yarmouk and Sporty match.

Al-Jazeera continues impressive push

By Hassan Mosa
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, July 30: The race for promotion in the First Division League has become increasingly competitive, with four clubs separated by only a small margin after the completion of the 15th round.

League leader Al-Sahel missed the chance to strengthen its position at the top after being held

to a 1-1 draw by Khaitan at Jaber Al-Mubarak Stadium. Despite dropping two points, Al-Sahel remains first with 33 points, while Khaitan climbed to 18 points in fifth place.

Al-Yarmouk capitalised on Al-Sahel’s slip-up, closing the gap to just one point with a 2-1 victory over bottom side Sporty at Nasser Al-Osaimi Stadium. The result moved Al-Yarmouk to 32 points, while Sporty remains at the bottom with three points.

Al-Sulaibikhat stayed firmly in the promotion race after returning to winning form with a comfortable 3-0 triumph over Al-Shamiya. The

victory took its tally to 32 points, keeping it level with Al-Yarmouk and within striking distance of the leader.

Meanwhile, Al-Jazeera continued its impressive push for promotion after defeating Burgan 2-0 at Al-Sahel Stadium. The newly promoted side moved to fourth place with 28 points, keeping its hopes alive of securing one of the two available spots in the Premier League.

Burgan, on the other hand, remained sixth with 14 points and saw their promotion hopes officially come to an end, while Al-Shamiya stayed seventh on 10 points.

Ancelotti still recovering from round-of-16 loss

‘2028 Olympics important for Brazil’s next WC team’

RIO DE JANEIRO, July 30, (AP): Brazil coach Carlo Ancelotti is still recovering from his team’s round-of-16 loss to Norway in the World Cup.

But as the 67-year-old Italian turns to the next four years on the job, he pledges to closely watch youth division players and the country’s squad at the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics to spearhead an overhaul.

Ancelotti also said in an exclusive interview with The Associated Press at the headquarters of the Brazilian soccer confederation in Rio de Janeiro that the five-time World Cup winners don’t need to copy defending champion Spain or high-powered France to win a sixth.

“We don’t need to copy - we need to learn where we can improve,” Ancelotti said in the confederation’s museum, where much of Brazil’s national team sil-



Brazil's national soccer coach Carlo Ancelotti speaks during an interview in Rio de Janeiro. (AP)

verware is kept. “Some positions are well-covered, both in defense and attack. We are looking for improvement and development among the midfielders. And the

Olympics could be a crucial moment (to find players).”

Ancelotti, who returned to Brazil on Sunday, has heard a lot about the Tokyo Olympics gold

medal match since he arrived. Five years ago, Brazil beat Spain 2-1 to defend its title. Eight of the Spanish players in that game plus coach Luis de La Fuente and are now World Cup winners, but Brazil only took midfielder Bruno Guimaraes and striker Matheus Cunha to the 2026 World Cup.

“We are in contact with the U-15, U-17, and U-20 coaches to identify talent and track their progress, ensuring they are prepared for the next World Cup,” Ancelotti said. “Four years ago, Rayan was playing U-17. It is vital to look at youth development now so that by 2030 we have another generation of players progressing like him.”

Many Brazil fans might not be that patient; they often expect stars to deliver and players to have leading roles wherever they play. But Ancelotti says the set up he plans is different from that.

Howe set to leave Newcastle after nearly five years in charge

LONDON, July 30, (AP): Eddie Howe is expected to leave his role as Newcastle head coach less than a month before the start of the Premier League season.

Howe’s impending departure was reported by outlets including the BBC and the Press Association on Thursday.

He has been in charge of Newcastle for nearly five years and during that time ended the Saudi-backed club’s decades-long wait for silverware.

Howe took charge of Newcastle’s 4-1 preseason friendly loss to Bristol City on Wednesday, which may have been a pointer to a difficult campaign ahead following departures of star players this summer.

Anthony Gordon and Sandro Tonali have left during this transfer window and there is speculation captain Bruno Guimaraes could follow.

Last year Newcastle sold top scorer Alexander Isak, finished the season in 12th and missed out on Champions League qualification.

