



MAKKAH PACT DRAWS SAUDI, TURKIYE, PAKISTAN DEFENSE LINE



Saudi Press Agency photo

Saudi Crown Prince and Prime Minister Mohammed bin Salman Al-Saud, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif pose for a group photo following the signing of the Makkah Joint Defense Agreement.



Ministry of Interior photo

First Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef tours Kuwait's islands and maritime facilities on Saturday, inspecting operational readiness and security measures along the country's sea borders.



Opinion

Ahmed Al-Jarallah

Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

King Salman, may God bless you and your Crown Prince for this alliance

SINCE the dawn of history, the Middle East has witnessed many momentous events. Throughout history, there have been those who sought to build alliances to protect their nations. During the Crusades, when Europe sought to export its crises, this region became its strategic arena, diverting attention from internal matters. However, it was fortunate that some were able to liberate it from the grip of European occupation.

Similarly, when colonial powers sought to extend their influence over salt, energy and other resources, paving the way to East Asia, others emerged to rescue the nations in the region.

When some ancient empires, such as the Persian Empire, harbored colonial ambitions, others were able to save the countries in the region, whether during the era of the Rightly Guided Caliphs or after them, such as Khalid ibn Al-Walid, Saladin and others, by establishing alliances among the people of the region.

In the modern era, several factors have entered the political and military landscape, transforming states into geographically defined entities. These states have sought to bolster their power according to their capabilities, both internally and in their foreign relations.

Here, we are speaking of a power with a significant political, economic and religious presence -- the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which has undergone a radical transformation since the reign of King Salman bin Abdulaziz and his Crown Prince, Mohammed bin Salman.

History shows that states age and decline, but every century, a new generation emerges to rejuvenate them and restore their strength. The Kingdom has been witnessing this since 2015, when it started working on several fronts. Internally, it reformed laws and regulations, enabling it to enjoy greater economic power and speak the language of the modern age. Externally, it strengthened its relations with neighboring Gulf states and the rest of the world.

Thus, the Saudi-Turkish-Pakistani tripartite alliance is viewed as a natural response to the dangers threatening the entire region, from Israeli threats to Iranian expansionism, cloaked in slogans like 'exporting the revolution'. Both are dangerous because they not only infringe upon sovereignty but also undermine economic, political and religious foundations.

This alliance gives the three countries greater power. Their combined GDP is \$3.4 trillion, and they possess significant military and public support.

Therefore, the new defense agreement, which complements the initiative of Riyadh to establish a maritime alliance to defend the Red Sea and straits of the region -- an alliance comprising 14 countries -- means that the interconnectedness of the two alliances is now a reality. Any threats, from whatever source, will be met with a formidable response.

Because other regional agreements, such as the Gulf Joint Defense Treaty, are based on cooperation in defense fields, this new alliance offers a significant opportunity for other Gulf states, such as the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Bahrain, to join, thus, strengthening the defensive and deterrent capabilities of the region.

While it is true that the balance of power in the region is being redrawn according to a vision different from that established by the outcomes of the First and Second World Wars, the power possessed by Saudi Arabia, Turkiye and Pakistan will be the cornerstone of the future of the Middle East. The influential states within the region will ultimately determine the fate of many strategic issues in the entire region.

Continued on Page 5

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Kuwait anchors maritime shield

By Munif Naif

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff and Agencies

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 8: Kuwait's First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah conducted a field tour in several islands and maritime centers to review the operations, readiness levels and procedures followed in ensuring maritime border security and safety.

In a press statement on Saturday, the ministry revealed that Director General of the Coast Guard Brigadier General (Navy) Sheikh Mubarak Ali Al-Yousef Al-Sabah warmly welcomed Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef during the visit.

Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef visited the Umm Al-Maradim Island port and inspected the facilities at the Coast Guard, Ports General Department and Kuwait General Administration of Customs, where he personally looked into the operational mechanisms and coordination among the institutions operating at the port.

He also visited Qaruh Island where he assessed the ongoing construction works, and issued directives that

Houthi strikes on Saudi trigger regional condemnation

Kuwait rallies behind UAE after tanker attack

projects must be completed according to the approved schedule, facilities must be improved, and the working and living conditions of the personnel must be developed.

The tour included Kubbar Island, where Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef reviewed the security situation and the security measures being taken. He was briefed on the nature of field operations and their implementation.

He then commended the Coast Guard personnel for their efforts in protecting maritime borders and maintaining the safety and security of those at sea.

Continued on Page 5

Sovereign foreign assets set to rise in 2026

Fitch Ratings affirms Kuwait's AA- rating

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 8, (KUNA): The Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) said on Friday that Fitch Ratings affirms Kuwait's long-term sovereign rating at "AA-" with a stable outlook.

In a statement to KUNA, the bank said that the key points of Fitch's report show that Kuwait's credit rating reflects the country's exceptional strength in its financial and external positions.

Regarding economic growth and inflation rates, Fitch projected the ongoing regional geopolitical insta-

bility to affect the local economic growth rate amid changes in oil production, it added.

Fitch expected that non-oil GDP would see positive growth, though at a slower pace, buoyed by government spending on infrastructure development projects, projecting a slight rise in the inflation rate during 2026 before dropping in 2027.

Concerning public debt, the agency anticipated an increase in the public debt-to-GDP ratio over the next three fiscal years (until the end of

the 2028/2029 fiscal year), adding that debt levels would remain below the median of countries with an AA sovereign rating, which is around 51.5 percent of the projected GDP for 2028.

Pointing to foreign assets, Fitch Agency confirmed that Kuwait has an exceptionally strong external financial position, expecting the net sovereign foreign assets as a percentage of GDP to rise in 2026, which is more than 10 times the average of countries with an AA credit rating.

Kuwait subsidies sink 22 pct in H1

By Marwa Al-Bahrawi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 8: Data from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry showed a 22.11 percent year-on-year decrease in total subsidies for basic food commodities and construction materials during the first half of 2026, reaching KD 143.56 million, compared to KD 184.33 million during the same period in 2025.

Basic building materials accounted for the largest share of total subsidies at KD 77.5 million, equivalent to 54 percent of the total disbursed amount, registering a 3.5 percent decrease compared to the first half of last year.

Subsidies for construction materials declined significantly, reaching KD 56.74 million, representing 39.5 percent of total subsidies, compared to KD 95.06 million in the corresponding period of 2025, a decrease of 40.3 percent.

Subsidies for milk and infant formula recorded the largest decrease at 47.5 percent, reaching KD 9.26 million, compared to KD 17.64 million during the first half of last year.

The value of subsidies increased by 26.3 percent in June 2026, reaching KD 24 million, compared to KD 19 million in the previous month of May.

Subsidies for basic commodities in June amounted to approximately KD 16 million, representing 64 percent of total subsidies disbursed and registering a 51 percent increase compared to May.

Continued on Page 5



Photo by Samer Shqair

Beachgoers seek respite at Marina as Kuwait swelters under a relentless summer sun, with temperatures forecast to reach 48°C on Saturday amid light to moderate northwesterly winds of 8-35 km/h and a chance of blowing dust.

Kuwait swings axe at market monopolies

By Najeh Bilal

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 8: According to official documents, the National Competition Policy project has reached 96 percent completion, paving the way for the announcement of its final outputs and its full implementation this year, 2026, at a total cost of KD 8.6 million.

This step aims to fundamentally address the decline in foreign direct investment rates. Through this project, the state

seeks to break the monopoly restrictions that have hindered the flow of foreign capital, harmed the environment of free competition, and reduced incentives for new investments.

The documents reveal that the project provides more incentives for business owners and improves market governance, thereby enhancing Kuwait's competitiveness in attracting direct investments and reflecting the active economic movement in the region.

Continued on Page 5

Private sector pours \$12 mln into Kuwait emergency fund

By Fares Ghaleb

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 8: Private-sector institutions are racing to contribute to the Kuwait Emergency Response Fund in support of the national initiative to enhance Kuwait's preparedness, with an additional \$12 million added to the total donations.

The Ministry of Social Affairs has opened the door for charitable societies and foundations wishing

to donate to the fund.

The ministry's Cooperative Societies and Foundations Department explained in its letter that the invitation is based on the establishment of the fund, which is managed by the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED), to support efforts to enhance the speed of response to emergencies and mitigate their effects.

Continued on Page 5

Newswatch

KUWAIT CITY: Kuwait on Friday strongly condemned and denounced the bombing that struck a minibus in the town of Jaramana in Syria, resulting in casualties.

In a statement, the Foreign Ministry reaffirmed Kuwait's firm rejection of all forms of violence and terrorism, stressing the country's solidarity with Syria in its efforts to preserve its security, stability, and the safety of its people, wishing speedy recovery for the injured.

Two people were killed and 13 others injured Thursday in an explosion that hit a minibus in Jaramana town of Damascus countryside, according to the Ministry of Health. (KUNA)

stc contributes \$5 mln to Kuwait Emergency Response Fund



KFH: KD 130,000 in prizes for Al-Hassad & Al-Rabeh monthly draws



Prayer Timings

Fajr	03:46	Asr	15:29
Sunrise ..	05:13	Maghrib ..	18:35
Zohr	11:54	Isha	20:01



HH the Amir



HH the Crown Prince



HH the Prime Minister

Amir congrats Cote d'Ivoire President on National Day

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 8, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on Friday sent a cable of congratulations to the President of Cote d'Ivoire, Alassane Ouattara, on his country's national day.

In the cable, His Highness the Amir wished President Ouattara good health and wellbeing, and further progress and prosperity for Cote d'Ivoire and its people.

Crown Prince congratulates

His Highness the Crown Prince

Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah on Friday sent a cable of congratulations to the President of Cote d'Ivoire Alassane Ouattara on his country's national day, and wished him good health and wellbeing.

PM congratulates

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah on Friday sent a cable of congratulations to the President of Cote d'Ivoire, Alassane Ouattara, on his country's national day.

Teaching students how to be wise, buy healthy food

Co-ops to launch 'Healthy Shopping' initiative soon

By Fares Ghaleb

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 8: The Ministry of Social Affairs, in cooperation with the Ministry of Health and the Union of Consumer Cooperative Societies, is currently preparing for the launching of the 'Healthy Shopping' initiative in cooperative societies, say reliable

sources.

Sources disclosed that the objective of this initiative is to train Grade Five students on how to make wise purchase decisions and choose healthy food products.

Sources stated that the initiative is part of the campaign to combat chronic non-communicable diseases, which is included in the Fourth Development Plan 2025-2030, and among the programs for raising health awareness and

promoting nutrition.

Sources clarified that cooperative societies were chosen as venues for the implementation of the initiative due to their widespread presence as prominent daily shopping outlets for citizens and residents, in addition to their impact on consumers and the food sector.

Sources urged the cooperatives to coordinate with the concerned teams at the Ministry of Health and provide the necessary support to implement the planned programs and ensure the success of the initiative.



KUNA photo
Chairman of the Public Authority for Civil Aviation Sheikh Humoud Mubarak Al-Humoud Al-Sabah chairs the National Committee for Aviation Security and Facilitation meeting.

Aviation panel reviews making travel secure and comfortable

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 8, (KUNA): Kuwait's National Committee for Aviation Security and Facilitation discussed recently, in its periodical meeting, means of enhancing security coordination and developing travel facilitation.