Despite being bought by Saudi Arabia’s sovereign wealth fund in 2021, Newcastle has not been able to emulate the Abu Dhabi-backed Manchester City or Qatar-backed Paris Saint-Germain and become a dominant force in European soccer.

Howe, who was hired in November 2021, twice led the club to Champions League qualification and won the English League Cup last year to

end the club’s 70-year wait for a major domestic trophy.

But financial rules have restricted Newcastle’s Saudi backers from spending as lavishly as City and PSG and, instead, it has had to sell top players to reinvest in the squad.

□ □ □

Discriminatory behavior in English soccer could be punished with at least 10-game suspensions.

The Football Association confirmed plans on Thursday to strengthen sanctions on incidents involving race, religion and sexual orientation.

Under new guidelines, regulatory commissions will be required to impose a suspension of at least 10 matches in cases that are considered “aggravated breaches” of misconduct.

Such breaches involve “express or implied reference” to ethnic origin, colour, race, nationality, religion, belief, sex, gender, gender reassignment, sexual orientation and disability.

“Enhanced measures are necessary to tackle this abhorrent conduct,” the FA said.

Mitigating factors could result in suspensions of more or less than 10 matches.

Saudi Arabia secures AFC Champions League Elite hosting rights through 2029

KUALA LUMPUR, July 30: Saudi Arabia will continue to host the AFC Champions League Elite Finals until 2029 after the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) confirmed the extension of the hosting rights following the success of the previous two editions.

The Kingdom staged the knockout rounds of the 2025 and 2026 tournaments in Jeddah, with the competition’s decisive matches from the quarter-finals to the final held there as part of what the AFC describes as the “finals.”

In its announcement, the AFC confirmed that the provisional hosting agreement granted to the Saudi Arabian Football Federation in December 2023 has now been made permanent for the next three seasons.

The decision means Saudi Arabia will host the AFC Champions League Elite Fi-



AFC Champions League Elite trophy.

nals for the 2026-27, 2027-28 and 2028-29 campaigns, building on the successful organisation of the 2024-25 and 2025-26 editions.

FIFA hits Argentina with World Cup charges for scuffle, ‘Malvinas’ banner

CORAL GABLES, Fla. , July 30, (AP): FIFA lodged disciplinary charges against two Argentina players Wednesday for striking Spain opponents moments after the World Cup final and charged Argentina’s soccer federation for players showing a political banner about the Falkland Islands after beating England in the semifinals.

A list of disciplinary cases opened by FIFA against Argentina also include “discriminatory chants and gestures” by fans, alleged assault by an assistant coach after the final and “throwing of objects by spectators in relation to several matches” at the World Cup.

Argentina midfielder Leandro Paredes faces three charges of assault in the post-game clashes after Spain’s 1-0 win on July 19, defender Nahuel Molina faces two charges and coach Roberto Ayala one.

Molina and Thiago Almada also are charged with unsporting behavior, with

the same charge leveled against Spain player Gavi.

Argentina’s players carried a banner with the slogan “Las Malvinas son Argentinas” - “The Malvinas are Argentine” - after beating England 2-1 in the semi-finals.

Argentina refers to the Falkland Islands as Islas Malvinas. They were invaded in 1982 under orders from Argentina’s then-military dictatorship, triggering a 10-week war won by Britain.

British government officials urged FIFA to investigate, and the soccer body said Wednesday the formal charge was “using a sports event for demonstrations of a non-sporting nature.”

FIFA said all the people charged “have now been provided with the opportunity to present their position, following which a decision will be issued by the FIFA Disciplinary Committee in due course.”

Mancini apologizes after being rehired

ROME, July 30, (AP): Roberto Mancini issued an apology in his first public comments Wednesday after being rehired to coach an Italy squad in crisis three years after he abandoned the same job for a lucrative contract with Saudi Arabia.

“I’m very sorry,” Mancini said. “It was like losing the woman of your life. And it means you did something that shouldn’t have been done. So I’m sorry, very sorry also for everything that happened over these last three years. ... I’m going to try to bring the national team back where it belongs.”