In a statement to KUNA, the committee said that the meeting chaired by the chairman of the Public Authority for Civil Aviation Sheikh Humoud Mubarak Al-Humoud Al-Sabah focused on the topics listed on the agenda foremost among them coordination between security authorities and bodies working at the Kuwait International Airport.

The committee pursued the implementation of systems and requirements of travel facilitation approved by the Inter-

national Civil Aviation Organization in a manner that enhances the effectiveness of procedures at the airport, the statement added.

In addition, the meeting discussed modern international treaties related to civil aviation and means of updating laws and measures in a manner which aligns with modern technology, it noted.

The gathering featured the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior Maj. Gen. Abdulwahab Al-Wahib, the head of the Kuwait Fire Force Maj. Gen. Talal Al-Roumi, Director-General of the General Administration of Customs Yusuf Al-Nuwaif, the commander of the Air Force Maj.Gen. Pilot Fahd Al-Khurainej and other senior officials.



KUNA photos
Top and above: Children involved in various activities as NCCAL launches 'Creators Club for Children'.

Creators Club launched to enhance young kids skills

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 8, (KUNA): The National Council for Culture, Arts and Literature (NCCAL) has launched the Creators Club for Children as part of the activities of the 18th edition of its summer cultural festival, offering a range of workshops designed to nurture creativity, self-expression and a love of reading among young participants.

The club, which runs until Aug 23, is accompanied by an exhibition featuring stories and tales from children's books.

The initiative reflects the NCC's efforts to make productive use of the summer vacation by providing children with an interactive environment where they can develop their creative and intellectual abilities through specialized workshops and cultural activities.

The program opened with the "Al-Bustani" workshop, presented by Dr. Noor Al-Mutawa, which introduced children to the basics of agriculture and plant care. It was followed by "The Author," led by Abrar Bou Abbas, focusing on story writing and developing creative ideas.

Other workshops include "The Painter," conducted by Farah Al-Qenai, which develops children's artistic expression through colors, and "Feelings Book," led by Iman Al-Hajri, which encourages participants to identify and express their emotions through writing.

The program also features "The Chef," presented by Sumaya Al-Obaid, which introduces children to the basics of cooking in an interactive setting, and "The Storyteller," led by Amal Al-Randi, which seeks to revive the art of storytelling and narration.

Children can also take part in "The Designer," conducted by Dalal Bouresli, which introduces the basics of color coordination and design, and "Little Speaker," presented by Sara Al-Dehani, aimed at strengthening speech, communication and confident self-expression.

The Creators Club seeks to provide an incubating environment where children can refine their abilities, explore different creative fields and channel their energies positively.



Kuwait's Ambassador to the Czech Republic Talal Al-Shatti with officials.



KUNA photos
Kuwait's Ambassador to the Czech Republic Talal Al-Shatti meets Teplice Mayor Jiri Stabl.

Kuwait envoy checks on Kuwaiti patients status

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 8, (KUNA): Kuwait's Ambassador to the Czech Republic Talal Al-Shatti on Saturday met with Teplice Mayor Jiri Stabl.

Al-Shatti told KUNA that meeting with the mayor was to review status of Kuwaiti patients and tourists in the city.

He said that he discussed the conditions of Kuwaiti citizens receiving treatment at various health facilities in Teplice.

He stressed on the embassy's keenness to follow up on their affairs and provide necessary consular support upon the political leadership's directives, praising

the local authorities' cooperation in this regard.

Al-Shatti stressed the embassy's commitment to maintaining direct and continuous communication, facilitating necessary procedures and overcoming any obstacles citizens may face.

PAAET: Online grad. certs. available via Sahel app

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 8: The Public Authority for Applied Education and Training (PAAET), represented by the Deanship of Admissions and Registration, announced that online graduation certificates are available through the Sahel app for gradu-

ates of the second semester of the 2025-2026 academic year, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The Deanship of Admissions and Registration stressed that the service includes graduates of the Colleges of Basic Edu-

cation, Technological Studies, Business Studies, Health Sciences, and Nursing.

PAAET called on graduates to review the steps for obtaining their graduation certificates by scanning the QR code included in the announcement.

MPW ponders training staff on ways to tackle wastewater treatment

By Mohammad Ghanem

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 8: The Ministry of Public Works announced that the amount of treated wastewater (tertiary and quaternary phases) consumed in July reached 7.872 million cubic meters -- 1.025 million cubic meters of tertiary treated wastewater and 6.847 million cubic meters of quaternary treated wastewater.

Kuwait is a leading country in the region and in the international community in terms of the production of tertiary and quaternary treated wastewater to address the water scarcity issue and guarantee environmental sustainability and food security.

The Treated Water Department at the ministry oversees the operation of the distribution networks and the control of treated wastewater.

It is worth noting that treated wastewater benefits numerous sectors, including the agricultural and food sectors, hence, supplying water to the Wafra and Abdali farms, in addition to irrigating public parks, green spaces and landscapes.

Oil companies use treated wastewater in oil production processes and industrial cooling. Treated wastewater is also used in large cooling systems, such as at Al-Shadadiya University, while serving the environment and nature reserves, supporting wildlife and replenishing natural reserves.

Meanwhile, acting Undersecretary of the ministry Eid Al-Rashidi recently met with Eng. Ali Al-Eidi, Director of the Industrial Institute that is affiliated with the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training (PAAET).

They discussed the mechanisms for cooperation between the institute and the ministry, particularly the organization of training programs for the concerned employees to raise efficiency in the implementation, operation and maintenance works.



Eid Al-Rashidi

Other Voices

Study, laughter, and politics

By Ahmad alsarraf

I WAS never an excellent student in any subject throughout my studies, from elementary school, through three years of commercial high school, four years of high school, and four years of university, except for some creativity in composition. I used to rely on my teachers' explanations, and I always barely passed my exams, often achieving only the minimum passing score.

Generally, our education system relied, and still does, on memorizing information or solving problems, and I was bad at both. Perhaps I was good at observation and criticism, which was not permitted then and still is not. Teaching critical thinking and allowing students to ask questions and offer critiques were not allowed. I tried to break that rule at Kaifan Evening High School, but the school administration called the police to stop my non-stop questioning and doubting.

Undoubtedly, achieving top grades in school and university is important, but it did not mean much after graduation, mostly due to the disconnect between the curriculum and practical realities.

Engineers are responsible for building public facilities, which can be one of the factors in assessing a country's level of progress. I used to think that electrical engineering was the most difficult field of study, but I discovered that this was not true. Scientific subjects largely rely on understanding equations, and once they are understood, the ambiguity disappears, unlike humanities subjects, which require special talents, such as the ability to compose novels, poetry, and so on.

Therefore, it is not easy to choose a subject and label it as the most dif-



alsarraf

ficult. It often depends on an individual's strengths and weaknesses. However, certain indicators can help assess the difficulty of one subject compared to others, such as observing the rates at which students fail to complete their studies. This is particularly noticeable among physics students, especially those studying quantum mechanics and electromagnetism, due to their reliance on advanced mathematics and abstract concepts that are difficult to grasp. These subjects require calculus, differential equations, and four-dimensional thinking.

To understand biochemistry, it is not enough to simply memorize chemical reactions. It requires three-dimensional spatial reasoning, an understanding of mechanisms, and an awareness of different patterns. These are skills that medical students must master; otherwise, they may be deemed unqualified and excluded.

Third, advanced mathematics relies on real analysis, abstract algebra, and differential equations. The goal is to prove fundamental principles, not just perform calculations.

Fourth, the subjects of "Fundamentals of Engineering," thermodynamics, fluid mechanics, and electrical circuits contain a vast number of problems. Participation in labs and group projects is essential.

Finally, there is computer science, which depends on algorithms, data structures, and operating systems. It requires mathematical logic and the development of large projects that can take up to 10 hours to debug. Knowing only a programming language, without acquiring computational thinking skills, often prevents students from continuing their studies.

It is astonishing that politicians, legislators, and top business leaders have no connection to the subjects mentioned above, yet they govern the world and control the destinies of nations.

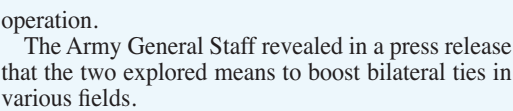


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Abdulnabi Al-Shuala

“When Kuwait was subjected to at-

– Compiled by Simi K. Kutty





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Kuwait intensifies aid for poor, needy

Healthcare, food, education provided to Gaza, Chad, Sudan and Yemen

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 8, (KUNA): Kuwait continued its charity work abroad, through projects that can benefit those in need by providing them with a decent life for the long term.

Kuwait’s recent charity initiatives included health care, food security, sheltering, education, economy support and developmental projects in Gaza, Chad, Sudan and Yemen.

Kuwait’s International Islamic Charity Organization (IICO) sent several trucks loaded with food items and sheltering essentials to Sudan’s Omdurman, for the benefit of 2,500 families affected by war.

Speaking to KUNA, Kuwaiti Ambassador to Sudan Dr. Fahad Al-Dhafeeri said that the humanitarian aid is part of the “Kuwait beside you” campaign, launched after the war brokeout in Sudan.

He added that Kuwait also sent 37 airplanes and three ships carrying thousands of tons of food items and medicine aid, while other Kuwaiti charity societies executed humanitarian projects that serve millions of Sudanese people.

Meanwhile, Kuwait Red Crescent Society opened the Yousef Al-Nafeesi ophthalmology hospital in Marib, Yemen, as part of the “Kuwait beside you” campaign,



Eye treatment given priority at one of the health centers.

marking its 12 year. Executing sustainable projects in the health field is a priority for the society, to ease the suffering of patients in disaster-struck areas, the society’s Chairman of the Board Khaled Al-Mughamis told KUNA.

He said that the health sector is a priority in the humanitarian society’s programs because of its significance in alleviating the suffering of patients and enhancing the ability of communities to access specialized treatment services.

Also, the Tanmeia Charity Association’s “Sahab Al-Joud 27” campaign in Chad executed several projects related to water, health, food, shelter and education for Sudanese refugees in the country.

Surgeries

Head of the association’s humanitarian work Dr. Mohammad Al-Rashidi told KUNA that the projects also included economic support, performing 150 eye surgeries, as well as setting a camp to treat 1,000 children suffering from malnutrition and Malaria.

Meanwhile, Al-Salam Association for Humanitarian and Charitable Work continues its aid projects in the health field in Yemen, aiming to restore sight for over 2,000 patients, while also running other projects related to sheltering people in need.

The charity’s Director General Hamad Al-Oan told KUNA that the association also aims to shelter and provide key life services for widows, orphans and the elderly, as part of it “Salam village four” project.

In the same context, Ataa Humanitarian Relief Association executed projects aiming to provide over one million liters of water in Gaza Strip.

The association’s Director General Omar Al-Shaqra told KUNA that the project is funded by philanthropists in Kuwait, noting that it delivered water to 33,000 families in the strip.



Kuwait charity workers open a medical center for needy families in Chad.



Government officials at the opening of a health project in Yemen.



Water distribution to residents in Gaza.

KUNA photos



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Kuwait's Ambassador to the United Kingdom, Bader Almunayekh receives Kuwaiti special needs delegation participating in GALI program.

Special needs team on UK trip

Embassy pledges support for Kuwaiti youth to enhance skills

LONDON, Aug 8, (KUNA): Kuwait’s Ambassador to the United Kingdom, Bader Almunayekh, received on Thursday a Kuwaiti special needs delegation -- headed by Member of the Capital Governorate Council, Mashael Al-Kulaib, -- participating in the Gulf Academy for Leadership and Innovation (GALI) summer program in the UK from August 4-10.

During the reception, Ambassador Almunayekh was honored by the Capital Governorate and members of the delegation for his efforts in facilitating their participation. In a statement to KUNA, Almunayekh welcomed the Kuwaiti delegation to the embassy, praising the participants for their enthusiasm, ambition, and commitment.

Ambassador Almunayekh noted that they represented a promising generation of young Kuwaitis and reflected the country’s continued investment in developing future leaders.

He reaffirmed the embassy’s commitment to supporting Kuwaiti youth participating in educational and cultural initiatives that broaden their horizons, strengthen their leadership skills, and contribute to Kuwait’s future development.

Appreciation

The Ambassador also expressed his appreciation to the Capital Governorate for its support and the head of the delegation Al-Kulaib for her dedicated leadership and commitment to creating meaningful educational and leadership opportunities for young Kuwaitis.

He praised their efforts in promoting the values of inclusion, empowerment, and equal opportunity, especially for students of diverse abilities, ensuring that all young people have the opportunity to learn, lead, and contribute side by side.

The Ambassador also commended

the GALI Summer Mentorship Program as it brings together outstanding young people from across the GCC, stressing that initiatives of this kind played an important role in developing the next generation of leaders by fostering leadership, innovation, creativity, dialogue, and cross-cultural understanding while enabling participants to engage directly with prominent leaders and experts.

Support

For her part, Al-Kulaib reiterated her gratitude to Ambassador Almunayekh for the valuable support given to the delegation. She revealed that the delegation, including special needs students, were not mere participants in the summer program; rather, they were leading and supervising their non-special needs peers, reflecting true messages of inclusion, empowerment, and inspiration.

She said that the delegations participation was sponsored by the Capital Governorate and included programs and events aimed at developing the participants leadership and creative skills to boost their confidence, hone their capabilities, exchange expertise, and solidify social integration.

The delegation will be participating in the finale of the GALI residential membership program for exceptional youth event next Sunday, with the attendance of Saudi Prince Turki Al-Faisal bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud and Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Secretary General Jassem Al-Budaiwi, among other keynote speakers.

The GALI program gathers 100 promising participants from across the GCC countries, providing them with a chance to directly connect with leaders and experts, partake in interactive dialogues, workshops, field visits, and opportunities to exchange expertise and experiences.

Continued from Page 1

King Salman,

On this basis, for example, the Iranian regime, its proxies in some Arab countries and Israel have started to change their behavior since the agreement was announced. This, in itself, confirms the immediate fruits of a wise policy based on the belief that “the greatest victory is achieved without fighting or war.”

Consequently, from Makkah, the land of peace, came the glad tidings of this alliance, thanks to the efforts of Prince Mohammed bin Salman and the directives of King Salman, to put the region on the path towards stability, protected by immense economic and military power and broad public support.

Therefore, we say to King Salman bin Abdulaziz and his Crown Prince, Mohammed bin Salman, may God bless both of you.

Kuwait anchors

Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef also met with a number of citizens and beachgoers during the tour, and heard their opinions and comments about the services. He emphasized the importance of direct communication with them and benefiting from their suggestions.

He also issued instructions to continue the development of maritime centers and facilities, raise their readiness level, provide all necessary resources for their personnel, and strengthen coordination and integration among the agencies operating at the ports and islands.

Separately, Saudi Arabia, Turkiye and Pakistan on Friday signed the Makkah Joint Defense Agreement, committing to strengthen collective security and defence cooperation and to enhance deterrence against aggression.

The agreement was signed at Al-Safa Palace in Makkah by Saudi Crown Prince and Prime Minister Mohammed bin Salman Al-Saud, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Pakistani Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif following the Makkah Summit for Joint Defense.

According to the Saudi Press Agency (SPA), the summit reviewed the long-standing relations among the three countries, their shared strategic interests and defense cooperation, as well as a number of issues of mutual concern.

The agreement stipulates that any armed attack against one of the three countries will be regarded as an attack against all three. It also calls for strengthening cooperation across defense sectors as part of efforts to promote peace, security and stability in the region and beyond.

Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al-Saud described the agreement as an important milestone in defense cooperation, saying it reflects the depth of the strategic and brotherly ties among the three countries.

He said the pact represents their shared desire to coordinate efforts in confronting challenges and threats to regional security and stability, adding that it could contribute to a more secure environment conducive to development and prosperity.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said the agreement does not target any country and would strengthen security and defense cooperation among the signatories.

In a post on X, Erdogan said the pact, based on the principle of collective deterrence, would support joint defense industry projects and contribute to counterterrorism efforts. He added that it reaffirms the right to self-defense under Article 51 of the UN Charter.

He said the agreement remains open to the participation of other countries committed to peace, prosperity and stability in the region.

Bahrain welcomed the agreement, describing it as a strategic partnership between equal partners and a significant addition to the region’s broader defense architecture.

In a statement, Bahrain’s Foreign Ministry said the pact complements and strengthens the collective defense systems of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) through greater solidarity and strategic integration.

Bahrain also reaffirmed that Saudi Arabia’s security is integral to its own security and voiced support for initiatives aimed at protecting national sovereignty and territorial integrity and advancing political solutions to regional conflicts.

Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Secretary-General Hissein Taha also welcomed the agreement, describing it as an important strategic step toward strengthening regional and international cooperation.

Taha said the pact could serve as a pillar for security and stability across the region and the Muslim world, while reflecting a shared commitment to addressing emerging security challenges and strengthening solidarity and constructive partnerships among OIC member states.

He expressed hope that the agreement would contribute to regional peace, prosperity and wider international stability.

Kuwait backs Saudi after Najran attack

Meanwhile, Kuwait strongly condemned Houthi attacks on Saudi Arabia’s southern Najran region, which targeted civilian facilities and injured 11 people.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs described the attacks as a flagrant violation of Saudi Arabia’s sovereignty and territorial integrity and a breach of international and humanitarian law.

Kuwait reaffirmed full solidarity with Saudi Arabia and support for measures taken by the Kingdom to protect its sovereignty, security, stability, citizens and

residents.

It stressed that Saudi Arabia’s security is an integral part of the security of Kuwait and the GCC.

Coalition to Support Legitimacy in Yemen spokesman Maj. Gen. Turki Al-Maliki said those injured included seven Saudis, among them a woman and a four-year-old child who suffered second-degree burns, as well as a Yemeni, two Egyptians and a Pakistani.

Al-Maliki said the Houthis used random projectiles against civilian property, describing the attack as a blatant violation of international humanitarian law.

The GCC, Bahrain, Arab League, Muslim World League and Organization of Islamic Cooperation also condemned the attacks and expressed solidarity with Saudi Arabia.

GCC Secretary-General Jasem Al-Budaiwi called the attacks a serious threat to regional and international security and stability, while Arab League Secretary-General Nabil Fahmy urged an end to military escalation and a return to the political track.

The OIC called the attacks a dangerous escalation and deliberate assault on civilians and civilian property, stressing that Saudi Arabia’s security is a fundamental pillar of stability in the Muslim world.

UAE tanker attack raises maritime concerns

In a separate development, Kuwait strongly condemned the Iranian targeting of an Emirati tanker while transiting the Strait of Hormuz.

The Foreign Ministry described the incident as a blatant violation of international law and a grave threat to maritime navigation and global energy supplies, citing UN Security Council Resolution 2817.

Kuwait called for an immediate halt to escalatory actions and reaffirmed its rejection of attacks that endanger the safety of international waterways.

The ministry also expressed full solidarity with the UAE and support for measures taken to safeguard its sovereignty, security and national interests.

The UAE confirmed that an Iranian missile targeted a tanker belonging to the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC) while it was transiting the Strait of Hormuz. No injuries were reported.

ADNOC said the situation had been brought under control and urged the public to rely only on official sources.

The UAE Foreign Ministry condemned the attack and said targeting commercial navigation and using the Strait of Hormuz as a means of economic pressure pose a direct threat to regional stability and global energy security.

Saudi Arabia and Qatar also condemned the attack and reaffirmed support for the UAE.

Saudi Arabia on Saturday strongly condemned the targeting of an Emirati tanker while transiting the Strait of Hormuz, stressing that such unacceptable

attacks constitute an assault on the security and safety of maritime navigation and the security of global energy supplies.

In a statement, the Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs said Iran’s continued attacks constitute a grave violation of international laws and norms, including UN Security Council Resolution 2817, which safeguard freedom of navigation and safe passage through maritime waterways.

Saudi Arabia held Iran responsible for the consequences of its continued blatant attacks, calling on Iran to immediately halt such violations in order to preserve the security, stability and safety of the region.

The Kingdom also reaffirmed its full solidarity with the United Arab Emirates and its support for measures taken by the UAE to safeguard its sovereignty and national interests.

Qatar strongly condemned the Iranian attack targeting an Emirati tanker operated by Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC) while transiting the Strait of Hormuz, considering it a blatant violation of international law and UN Security Council Resolution 2817 on freedom of navigation.

Qatar’s Foreign Ministry said in a statement Saturday that Qatar categorically rejects using the Strait of Hormuz as a pressure tool, calling for its unconditional reopening and stressing that freedom of navigation through the vital waterway is a firm, non-negotiable principle.

The ministry warned that the continued closure of the strait threatens the vital interests of regional countries and the global economy, stressing the need to halt unjustified Iranian attacks on the property of brotherly states.

The statement affirmed Qatar’s full solidarity with the United Arab Emirates and support for all measures it takes to safeguard its property.

Kuwait subsidies

Subsidies for milk and infant formula rose to approximately KD 2 million, constituting 8 percent of total subsidies and showing a 34 percent increase month-on-month.

The value of subsidies for construction materials reached approximately KD 7 million, equivalent to 28 percent of total subsidies disbursed in June, a decrease of 9 percent compared to May.

The number of beneficiaries of food subsidies reached approximately 2.39 million by the end of June, while the cumulative number of ration cards reached approximately 279,753.

Data from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry for June 2026 revealed significant activity in several departments.

Data from the Precious Metals Department showed that total fees collected for inspection services reached KD 308,800, an 8 percent increase com-

pared to May.

The inspections covered more than 4.19 million grams of gold and 5.1 million grams of silver, in addition to quantities of platinum, diamonds, precious stones, gem-set accessories, and a number of watches and metal artifacts.

In the Real Estate Services and Valuation Department, the number of completed transactions more than doubled in June, reaching 140 transactions, compared to 70 in May, representing a 100 percent increase. These transactions were distributed across 14 different types.

The issuance of real estate brokerage books saw a 180 percent increase, reaching 14 transactions. Renewals of brokerage books increased to 53 transactions, a 112 percent rise.

Requests to renew real estate broker IDs rose to 25 transactions, an increase of 178 percent.

The number of requests to issue real estate broker IDs reached 23 transactions, a 53 percent increase. Requests to cancel brokerage books decreased by 17 percent to 10 transactions.

The Anti-Money Laundering and Counter-Terrorism Financing Department conducted four inspections of high-risk jewelry, gemstone, and precious metals businesses, in addition to several other transactions, visits, and supervisory meetings. The department processed 118 substantive transactions and 61 emergency transactions.