Italy failed for a third straight time to qualify for the World Cup, prompting the resignations of federation president Gabriele Gravina and coach Gennaro Gattuso in April, shortly after a playoff defeat to Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The 61-year-old Mancini led the Azzurri to the European Championship title in 2021 but shockingly resigned as Italy

coach in August 2023, taking over Saudi Arabia’s national team two weeks later.

“It was completely my fault,” Mancini said, referring to a lack of communication with Gravina.

Mancini’s first match back in charge will be against Belgium in the Nations League on Sept. 25 at the Stadio Olimpico in Rome. He was asked about what type of reception fans might give him.

“I realize some people will be against me,” Mancini said. “I’m hoping the squad plays well enough that maybe people will forgive me.”

Mancini was a fourth-choice option after Carlo Ancelotti and Pep Guardiola turned the job down and Andrea Pirlo was dropped as a candidate amid political concerns over a sponsorship deal with a Russian betting firm.

Italy will also face France and Turkey in its Nations League group.

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NEWS



Former South Korean men's national team head coach Hong Myung-bo, right, and former KFA President Chung Mong-gyu, left, attend a hearing on the Korea Football Association (KFA) amid a controversy surrounding the management of the sport's national governing body and its impact on the team's World Cup performance, at the National Assembly in Seoul, South Korea. (AP)

Sports

UEFA boycotts FIFA competitions over investment plan

Asia warns of competition threats

GENEVA, July 30, (AP): FIFA President Gianni Infantino's plan to sell stakes in the World Cup to private equity investors was hit hard Thursday by his former colleagues at UEFA, who agreed to boycott all the global soccer body's competitions in protest.

"UEFA and its national associations will not participate in FIFA competitions," the European soccer body said after an urgent online meeting of its 55 member nations.

The next scheduled FIFA tournament is within weeks in Europe - the Women's Under-20 World Cup hosted by Poland from Sept. 5.

"Some things are simply too important to sell," UEFA said in a statement. "The FIFA World Cup belongs to football. It always will. And so long as Europe has a voice, it will never be for sale." The strategy meeting was called to counter Infantino's offer of \$20 million to each of FIFA's 211 global members that has to be accepted by mid-September.

Infantino's secret project was revealed Tuesday to spin off its commercial operations in a new \$20 billion subsidiary called FIFA Forward Enterprise (FFE) 20% owned by private investors. The core investor would be a New York investment firm created by Joshua Kushner, the brother of U.S. President Donald Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner.

Infantino wrote Tuesday to the 211 members - already the effective owners of FIFA as a non-profit association under Swiss law - that if they approve FFE their promised \$10 million basic funding for the next four years will double to \$20 million. He projected their FIFA funding through 2038 would be \$86 million each, instead of about \$36 million.

"This is not merely a profound failure of leadership, but an abdication of FIFA's duty as the custodian of world football," said UEFA, where Infantino was a long-time staffer and its CEO-like general secretary when he was first elected to lead FIFA in 2016.



In this file photo, Asia Football Confederation President Salman Bin Ibrahim Al-Khalifa, center, walks with FIFA President Gianni Infantino, left, as they arrive for an inauguration ceremony for the new building of the Asia Football Confederation in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. (AP)

Infantino's high-stakes financial gambit now could threaten his previously secure 11-year presidency of FIFA as anger and frustration with him rises among soccer stakeholders including three of the six continental bodies.

FIFA has set a Nov. 18 deadline for potential candidates to declare in a presidential vote of the 211 members scheduled next March in Rabat, Morocco.

Infantino had seemed - 11 days ago after the World Cup final in East Rutherford, New Jersey - to have a clear path to being re-elected unopposed for a fourth and final term in office through 2031.

Soccer officials have said privately Infantino eyes a commissioner-like role

at the FIFA Forward Enterprise spinoff beyond 2031.

"Game over, Gianni #InfantinoOUT," the Football Supporters Europe group, which advises UEFA on fan issues such as ticket prices, posted after the boycott threat.

Global opposition to FIFA President Gianni Infantino's plan for selling a stake in World Cup revenue to private investors grew Thursday with Asia's soccer leader warning members about threats to their own competitions.