The number of patent applications filed by individuals increased to 7, a rise of 133 percent. Patent applications filed by companies increased to 56, a rise of 17 percent compared to May. The number of patent grants and publications for companies decreased by 80 percent.

The number of industrial design filings rose to 30, an increase of 11 percent, while industrial design grants and publications fell to 11, a decrease of 35 percent compared to the previous month. There were 7 industrial design renewal applications.

Kuwait swings

They state that the project’s outputs are based on intensive field studies of Kuwait’s market structure, followed by a package of legislative and regulatory measures that include updating laws, regulations, and government procedures to ensure their flexibility and alignment with international standards.

The National Competition Policy project will deter violators by imposing tough penalties to prevent anti-competitive practices such as illegal price-fixing. The project ensures effective governance and supports sustainable development.

According to an informed source, implementing the National Competition Policy is the cornerstone of protecting local markets from structural imbalances.

This step directly contributes to building a fair and stable investment environment that guarantees equal opportunities and limits harmful monopolistic practices.

The strategic importance of this project lies in curbing inflation and controlling prices by preventing dominant companies from imposing unjustified prices, thereby protecting consumers’ purchasing power.

This project serves as a mechanism for attracting capital, as a fair and transparent legislative environment is the greatest incentive for the flow of foreign and domestic investments, resulting from investors’ confidence in the protection of their rights and the fairness of the laws regulating the market.

The project represents an important tool for empowering small businesses and diversifying the economy by breaking monopolies. Strict laws prevent large entities from imposing crippling barriers aimed at excluding startups or preventing them from entering the market.

The project’s main strategic objectives are:

1. Transforming Kuwait into a regional financial and commercial hub that attracts investment.
2. Increasing local production and growth rates in non-oil sectors.
3. Empowering the private sector and effectively engaging it in the country’s economic activity.
4. Protecting consumer welfare by providing essential products of the highest quality at the best prices.
5. Preventing and penalizing monopolistic behavior and anti-competitive practices.
6. Developing and training national talent according to the best international practices.

Private sector

The department emphasized that the initiative embodies the importance of partnership and institutional integration among various entities and contributes to unifying national efforts.

KFAED recently announced that stc contributed a total of \$5 million, while Arzan Financial Group, Kuwait Real Estate Company, and International Financial Advisors Holding Company each contributed \$1 million, for a total of \$3 million.

The Fund noted three cash contributions, each valued at \$1 million, from Heavy Engineering Industries and Shipbuilding Co., in addition to an in-kind contribution of \$1 million from Mohammed Bin Yousef Al-Nisf & Partners Co. and Warba Insurance and Reinsurance Co.

It affirmed that the continued addition of private-sector institutions to its list of supporters reflects the growing national partnership and embodies the private sector’s commitment to supporting priority national initiatives.



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Blanche narrowly confirmed as Trump’s AG in overnight vote

US Senate approves funding bill to avoid shutdown before election

WASHINGTON, Aug 8, (AP): The Senate in an overnight vote Saturday approved a short-term measure to fund federal agencies into early December and avoid a potentially chaotic government shutdown during the middle of campaign season.

The late-summer action on a funding fix is unusual. Normally, Congress waits until the final days or hours of a funding deadline to pass short-term patches, but this time senators acted nearly two months before the end of the fiscal year on Sept. 30.

The 90-6 vote showed lawmakers are still smarting from the two historic shutdowns that occurred this past year and want to avoid another before voters go to the polls.

Senate Majority Leader John Thune wanted the funding dealt with before senators went home for the next five weeks to focus on their reelection campaigns and other matters. It got caught up with other issues that pushed votes into the night, but the bill had broad bipartisan support. The House will also have to approve the measure when members return from their August recess before it can go to President Donald Trump’s desk for his signature.

The bill generally funds the federal government at current levels though Dec 11, but includes a variety of exceptions that senators negotiated with the White House.

Democrats secured language to ensure no money could be transferred to the Border Patrol. They also rejected the White House’s request of \$1 billion for early work on a new “Trump-class” battleship that the administration announced on Dec 22.

“The only person who wants these golden ships is Donald Trump so he can slap his name on them,” Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer said.

The bill also includes language delaying a national ban on most intoxicating hemp products. That one-month delay prompted outrage from some Senate Republicans who say that too many such products are falling into the hands of often unsuspecting children. The packaging of the products often relies on bright colors and intentionally mimics popular snack brands to attract consumers.

Sen. Ted Budd, R-N.C., said that since 2017 there has been nearly a 10-fold increase in cannabis-related



US Sen Majority Leader John Thune (left) speaks as Sen John Barrasso listens during a news conference after a policy luncheon on Capitol Hill, on July 29 in Washington. (AP)

emergency room visits by minors in his home state.

“This is a public health crisis that deserves this Senate’s immediate attention,” Budd said. “Our children should never be the testing ground for an industry willing to exploit a loophole in federal law for profit.”

But the hemp industry said the delay buys time for Congress to craft legislation that protects hemp farmers and businesses while also putting in place safeguards to protect children.

Trump himself has called Budd to discuss the issue, though the

president did not specifically ask the senator to drop his effort, Budd’s spokesman said.

“Senator Budd had a friendly phone call with President Trump discussing the legislative efforts regarding THC,” said spokesman Christian McMullen. He said the senator outlined his concerns about “any delay to closing the hemp loophole.”

Budd tried to strip the hemp delay from the bill, but the Senate turned aside his effort.

Democratic lawmakers, along with Sen. Susan Collins, R-Maine, also got language in the bill that would block, for the duration of the funding patch, new regulations on federal grants. The regulations would require a senior political appointee to review grants before they are awarded to ensure, among other things, that they advance the president’s policy priorities. Democrats worry it’s an effort to kill grants destined for Democratic-leaning states.

Also:

WASHINGTON: The Senate confirmed **Todd Blanche** as attorney general in a vote early Saturday

morning, cementing President **Donald Trump’s** former personal attorney’s command of a Justice Department the Republican president has sought to bend to his will.

The Republican-led Senate voted 50-49 to make Blanche the second confirmed attorney general since Trump returned to the White House last year with a stated desire to use the law enforcement agency to investigate his political enemies. While Blanche has already been leading the department in an acting capacity, his confirmation could free him to pursue the Trump administration’s agenda even more aggressively.

Blanche said on social media that he was “deeply honored by the trust and confidence President Trump has placed in me,” adding that he was “grateful” to senators for working late to confirm him.

The vote followed a tumultuous confirmation fight that exposed deep concerns - from some Republicans as well as Democrats - about installing Trump’s close ally atop a Justice Department that historically prided itself on its independence from the White House.

US President Trump again tries to restrict birthright citizenship after Supreme Court ruling

WASHINGTON, Aug 8, (AP): US President Donald Trump said that he is once more trying to limit the number of people who are born in the country who can become American citizens, in a sign that even after his first attempt at limiting birthright citizenship was rejected by the Supreme Court, he’s ready to try again.

The president said he was signing two executive actions on immigration, including one limiting the number of people eligible for US citizenship after being born in the United States, while another focused on stopping people from coming to the US to give birth.

The written executive order released later Thursday was narrower in scope than the previous one shot down by the Supreme Court and appeared to focus on restricting automatic citizenship to specific categories of people, including children born to adults with connections to foreign embassies or organizations as well as anyone considered an “alien enemy” of the United States.

It also aimed to restrict birthright citizenship to anyone whose parents

“engaged in fraudulent activity to obtain citizenship.”

A second order seeks to curb what Trump called “birth tourism” by increasing restrictions on visitors to the U.S. who want to obtain visas to give birth while in the country.

It was not immediately clear how successful the president’s most recent attempt to restrict birthright citizenship would be. Trump said he thought his latest actions would be constitutional and his drive to reopen the question reflected the administration’s zeal to restrict who gets to become an American.

“I thought we were going to win it at the Supreme Court. Unfortunately, we had a bad decision, very unfair decision. Our country suffers because of it and we’re ending it a different way,” Trump said.

The Migration Policy Institute noted in a 2026 article that it’s already considered fraud and grounds to restrict a visa if someone seeks a visa specifically to come to the U.S. and obtain citizenship for a child. Previous administrations have also sought to prosecute so-called “birth tourism” schemes that helped

women hide their pregnancies while traveling to the United States to give birth.

Birthright citizenship has become a key rallying point in the president’s second term anti-immigration agenda, with the president and supporters arguing it makes the country a magnet for immigration and that American citizenship should be reserved for those who truly value it, as opposed to just being given to anyone born here.

But immigration advocates and many legal experts say that the Constitution is clear in outlining who is considered a citizen. They’ve also argued that birthright citizenship is a benefit to the U.S. by giving everyone an equal stake in the country’s future and that restricting who can become a citizen would create a second-class of people in America.

The Trump administration has painted birth tourism as a widespread problem. There’s no official estimate of how many births can be considered “birth tourism” births, but an estimated 26,000 might fall into that category out of the roughly

3.5 million births in the US every year, MPI wrote in its 2026 article.

In June, the Supreme Court rejected Trump’s previous efforts to declare that children born to people in the U.S. illegally or temporarily aren’t American citizens, and upheld a broad conception of birthright citizenship.

The American Civil Liberties Union predicted that Trump’s second attempt would also be rejected.

“The Supreme Court already decided this issue: Birthright citizenship is guaranteed by the Constitution. No additional executive order can change the meaning of the Constitution. Any executive order that tries to rewrite birthright citizenship will meet the same fate as the last one,” said Cody Wofsy, deputy director of the ACLU’s Immigrants’ Rights Project, in a statement Thursday.

On Trump’s first day in office of his second term, he signed an executive order aimed at ending birthright citizenship, which allows anyone born in the United States to automatically become an American citizen.



US President Donald Trump speaks as Interior Secretary Doug Burgum, (left), and Secretary of State Marco Rubio listen at a roundtable on American mining on Aug 7, at the State Department in Washington. (AP)

Ukraine’s Zelenskyy visits Serbia

Russian attacks kill four in Kyiv

KYIV, Ukraine, Aug 8, (AP): Four people, including a child, were killed in Russian attacks on the Ukrainian capital, Kyiv, and the surrounding region, local officials said Saturday, as Ukraine hit another oil refinery in Russia.

Residents endure regular drone and missile barrages that Kyiv’s depleted air defenses are struggling to counter amid Moscow’s 4-year-old full-scale invasion, while repeated Ukrainian strikes on oil facilities have caused fuel shortages and rattled Russians.

Two grandparents and their 3-year-old grandson were killed after multiple Russian drones destroyed their home in the Brovary district of Kyiv region, northeast of the Ukrainian capital, Kyiv, early Saturday.

Three other members of the same family and a neighbor who came to their aid were hospitalized, local authorities said. The attack reduced the house to rubble and wrecked outbuildings and cars.

In the city of Kyiv, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said at least one other person died in a “strike involving six ballistic missiles against civilian infrastructure.”

In its daily report, Ukraine’s air force said it had downed or intercepted 135 of 151 drones launched by Russia overnight. The attack also involved six ballistic missiles and other guided missiles.

Russia has relentlessly pounded civilian areas of Ukraine, even though Moscow insists its forces target only military facilities.

Moscow is exploiting Ukraine’s critical shortage of interceptors for the US-made Patriot systems, the sole air defense weapon in its arsenal able to shoot down ballistic missiles.

Zelenskyy has pleaded with other countries, especially the US, to send more of the ammunition made scarcer by the Iran war. Failing that, he wants to make Patriot ammunition in Ukraine or win permission from Elon Musk to use his Starlink satellite communications system to guide strikes inside Russia that can hit its missile launchers.

Following the latest attacks, Zelenskyy appealed on X for more sanctions to “prevent the production of these ballistic missiles,” along with “anti-ballistic capabilities” and “interceptor missiles.”

Ukraine’s air defenses shot down around 5,300 drones and missiles last month, Ukraine’s defense minis-

try said Friday, just under 60% of the around 9,000 attack drones and missiles Russia fired in the same period.

In Russia, six people were wounded when a fire broke out at the Ilsky Oil Refinery in the southern Krasnodar region due to debris from a falling drone, local officials said.

Ukraine’s almost daily long-range drone and missile strikes using domestically developed weapons have battered Russian oil facilities for months. The operation has brought a fuel crisis that is embarrassing the Kremlin.

The latest attacks came hours after Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy arrived Friday for his first official visit to Serbia, one of the few European countries that have maintained friendly relations with Russia despite its invasion of Ukraine.

“Important talks are scheduled for today and tomorrow,” Zelenskyy said Friday. He added that he will meet with Vucic and Serbia’s Prime Minister Djuro Macut.

“We will discuss expanding economic ties between our countries, relations with the European Union, and other areas where we can find practical opportunities that benefit

our peoples, as well as security issues,” Zelenskyy said.

The visit comes as Vucic tries to balance Serbia’s traditional ties with Moscow against pressure to align its foreign policy with the European Union. Vucic has refused to join international sanctions against Russia over Ukraine, citing historic ties between the two Slavic nations.

Serbia is in the process of joining the EU, but that has been stalled partly because of Belgrade’s policies toward Moscow.

Serbia relies almost entirely on Russia for its energy supplies. Although Belgrade has refused to sanction Russia, it has provided aid to Ukraine and Vucic has recently stepped up contacts with Kyiv, in an apparent bid to boost his image in the West.

Russia last year accused Serbia of exporting arms to Ukraine through NATO member states, describing the move as a “stab in the back.” Serbia also has promised to help rebuild Ukraine after the war.

Ahead of the visit, Vucic said he and Zelenskyy will discuss cooperation in various fields and their countries’ paths toward EU membership.



Ukraine’s President Volodymyr Zelenskyy reviews an honor guard with his Serbian counterpart Aleksandar Vucic during a welcome ceremony at the Serbia Palace, in Belgrade, Serbia on Aug 8. (AP)



In this photograph made available by the Serbian Ministry of Interior, a Serbian Police helicopter battles a fire in Deliblatska Pescara (Deliblato Sands), 70 kilometers north-west of Belgrade, Serbia, on Aug 5. (AP)

Serbia races to contain wildfires

Thick gray smoke drifted over a wooded area in northeast Serbia on Friday as authorities raced to contain a major wildfire, while multiple other blazes raged across the coun-

try amid extreme heat and prolonged drought gripping the Balkans.

Firefighters used helicopters to drop water on the blaze sweeping through pine forests

near Deliblatska Pescara, a protected nature reserve about 65 kilometers (40 miles) from the capital, Belgrade. Another major fire raged near the central town of Kraljevo. (AP)

Spanish-led police raid smashes smuggling network, arresting 78

THE HAGUE, Netherlands, Aug 8, (AP): An international police operation led by Spanish authorities dismantled a major criminal network involved in trafficking migrants, drugs and weapons across the Western Mediterranean, the European Union police agency Europol and Spain’s Civil Guard announced Friday.

The takedown of the group underscored the highly professional and highly lucrative nature of migrant and drug smuggling operations in the narrow sea that separates Europe from North Africa.

Spanish authorities described the network as one of the “largest criminal organizations specializing in maritime human trafficking in the Mediterranean.”

The announcement came a week after irregular migration to Spain was thrust into the international spotlight when tens of thousands of migrants stormed into the Spanish



North African territory of Ceuta in a surge blamed on rampant online rumors about an open border.

The arrests came as a result of an “action day” on June 16, Europol said, that led to 77 arrests in Spain and one in Algeria and the seizure of 18 motorboats.

Subcontinent

Sri Lanka prison clashes kill 3: Three inmates were killed and more than 20 were injured in two separate prison clashes in Sri Lanka on Thursday and Friday, a government minister said.

In a third detention facility, officials used tear gas to control inmate protests on Friday.

Public Security Minister **Ananda Wijepala** told Parliament on Friday that one inmate died at Colombo Magazine Prison in the capital, Colombo, late Thursday when about 40 prisoners clashed after breaking out of their cells.

Two inmates died Friday morning at Kuruwita Prison in Kuruwita town about 80 kilometers (50 miles) from the capital, Wijepala said.

Between the two incidents, 23 inmates were injured and admitted to hospitals, Wijepala said, adding that the violence was related to narcotics dealers and rival criminal gangs.

Prison officials could not immediately be reached for comment.

Separately, prison officials used tear gas to control inmate protests at the Pallansena Correctional Center on Friday. There were no immediate reports of casualties.

The reports of the three deaths come a month after a clash in Negombo prison on July 6 left at least 26 people dead including seven prison officers.

Sri Lankan prisons are highly congested, with more than 39,000 inmates crowded into a system with a total capacity of just 10,000, according to a recent speech in Parliament by Justice Minister Harshana Nanayakkara.

“The number of prisoners in Sri Lanka today is four times the capacity,” said Senaka Perera, president of the Committee for Rights of Prisoners. “In fact they have been patient for so long.”



Wijepala

A large number of jail inmates are suspects awaiting trial for alleged narcotics-related offenses. Recent laws tightening bail conditions have resulted in prison overcrowding, Perera said.

The poor living conditions in the congested prisons keep inmates in constant agitation, which triggers incidents, Perera said.

His organization has made numerous pleas to authorities to categorize drug addicts as medical patients and establish separate rehabilitation facilities, Perera said. (AP)



Pakistan ruling party leads in Kashmir vote: Pakistan’s ruling party has taken a commanding lead in elections for the legislative assembly in Pakistan-administered Kashmir, results from the first two phases of voting showed on Wednesday, despite weeks of protests and calls for a boycott by a banned political group.

Candidates backed by twice-elected former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif’s Pakistan Muslim League-N party have won 24 of the 34 seats decided in the first two phases of voting, said Raja Shakeel, a spokesman for the regional election commission. Turnout exceeded 56% in the regional capital.

Shakeel said voting for the remaining 11 seats is scheduled for Aug. 10, but the party is already on course to form the next regional government.

It marks the party’s return to power in Pakistan-administered Kashmir after a decade.

Shakeel said the elections are being held in three phases because of security concerns and heavy monsoon rains, which have complicated campaigning and made it difficult to hold large outdoor rallies.

According to regional government and election officials said turnout exceeded 50% in many areas, including Muzaffarabad, despite security concerns and calls for a boycott by the outlawed Joint Awami Action Committee, or JAAC, which is notorious for holding violent protests.

Sharif congratulated the winning candidates in a statement. (AP)



In this aerial photo released by Xinhua News Agency, fishing boats shelter at a port ahead of Typhoon Dolphin in Lianyungang, eastern China’s Jiangsu Province on Aug 7. (AP)

Eastern China braces for typhoon, shuts schools and tourist sites

Authorities in eastern China shut schools and tourist sites as Typhoon Dolphin made its way toward land on Saturday.

The storm’s maximum sustained winds were estimated at about 162 kilometers per hour (101 mph). It will bring heavy rains, creating a risk of severe

flooding as well as landslides and is expected to hit Zhejiang province and northern parts of neighboring Fujian province late Sunday. Shanghai is also in the path of the storm.

Forecasters predicted that areas could see 200-400 mm (7.9-15.7 inches) of rainfall over

the next few days.

National authorities declared a level III emergency response, the second lowest level.

Many tourist destinations in Zhejiang are shut Saturday and Sunday, as well as all water-based activities, including ferries and cruises. (AP)

14 people remain hospitalized

Thai student kills 8 in rampage at home, school before ending own life

BANGKOK, Aug 8, (AP): A school-girl died from critical wounds Saturday after a student opened fire at a high school and his home outside Bangkok the day before, bringing the death toll from the attack to at least eight people.

The 14-year-old opened fire at around 10 am Friday at Debsirin Nonthaburi School in Nonthaburi province northwest of the Thai capital before apparently taking his own life. He also appeared to have killed his two grandparents at his family home earlier in the morning, officials said.

The girl, 12, died after hospitalization, the Health Ministry said. The school had posted a message on Facebook Friday seeking blood donations for two students, including the girl, who was in seventh grade.

Fourteen people remain hospitalized, of whom seven remain in critical condition Saturday, according to Thailand’s Health Ministry. Most of those wounded were between 12 and 14 years old.

Relatives claimed the bodies of

eight people from Bangkok’s Institute of Forensic Medicine: five school staff, the accused shooter, and his grandparents. Emergency workers brought out a coffin and loaded it onto an ambulance, which will transport the bodies to their hometowns for funeral rites.

The young girl’s body is still to be released.

Wiroon Supasingsiripreecha, head of the institute, said most of the victims suffered a single fatal gunshot wound to a vital area, including the chest or head.

He said the gunshot wound found on the alleged shooter was consistent with the weapon he had used. More detailed forensic findings, including toxicology results, are expected later, he said.

Officials said the gun, described as small and compact, was legally registered to the boy’s grandfather.

There were reports that the boy, who lived with his grandparents, had shown signs of stress connected to school, although some of his relatives told Thai media that they were



An injured person is carried on a stretcher after a school shooting in Thailand’s Nonthaburi province on Aug 7. (AP)

unaware of any troubles he might have been facing.

The co-educational state school, which has about 3,000 students en-

rolled aged 12 to 18, said all classes would be suspended between Aug. 10-14 and school staff were instructed to work from home during that

Colombia’s new President De la Espriella signals energy policy shift, backs oil and gas

BOGOTA, Colombia, Aug 8, (AP): Colombian President Abelardo de la Espriella has pledged to revive the country’s oil and gas sector, restore state-owned energy company Ecopetrol and strengthen the electricity system, arguing that energy security would be a cornerstone of his administration.

Speaking during his inauguration, de la Espriella said Colombia would pursue an energy transition - a shift away from oil, gas and coal toward cleaner energy sources such as wind and solar power - but insisted it must not come at the expense of the country’s oil and gas industry.

“I believe in the energy transition,” he said. “But that transition must be built from strength, not from weakness, from self-sufficiency and not from dependence.”

The remarks reinforce a sharp shift from former President Gustavo Petro, who stopped awarding new oil and gas exploration contracts while pushing Colombia toward renewable energy and making protection of the Amazon a centerpiece of his environmental agenda. Just four months ago, Petro’s government hosted an international summit in the Caribbean city of Santa Marta aimed at building support for a global transition away from fossil fuels.

The commitments echo promises de la Espriella made throughout his presidential campaign, when he repeatedly vowed to expand oil and gas production and reverse key elements of Petro’s energy policy.

Calling energy security “a matter of national sovereignty,” de la Espriella

said Colombia could not expect long-term prosperity by leaving its natural resources undeveloped.