"FIFA's unilateral actions appear to undermine the very foundations of continental football," the Asian Football Confederation president Sheikh Salman bin Ibrahim Al Khalifa said in a letter to member federations.

Infantino held secret talks in recent months with potential backers in the U.S. about creating the \$20 billion FIFA Forward Enterprise subsidiary with \$4.2 billion of private equity. It comes off the back of a record-setting men's World Cup in North America that pushed FIFA's income to \$15 billion over the past four years.

The 55 European federations and 46 from Asia count close to a majority of FIFA's 211 member countries globally that each was given a Sept. 19 deadline by Infantino to accept a one-time offer of \$20 million to invest.

The North American soccer body known as CONCACAF, with 35 FIFA members, has said it is "deeply concerned by the lack of due process" in Infantino's project revealed on Tuesday.

Sheikh Salman, an ally to Infantino since losing the FIFA presidential election to him in 2016, wrote in his letter "such an initiative will not succeed without the support of all the confederations, which is not the case now."

Infantino wrote to the 211 members late Tuesday that on top of the initial \$20 million offer, if they approve creating FFE their promised \$10 million basic funding for the next four years will double to \$20 million. He projected their FIFA funding through 2038 would be \$86 million each, instead of about \$36 million.

Infantino is due for re-election by the 211 FIFA members next March for a fourth and final term in office through 2031. Soccer officials have said privately Infantino eyes a commissioner-like role at the FFE spinoff beyond 2031.

In a video message published on Wednesday by FIFA, Infantino insisted the private equity plan to spin off its money-making operations was "an offer, not an obligation."

Clubs intensify preparations ahead of new season

U-20 team's poor Gulf showing sparks calls for reform

Al-Qadsia draws in Turkey friendly as Al-Shallal move becomes official

By Hassan Mosa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, July 30: Al-Qadsia began its pre-season preparations in Turkey with a 1-1 draw against Saudi side Al-Zulfi in its opening friendly match of the training camp in Yalova.

Bader Al-Mutawa put the "Yellow" ahead from the penalty spot, while the match also saw new signing Khaled Al-Kharqawi make his first appearance after joining on loan from Kuwait Club.

Coach Mohammed Ibrahim used the friendly to test a number of players and provide valuable playing time to members of the squad.

Al-Qadsia is scheduled to play more warm-up games before concluding their camp and returning to Kuwait on August 14.

The team is preparing for the AFC Challenge League campaign, as well as the new Kuwait Premier League season, which kicks off on August 25.

Meanwhile, Al-Qadsia has officially completed the registration of Abdulwahab Al-Shallal after reaching an agreement with Al-Jahra, clearing the way for the midfielder to represent the club.

The club praised the cooperation between both sides, saying the agreement reflects the strong relationship between Al-Qadsia and

Al-Jahra and their commitment to resolving matters in a positive and professional manner.

Al-Qadsia also expressed their gratitude to Al-Jahra president Yousef Karim for his role in finalising the deal, while Al-Shallal thanked Al-Qadsia's management and officials for their confidence and support. He also acknowledged Al-Jahra's cooperation in facilitating the move.

Al-Salmiya will travel to Turkey today to begin their overseas training camp as part of their preparations for the upcoming season.

The "Sky Blues" are scheduled to play several friendly matches during the camp before returning to Kuwait on August 20.

Al-Nasr has finalised its football department and first-team technical staff for the 2026-27 season as part of their preparations for the new campaign.

Board member Asbih Al-Adwani will oversee the football department, with Salem Nasser appointed as deputy and Mohammed Mujahid taking charge of professional affairs.

The first-team coaching staff will be led by national coach Thaher Al-Adwani, assisted by Fahad Al-Mnees and Nebojsa Šćepović, with Armin Zagorovic serving as goal-keeping coach and Rajko Ivanovic appointed fitness coach.

The club said the early appointments are aimed at ensuring administrative and technical stability while creating the right conditions for a successful season.

club, it's something that we can achieve. The ambition is to lift trophies, and I can't wait to contribute." (AP)



Monaco signs France U21 striker Abline: Monaco signed Matthis Abline from Nantes on Thursday, forming a potential forward line with United States striker Folarin Balogun.