He said rebuilding Ecopetrol, Colombia’s majority state-owned oil company and one of the country’s largest sources of government revenue and export earnings, would be “a definitive and absolute priority” after accusing the previous administration of weakening the company.

The new president also confirmed his government would authorize fracking - a method of extracting oil and gas by injecting water, sand and chemicals underground to crack rock formations - under what he described as “the strictest technical and environmental standards.” He said his administration would also expand oil and gas exploration to rebuild Colombia’s declining reserves, guarantee the country’s energy security and attract investment back into the sector.

The president warned Colombia’s energy system was in a “critical situation,” citing declining oil and gas reserves, delayed energy projects and rising electricity demand.

He said the approaching El Nino weather phenomenon, which typically brings prolonged drought and can reduce hydroelectric power generation, meant there was little time to act.

“The El Nino phenomenon won’t wait for us. To overcome it, it is imperative to implement urgent solutions,” he said.



Colombia’s President Abelardo de la Espriella delivers his inaugural address after taking the oath of office in Cali, Colombia on Aug 7. (AP)

Cameroon prez draws concern, criticism by staying abroad for two months

YAOUNDE, Cameroon, Aug 8, (AP): Cameroon President Paul Biya reached two months since the last time he was inside the borders of his country, a prolonged absence that has raised concerns for his health and criticisms about a possible power vacuum in the Central African nation.

The world’s oldest president, who has led Cameroon since 1982, began his eighth term in office in November after winning a widely disputed election in October. But the 93-year-old left the country on June 7 for what Biya’s office described as “a brief private stay in Europe” that has become one of his longest trips overseas. His government later confirmed he was in Switzerland.

The health of the president has long been a topic of speculation as he spends significant time in Europe, including France and Switzerland, where he often spends weeks while leaving governance to key party officials and family members.

Cameroon’s constitution does not specifically prohibit a president from leaving the country for months. But without a vice president, an appointment Biya has full control over, the



Cameroon’s President Paul Biya, of the Cameroon People’s Democratic Movement party, waits to cast his vote during the presidential elections, Oct. 7, 2018, in Yaounde, Cameroon. (AP)

opposition has described the country as being run on “autopilot.”

Opposition leader Issa Tchiroma Bakary, the presidential runner-up in October’s election and a former Biya ally, said Thursday there is a widespread perception in Cameroon that “all is not well” with Biya,

whose absence has angered the opposition.

“Biya’s very long stay in Switzerland only aggravates that lack of legitimacy and his desperate attempts to hold on to power by force,” Tchiroma said in a text message from exile in The Gambia.

Argentines pray Pope visit alleviates economic stress

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina, Aug 8, (AP): Nearly 40 years after the last papal visit to Argentina, many Catholics received the news of Pope Leo XIV’s trip to the South American country in November as a divine sign during economic hardships that have driven millions of Argentines into debt.

The announcement of Leo’s first South American tour comes at a time when the Argentine Catholic Church has been warning of an alarming deterioration in the living conditions of the most marginalized sectors as a consequence of libertarian President Javier Milei’s austerity plan. Since taking office in December 2023, Milei has managed to slow inflation and reduce the fiscal deficit, but at a high social cost.

The decline in wages and pensions, coupled with an increase in the cost of public transportation, utilities, rent and food, has forced millions of Argentines to go into debt to survive.

“I hope the Pope comes to help the poor like me,” said María Ruíz Díaz, a 70-year-old retiree who, as she does every Aug. 7, went to the Parish of Saint Cajetan in Buenos Aires to pray to the Catholic saint of work.

“The country is going through a difficult time; there are many brothers and sisters in need,” said Santiago Olave, 60, among dozens of devotees waiting to enter the sanctuary. “The Pope can open hearts and minds.”

Milei has defended his plan, saying this week: “I am not going to engage in populism. I am going to die with my boots on, doing what is right and doing what is proper. If you want populism, you have other alternatives.”



A poster of Pope Leo XIV is seen outside the church of San Cayetano on the day of the annual pilgrimage honoring the patron Saint of work in Buenos Aires, Argentina, on Aug 7. (AP)

Oil price surges to \$75.27 pb

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 8, (KUNA): Price of Kuwaiti oil went up by USD 2.83 to USD 75.27 per barrel (pb) in Friday's trading, compared to USD 72.44 pb in the previous day, according to Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC).

In global markets, Brent crude rose by USD 1.06 to settle at USD 83.55 pb, while US West Texas Intermediate rose by 89 cents to USD 77.29 pb.

Other Voices

Refining margin is too high!

By Kamel Al-Harami
Independent Oil Analyst

Yes, today the refining margins are too high. No one can help it. As a result of disruptions and attacks on refineries in Russia, as well as the closure of the Arabian Gulf, there is a shortage of refined petroleum products globally.

The continuing war between Russia and Ukraine, with Ukraine attacking and damaging Russian refineries, has caused Russia to stop exporting finished petroleum products to Europe in particular and to other parts of the world, particularly India.

Meanwhile, while the Arabian Gulf refineries, with more than 9 million barrels per day of refining capacity, cannot export refined petroleum products to the world, particularly to Asia, due to the closure of the Strait of Hormuz.

As a result, petroleum products are commanding a premium over crude oil prices of more than \$75 a barrel. This is the highest figure ever recorded, and it could easily rise even further due to the shortage of refining capacity in Russia.

Meanwhile, some of the best and most modern refineries in the world, located in the Arab Gulf, simply cannot export finished petroleum products because Iran is refusing to allow freedom of navigation through the Strait of Hormuz. Iran itself cannot do the same, as all of its ports are completely blocked.

The refining business is at its best, with record profits, and is

enjoying every minute of it. This is despite the fact that the current U.S. administration is extremely unhappy about witnessing such huge profit margins. The U.S. government is asking major American oil companies to return some of their profits to U.S. consumers.

How practical or feasible such a recommendation is remains to be seen. Perhaps the U.S. government will impose additional taxes or tariffs on American oil companies. The question is how these companies would pay back or compensate gasoline consumers for the recent price increases.

U.S. consumers must be frustrated and angry at witnessing the huge increase in U.S. oil companies' profits, which could reach historic levels. The U.S. administration is seeking lower oil prices for American consumers, as it has promised and continues to pursue. But how can it force prices lower, and when? Is such a policy likely to be implemented?

Certainly, refining margins are too high, particularly as many refineries have been damaged or as Arab Gulf refineries are unable to export because of the closure of the Strait of Hormuz.

Oil-consuming countries must secure crude oil supplies to keep their refineries operating. Those that do not have refineries at all must rely on reliable sources of supply. Their traditional suppliers, particularly those with long-term contracts, must strive to take some responsibility by assisting them and securing alternative sources of supply.

Yes, these are difficult times for oil consumers, and established suppliers must do their best to help ease the situation and provide assistance.

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Focusing on efficiency, service quality

Kuwait Airways turns into fully state-owned company

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 8, (KUNA): Kuwait Airways Chairman Abdulmohsen Al-Fagaan said its transformation into a fully state-owned shareholding company strengthens its strategy within the Companies Law framework.

The remarks came in a KUNA interview on Saturday following the issuance of Decree Law No. 77 of 2026 transforming Kuwait Airways into a fully state-owned shareholding company.

Al-Fagaan said the decree strengthens Kuwait Airways' governance, long-term planning and development, reflecting the State's commitment to modernizing the national carrier amid rapid aviation-sector changes.

He added the next phase will focus on strategic plans, operational efficiency, service quality, human capital and technology to strengthen Kuwait Airways' role as the national carrier.

He said the unrestricted powers granted to the company will enhance Kuwait Airways' operational and administrative flexibility, streamline procedures and decision-making, accelerate projects, and improve its response to market changes, supporting future plans including acquiring or leasing new aircraft and launching new destinations within legal frameworks.

Al-Fagaan explained greater administrative flexibility will help Kuwait Airways respond quickly to aviation-sector developments and implement plans more efficiently.

He added that any future expansion, whether through increasing the size of the fleet or expanding the route network, will be subject to technical and economic studies and operational needs to ensure the best return for the company while enhancing its competitiveness and sustainable growth.

Regarding the contribution of the company's transformation into a wholly state-owned shareholding company to reducing accumulated losses, Al-Fagaan said that reducing losses depends on several operational, financial and administrative factors, in addition to external factors such as travel de-



Abdulmohsen Al-Fagaan

mand, fuel prices, and regional, global and economic developments.

He stressed that institutional transformation takes time but enables more efficient decisions, effective development initiatives, sustainable growth, and improved performance.

Al-Fagaan said the transformation will provide the company with a modern legal framework aligned with the Companies Law, enabling it to adapt to legislative and economic developments and strengthen its competitiveness in the aviation sector.

He added that the institutional model clarifies roles and responsibilities, aligns with best corporate practices, supports sustainable performance, and improves resource management efficiency.

The decree responds to developments in the aviation sector and growing regional competition, providing a legal and regulatory framework to support the company's development plans, he explained.

He said that becoming a leading global airline requires more than legal transformation, including fleet modernization, better services and efficiency, strategic network expansion, investment in national talent, and digital transformation.

He stressed that competitiveness in the aviation sector is measured not only by fleet size, but also by the quality of passenger experience, operational efficiency, and the ability to adapt to global developments, highly appreciating the continuous support of the political leadership to the national carrier.

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 8: Kuwait Telecommunications Company – stc, a world-class digital leader providing innovative services and platforms to customers, enabling the digital transformation in Kuwait, announced its contribution of USD 5 million to the Kuwait Emergency Response Fund, established by the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) to strengthen Kuwait's preparedness and response capabilities during emergencies and exceptional circumstances. The contribution reflects stc's continued commitment to supporting national initiatives that promote sustainability and long-term development.

This contribution reflects stc's long-standing commitment to supporting Kuwait and its community, particularly during times that call for collective action and national solidarity. Through its comprehensive corporate social responsibility (CSR) and Sustainability Program, the Company continues to support initiatives that create a meaningful and lasting impact while contributing to the well-being of the communities it serves. In addition to its financial contribution, stc is supporting the Fund through in kind contribution including AI powered internet network infrastructure at Kuwait International Airport Terminal 1. Partnering with government institutions to support strategic national initiatives aligns with stc's commitment to advancing sustainable development in Kuwait, particularly by reinforcing the country's preparedness for future challenges.

stc released a statement, that said, "Supporting the Kuwait Emergency Response Fund reflects our strong belief in the importance of public-private sector collaboration in strength-

By Stacy D. VanDeveer
UMass Boston

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

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The crisis in the Strait of Hormuz, wider tensions in the Red Sea and the oil price spikes these circumstances occasion have made one thing abundantly clear: Gulf countries and global markets are dependent on vulnerable maritime routes.

But while national leaders and diplomats work to free up crucial waterways through which much of the world's trade passes, another transport phenomenon is tentatively underway. For over 15 years, six Arab Gulf countries have been quietly cooperating to build a railway network - and the project has recently accelerated.

The aim is to increase the Gulf's economic integration and improve the region's resilience and security. But as experts of global governance and political economy, we also ask: Could such a rail project help reshape politics and conflict in the region?

That question is especially salient now, given that the U.S.-Iran war has meant months of severely disrupted and largely halted shipping in the Strait of Hormuz.

Routes in and out of the Arabian Gulf region have long been subject to outside influence from military powers and bitter regional rivalries and conflicts. That has included Portuguese control of Hormuz during part of the 16th and 17th centuries, and British and American naval and airpower.

Since the founding of the Gulf Cooperation Council in 1981, leaders of its six member countries - Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates - have channeled efforts into regional integration. But despite 45 years of summits and joint declarations, economic and political cooperation has generally lagged behind rhetoric.

The current war in Iran has served to underscore the need for Gulf cooperation, and the GCC Railway project may be the means by which this is finally achieved.

Announced at the 30th summit of the council in 2009, the project aims to build a 1,352-mile (2,177-kilometer) railway network connecting the six GCC states at a projected cost of US\$250 billion. The plan envisions standard gauge freight and passenger rail services with speeds between 50-60 mph (80-100 kph) for freight and 120 mph (200 kph) for passenger rail, all to be equipped with European train control technologies.

sional financial adviser, with far more, 73%, saying they relied on their own internet research.

As the use of AI increases, financial experts say consumers should be cautious about fully trusting these tools. Using AI as a tool at the start of a learning journey and then combining this knowledge with other trusted sources can be the best way to engage with new and traditional financial guidance tools, said Taha Choukhmane, associate professor at MIT's Sloan School of Management.

"I would encourage people to use AI to explain and define," Choukhmane said. "If you're interested in knowing what the stock market is, what the difference between a mutual fund and an index fund is. Using AI to explain these concepts can be very useful because it can empower people to get the most out of these methods."

Most Americans have sought financial guidance from at least one source in the past year, the survey found. In addition to those who said they used internet research, financial advisers, or AI, 35% went to a parent, sibling, or relative, while 26% got information from news, media or social media. About 2 in 10 said they turned to a friend or an author, speaker, or influencer, and fewer relied on an employer or retirement plan provider, a robo-advisor or a teacher or professor.

Younger generations are more likely to say they've used AI for financial advice, while older adults are more likely to have turned to a professional financial adviser.

Affordability can often deter younger adults from hiring a financial adviser. While doing research online, asking family and friends and using AI can have minimal costs, hiring a professional can require a bigger financial commitment.

Financial & tech support boost national preparedness

stc contributes \$5 mln to Kuwait Emergency Response Fund



stc in the heart of Assima.



ening national preparedness and advancing initiatives that contribute to Kuwait's long-term resilience. stc's contribution extends beyond financial support by leveraging our technological expertise and digital capabilities to create sustainable value and support the country's emergency preparedness efforts. As pioneers in the market, we are committed to working alongside government institutions and national stakeholders to reinforce Kuwait's resilience, support its sustainable development priorities, and contribute to building a more prepared and digitally empowered future."

The statement added, "As digital transformation continues to reshape the way nations prepare for and respond to emerging challenges, a solid telecom infrastructure and advanced digital capabilities have become fundamental to national preparedness. At stc, we remain committed to leveraging innovation to strengthen Kuwait's digital ecosystem and support the country's long-term objectives through meaningful partnerships and sustainable initiatives."

The contribution further supports stc's commitment to creating sustainable value beyond telecom solutions by supporting initiatives that contribute to national development and community well-being. Through strategic partnerships with government entities and leading national institutions, together with the deployment of its technological expertise where it can create meaningful impact, stc continues to strengthen its role as a trusted partner in supporting Kuwait's development priorities while contributing to a more digitally empowered future.

Can trains transform Arabian Gulf politics & global security?

After initially slow progress, mostly due to periods of low oil prices that delayed many investments in the fossil fuel-rich countries, the UAE and Saudi Arabia led an acceleration of the project in the 2020s.

Then came the war with Iran. In April 2026 the GCC leaders gathered in Jeddah in Saudi Arabia amid strikes from Tehran against Gulf states and the crisis closure of the Strait of Hormuz.

The gathered kingdoms called for increased security cooperation as well as joint electricity and oil pipeline connections between GCC states. They also pledged expedited construction and completion of the GCC railway project.

With GCC countries responsible for building and operating its section of the project, Saudi Arabia and the UAE have made the most progress to date.

The UAE launched Etihad Rail in June 2026, transporting passengers between Abu Dhabi and Fujairah. A full service line from the Gulf of Oman to the Saudi border is scheduled to open by the end of the year; construction of the UAE-Oman segment is well underway; and Qatar, Bahrain and Kuwait are moving their sections through planning and design processes.

Earlier in 2026 the director of the GCC Rail Authority noted the project had reached 50% completion and is on track to be operational in 2030.

Once completed, the network will create the Gulf region's first integrated, cross-border rail system, stretching from ports on the Gulf of Oman to Kuwait City.

But even more transformative integration plans are taking shape.

Several potential connections to Europe are under consideration or in development.

The GCC Railway could connect the Gulf of Oman and all six GCC member countries to Europe through several possible routes:

- From Kuwait through Iraq and Turkey.
- Across Saudi Arabia through Jordan, Syria and Turkey.
- Across Saudi Arabia, through Jordan to the Israeli port of Haifa.
- Across Saudi Arabia's "Landbridge" to Red Sea ports and by ship through the Suez Canal.

GCC Railway ports on the Gulf of Oman, including the existing port in the UAE's Fujairah and the expanding facilities in Sohar, Oman, will connect Gulf countries to Asian markets via the Arabian Sea and Indian Ocean. That network will offer valuable alternatives to the Strait of Hormuz during times of crisis.

Several efforts to realize these corridors are already underway and backed by major investment from both inside and outside the Gulf.

They include the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor, backed by India, the EU, the United States and several Persian Gulf states; Saudi Arabia's Landbridge from Riyadh to the Red Sea port city of Jeddah - which has seen its design contract already signed; and Iraq's Development Road Project.

In June 2026, Saudi Arabia and Turkey signed a memorandum of understanding on railway connectivity that includes reviving and upgrading the century-old Hejaz Railway to reconnect Turkey to Saudi Arabia via Jordan and Syria.

All four of these initiatives plan to expand rail links from Gulf countries to Europe or the Mediterranean Sea.

The GCC Railway and its future connections, however, are more than mere infrastructure. It will also connect tens of millions of travelers across borders for business and tourism. And the railway network will make it easier for international visitors to travel across multiple Gulf countries, creating new opportunities for regional tourism.

Such connections can support political stability and development as well. For example, Iraq's Development Road project has the potential to transform GCC-Iraq relations from one largely defined by security concerns and the spread of Iranian influence into one centered on economic connectivity and shared development interests. Similarly, greater GCC integration might engender more investment and economic growth in post-civil war Syria.

Additionally, the new connectivity would offer opportunities to avoid future conflicts between GCC states, such as the Qatar blockade.

In the short term, GCC leaders are likely to see improved economic and political cooperation as a counterbalance to Iran. But in the longer term, the project's effects might lead to improving relations between Iran and GCC states.

Historically, railways have played transformative roles in the making of countries, including the U.S. and Canada. They have also connected Europe and helped to modernize postwar Japan and contemporary China.

We believe the GCC Railway is best understood in that broader historical context. It is more than physical infrastructure - it represents a shared, strategic effort to strengthen regional resilience, deepen economic integration, reduce dependence on the Strait of Hormuz and position GCC states as links between Asia, the Middle East and Europe.

Railways cannot prevent wars or eliminate geopolitical rivalries. But over time, infrastructure can reshape the incentives and identities that drive behaviors and decisions. Railways can put more meaningful regional collaboration on track. (AP)

Some US adults are using AI for financial guidance but few trust it, Gallup poll finds

NEW YORK, Aug 8, (AP): Some U.S. adults are using artificial intelligence for financial guidance, but it's far from the most trusted source of advice, according to a new Gallup survey conducted in partnership with Edward Jones, a financial services firm.

About 1 in 5 Americans who have sought financial advice in the past year turned to AI, the survey found. But among U.S. adults overall, only about 3 in 10 have "a great deal" or "some" confidence in its expertise for managing money, according to the survey, including just 3% who trust AI "a great deal."

The poll, which was conducted in the spring and looked at the views of adults who are at least 21, found a disconnect between the resources Americans trust for financial advice and the ones they actually rely on. About 8 in 10 U.S. adults have at least "some" confidence in financial advisers. But only about one-third of U.S. adults who sought financial advice turned to a profes-

Grand prize totaling KD 1.5 million

KFH: KD 130,000 in prizes for Al-Hassad & Al-Rabeh monthly draws

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 8: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) has announced the winners of its monthly Al-Hassad and Al-Rabeh draws for July 2026. Al-Hassad account awards a monthly prize of KD 100,000 to one winner, while Al-Rabeh account rewards 30 winners with KD 1,000 each, reflecting KFH's commitment to honoring customer loyalty and trust.

KFH conducted two draws, awarding 31 winners a total of KD 130,000 in cash prizes, distributed as follows:

■ Al-Hassad Account: One winner received KD 100,000.

■ Al-Rabeh Account: 30 winners received KD 1,000 each.

The full list of winners is available on KFH's official social media channels.

The new campaign for Al-Hassad account features substantial prizes, headlined by a KD 1.5 million Grand Prize, a KD 500,000 semi-annual prize, and a KD 100,000 monthly prize.

Effective January of this year, the new Al-Hassad prize campaign coincided with the resumption of investment account draws conducted under the supervision of independent auditors appointed by the bank to ensure the highest standards of integrity and transparency.

KFH continues to enhance the features of its Al-Hassad account, one of the bank's flagship products that



KFH celebrates July draw winners.

has gained remarkable popularity and strong customer trust.

Al-Hassad offers increased chances of winning, with one entry for every KD 50 deposited. The longer the balance is maintained, the greater the number of entries, bringing customers closer to the title of "KFH Millionaire".

As for Al-Rabeh account, it is a dedicated salary account. To qualify for the draws, customers must deposit at least three salaries over the three months preceding the draw and maintain a minimum monthly closing balance of KD 50 throughout that period. The account awards 30 winners KD 1,000 each month.

KFH remains committed to offering premium banking products that fulfill customer aspirations and provide unique opportunities to win significant cash prizes. This makes the account a highly appealing savings and investment solution.

Based on the Wakala investment structure, Al-Hassad account allows the bank to invest the full balance at a pre-agreed expected profit rate, in addition to the monthly, semi-annual, and annual prize draws.

Customers can open Al-Hassad and Al-Rabeh accounts through KFH branches, KFHonline, or ATMs to enjoy exclusive draw opportunities and a wide range of banking benefits.

Delivering political setback to Trump

US job market stalled in July as employers eliminate 23,000 jobs

WASHINGTON, Aug 8, (AP): The U.S. job market stalled unexpectedly last month, delivering a political blow to President Donald Trump three months ahead of midterm elections and complicating decision-making for the inflation fighters at the Federal Reserve.

Employers cut 23,000 jobs in July. And Labor Department revisions slashed 103,000 jobs from May and June payrolls.

The unemployment rate fell but for the wrong reason: Thousands of people dropped out of the labor market so fewer people were competing for work.

The July jobs numbers from the Labor Department Friday marked a sharp setback for the American labor market and for Trump less than three months before his Republican party seeks to keep full control of Congress in the midterm election.

Forecasters had expected job creation to approach 100,000 last month.

Local public schools cut 50,000 jobs in July, restaurants and bars 26,000, retailers 19,000.