Monaco said the 23-year-old Abline signed a five-year contract without disclosing the transfer fee. It was reportedly 25 million euros (\$28.6 million).

Abline, a former France Under-21 international, scored 15 goals over the past two seasons in Ligue 1 for Nantes which was relegated and will play in the second tier this season. (AP)

Best of the Rest

Chelsea signs Lacroix from Palace: Chelsea completed the signing of Maxence Lacroix from Crystal Palace on Thursday for a reported fee of 52 million pounds (\$70 million). The France international has agreed to a contract until 2032 and is the latest major arrival during this window after the signing of Morgan Rogers and Marco Paolista.

Danny Welbeck and Jordan Henderson are also reported targets for new Chelsea manager Xabi Alonso. "When I spoke with the manager, I saw that we have the same direction and desire for this club," Lacroix said. "We want to win. When you see the quality of the players here, everything we have around the



Bader Al-Mutawa shields the ball away from an opponent during Al-Qadsia friendly match against Al-Zulfi.

Alarm bells ring after Kuwait winless Basketball Championship campaign



Kuwaiti forward drives past an opponent to score during the Gulf Basketball Championship.

By Khaled Al-Enezi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

DOHA, July 30: Kuwait's national youth basketball team endured a disappointing Gulf Basketball Championship campaign, finishing fifth and last after losing all four matches, including a 75-46 defeat to Saudi Arabia in its final outing.

The tournament, held in Doha, Qatar, served as the qualifying event for the FIBA Asia U20 Championship. Qatar and Bahrain secured the two available qualification spots for the continental finals, which will be staged in India next month.

Led by Serbian coach Darko, with Yahya Al-Bahar as assistant coach, Kuwait failed to register a

victory, suffering successive defeats to Oman, Bahrain, Qatar and Saudi Arabia.

The campaign has sparked concern over the team's current level, particularly given Kuwait's history of competing for top honours in Gulf youth basketball. The results have prompted calls for a thorough review of the national youth program to determine the reasons behind the decline.

Kuwait's opening match against Oman offered the only real encouragement. The team surrendered a 15-point lead before falling 62-59 in a game that had appeared well within its grasp. The remaining defeats were far more decisive, with Kuwait losing to Bahrain by 55 points, Qatar by 28 points and Saudi Arabia by 29 points.

The winless campaign has reinforced the need for a comprehensive technical and administrative evaluation by the Kuwait Basketball Association. Officials are expected to examine every aspect of the program, including player development, team selection, preparation, coaching strategy and the strength of domestic youth competitions.

With the youth team serving as the main pathway to the senior national side, rebuilding the program has become an urgent priority. A long-term development plan focused on strengthening the grassroots system and improving player preparation will be essential if Kuwait is to regain its competitiveness in future Gulf and Asian tournaments.

Al-Sulaibikhat bolsters squad with Al-Najjar loan deal

By Khaled Al-Enezi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, July 30: Al-Sulaibikhat has strengthened its first-team handball squad by signing Abdulaziz Al-Najjar from Kazma on a season-long loan as preparations continue for the upcoming campaign.

The move is part of the club's strategy to add experienced and high-quality players capable of improving the team's performance and boosting its ambitions for the new season.

Team manager Hussain Siwan described Al-Najjar as an important addition, saying the experienced player will provide valuable depth and quality across the squad. He added that the club's management has worked to meet the coaching staff's requirements ahead of the new season.

Siwan also thanked Al-Sulaibikhat's board of directors and the handball committee for their continued support, saying their commitment reflects the club's determination to compete strongly and achieve its objectives in the coming season.

He also expressed his appreciation to Kazma's board and handball department for their cooperation and for facilitating the loan transfer.

Al-Najjar, meanwhile, thanked Al-Sulaibikhat's management and handball committee for the confidence they have shown in him by giving him the opportunity to represent the club next season. He also extended his gratitude to Kazma's board and handball department for their cooperation in completing his season-long loan move.



Abdulaziz Al-Najjar poses with officials after signing for Al-Sulaibikhat.