The 4.1% unemployment rate was the lowest since June 2025 - but it only fell because 264,000 people dropped out of the labor market last month. The share of those working or looking for work fell to 61.4%, the lowest since February 2021.

"We can't really put lipstick on a pig here," said Daniel Zhao, chief economist at the jobs website Glassdoor. "This is not a great report for July."

The Trump administration, which has imposed massive tariffs in an attempt to protect American industry and create manufacturing jobs, noted that jobs were up 22,000 at construction companies and 5,000 at factories.

"The Trump industrial resurgence is on schedule," said White House spokesman Kush Desai. "Manufacturing and factory construction jobs grew again in July even as government payrolls continued to significantly shrink."

Trump has long bragged that jobs have been increasing for native-born citizens in his economy, but that talking point was undermined by the July numbers. The White House declined to comment on why Friday's report showed that employment for native-born Americans dropped by 720,000 over the past 12 months. Those numbers can be quirky. They're not adjusted for seasonal changes and are not seen as a reliable measure of total native-born employment. But the administration had latched onto them as evidence that Trump's immigration crackdown was benefiting people born in the United States.

Policymakers at the Federal Reserve have been divided over whether to start raising interest to combat inflation that has exceeded their 2% target for more than five years. The Fed kept rates unchanged at its meeting last week - but three officials dissented from that decision in favor of a rate hike. Wall Street traders were expecting rate hikes later this year. Friday's report may at least delay higher rates.

"The Fed has to consider the health of the job market as they debate whether a hike is justified," said



Hiring sign for sales professionals is displayed at a store, in Vernon Hills, Ill., Wednesday, April 15, 2026. (AP)

Glassdoor's Zhao. "The softness in today's report is going to have to give the Fed a little bit of pause."

July wage gains were modest. Average hourly pay was up 3.2% last month from July 2025, the smallest year-over-year increase since May 2021. The smaller wage gains are coming at a time when American families are squeezed by the high cost of living.

"This is a bleak jobs report," said Heather Long, chief economist at Navy Federal Credit Union. "The U.S. labor market is stalling again and that is going to make the Federal Reserve's job harder and life for job seekers rough."

Women lost 32,000 jobs last month, the Labor Department reports, accounting for all the job losses in July. But that marked a reversal in women's fortunes: They still gained 321,000 jobs over the past 12 months; men lost 5,000 over that period.

Economists noted that private payrolls continued to grow in July and that the big drop in public school payrolls might have been a statistical glitch caused by seasonal adjustments.

Hiring had rebounded this year from a lackluster 2025 in the face of the conflict in the Persian Gulf that has sent energy prices surging and put a strain on family budgets. Job growth had been solid, if unspectacular. Some businesses are having trouble filling vacancies. Others are using technology to do the work humans used to do.

Americans who have jobs are enjoying unusual job security. Layoffs are low by historical standards. Companies, scarred by the surprise labor shortages that followed COVID-19 lockdowns a few years ago, don't want to risk giving up the staff they have.

One week in July the number of Americans filing for unemployment benefits dropped to the lowest level in more than 50 years. The jobless rate tumbled to 4.2% in June, the lowest in a year, and is expected to have stayed there last month, according to a survey of forecasters by the data firm FactSet.

But Americans who have lost their jobs - or are seeking to bust into the job market for the first time - are struggling to catch a break.

Economists have used the term "no hire, no fire" to describe the un-

usual job market conditions.

So far this year, employers are adding 61,000 jobs a month, up from 9,700 in 2025, the weakest hiring outside a recession since 2002. But job creation this year is well below the 2023-2024 average of 166,000 jobs a month - and it had been even higher during the 2021-2022 hiring boom that followed the end of COVID-19 lockdowns.

At least the United States doesn't need as many jobs as it used to to keep the unemployment rate from rising. Trump's immigration crackdown and the ongoing retirement of baby boomers mean fewer people are competing for work. So the "break-even" rate of monthly hiring, 155,000 in 2023-2024, has dropped, perhaps to nearly zero, according to a Federal Reserve study.

The jobs outlook is clouded by the ongoing fighting in the Persian Gulf, which has pushed up energy prices and squeezed family budgets, and by the rise of artificial intelligence, which could either make workers more efficient and better-paid -- or take their jobs.

In a report out this week, researchers Ingrid Chen, Marianna Kudlyak and Riva Mikhlin of the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco found that landing a job has gotten tougher in the past couple of years - surprisingly so.

Normally, this deep into an economic expansion - it's been more than six years since the last recession - employers would need workers so badly that they'd be taking chances on young people and on those with less education. Not this time. "Instead of being pulled in, the pipeline into employment is shrinking such that the recovery is no longer reaching workers at the margins," Chen, Kudlyak and Mikhlin write.

Moreover, the unemployed people who normally get back to work the fastest - those in their prime working years (25 to 54) and with college educations - are struggling to find new jobs. The San Francisco Fed researchers aren't sure what's making the job search so tough. They suspect it might have to do with the immigration crackdown, hiring slowdowns specifically at tech companies and government contractors, uncertainty over the direction of government policy or "early signals of broader labor market deterioration."

Trump admin moves ahead with bid to oust Fed's Cook

Cook challenges renewed removal attempt

WASHINGTON, Aug 8, (AP): The Trump administration is moving ahead with its efforts to fire Federal Reserve governor Lisa Cook, two months after the Supreme Court allowed her to retain her job while she fights the president's effort to terminate her over mortgage fraud allegations that she has denied.

The justices in a 5-4 decision in June said Cook, who was nominated to the Fed's Board of Governors by President Joe Biden, could remain in her post at least as long as her lawsuit challenging her firing goes on. The Trump administration is appealing a lower-court ruling in Cook's favor.

Supreme Court Chief Justice John Roberts wrote in a footnote in his opinion that nothing forbids President Donald Trump from "trying again" to fire Cook provided she is given proper notice and a chance to contest it. Trump indicated after the opinion that he would do just that, vowing to "take appropriate action immediately."

In a letter this week obtained by The Associated Press, White House aide Dan Scavino told Cook that Trump was "considering removing you from your position" but cited the Supreme Court's requirement of proper notice in giving her until August 26 to challenge it.

The attempt to fire Cook is rooted in a criminal referral made last August by Bill Pulte, the director of the Federal Housing Finance Agency, that accused her of committing mortgage fraud by declaring two different homes - one in Ann Arbor, Michigan, and one in Atlanta - as "primary residence." Homebuyers can get lower mortgage rates or smaller down payments on their primary homes compared to second or vacation homes.

Cook has aggressively defended herself against the allegations, saying the president had attempted to oust her "on a manufactured pretext because I refused to bow to political pressure and continued to set interest rates based only on what would best serve the American people."

Her lawyer, Abbe Lowell, argued in a November letter that Cook has mostly lived in the Ann Arbor property since first purchasing it in 2005. As a result, it was accurate for her to refer to it as her "primary residence"



Lisa Cook, a Federal Reserve Board of Governors member, speaks during an event at the Brookings Institution, Nov. 3, 2025, in Washington. (AP)

in a June 2021 application to refinance its mortgage, the letter said.

A month later, she purchased a condominium in Atlanta and, in a July 2021 document, also referred to it as her "primary residence." Lowell said that it was an "isolated notation" that did not reflect an intent to defraud. An earlier mortgage application to the same lender in May 2021 had referred to the Atlanta condo as a "vacation home," Lowell said. Cook also referred to it as a second home in federal filings during her confirmation process to become a Fed governor.

The latest White House letter largely rehashes the year-old allegations.

"These allegations are as baseless now as they were a year ago when President Trump tried to remove Governor Cook and interfere with the independence of the Federal Reserve," Lowell said in a statement.

"No matter what President Trump tries to do next, this much is clear under the facts and Supreme Court precedent - there is no valid cause for removing Governor Cook. As we did before, we will challenge this latest pretext and preserve her position and the historic role of the Fed," he added.

Trump criticizes Canada as talks continue

Carney calls US trade talks 'nasty'

TORONTO, Aug 8, (AP): Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney said Thursday that trade negotiations with the United States had turned "nasty" after President Donald Trump derided America's neighbor and its leadership while threatening to expand tariffs.

Carney said Canada remained engaged in the negotiations despite Trump's comments, describing the talks as a fight to protect Canadian workers and businesses.

"This is a tough negotiation," Carney said in French. "You can say 'nasty.' But this is a question of Canadian jobs. It's a question of the future of Canadian businesses."

Trump criticized Canada during a speech Wednesday in Las Vegas.

"Canada's nasty. They are. They're nasty," Trump said. "I love the people, but they're nasty. Nasty leadership."

Carney said "we are in the middle of a tariff war with the Americans" but laughed when asked about Trump's description. He said Canadian negotiators were in Washington this week and that he expected further conversations with Trump after speaking with him last week.

The United States already has tariffs on Canadian steel, aluminum and automobiles. Trump has threatened to impose 50% tariffs on more Canadian goods beginning Aug. 19.

Tariffs are taxes on imports, which companies can then pass along to consumers in the form of higher prices. The president maintains that the costs created by tariffs will

cause manufacturing to relocate to the U.S., though there is little evidence of that in the economic data.

Trump's tariff threats and repeated suggestions that Canada should become the 51st U.S. state have angered many Canadians, prompting many Canadians to cancel trips to the United States.

U.S. Trade Representative Jamieens Greer has argued that Canada and China are the only two countries to retaliate against Trump's tariffs, citing restrictions on U.S. alcohol sales in some Canadian provinces among his concerns. Canadian officials say their countermeasures were a response to existing U.S. tariffs.

The latest comments followed months of escalating tensions. At the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, in January, Carney criticized major powers for using economic coercion against smaller countries, prompting Trump to respond: "Canada lives because of the United States. Remember that, Mark, the next time you make your statements."

Canada is one of the United States' largest trading partners, and the move threatens to push prices higher at a time when Americans are already frustrated with the high cost of living ahead of the Nov. 3 midterm elections.

Carney said existing U.S. tariffs on aluminum have contributed to a 58% increase in aluminum prices in the United States.

"That's not a good situation for American companies," Carney said.

Trump administration pays RWE \$1.2 bln to drop wind leases

WASHINGTON, Aug 8, (AP): An offshore wind company said Thursday that it reached a \$1.2 billion settlement with the Trump administration to walk away from projects under development off New York, California and Louisiana. This latest agreement brings the total amount spent on such settlements to nearly \$4 billion.

RWE U.S. Offshore said its leases represented years of planning, investment and partnership with federal agencies, but it determined there was no path forward to permit the projects for the foreseeable future. In exchange for \$1.22 billion, RWE is relinquishing the wind power leases that could have provided about seven gigawatts of power, enough for more than 5 million homes. It does not have any remaining U.S. offshore wind leases.

President Donald Trump, who often talks about his hatred of wind power, has said his goal is to not let any "windmills" be built. The Republican administration has been buying back offshore wind leases from energy companies as it seeks to discourage the expansion of wind energy in favor of fossil fuels.

Offshore wind produces electricity cleanly. Oil, coal and natural gas emit carbon pollution when burned.

RWE announced it is investing \$900 million in a liquefied natural gas project in Louisiana and spending \$300 million on natural gas turbines. The company is developing 15 natural gas projects across the United States. RWE is headquartered in Germany.

The administration adopted this strategy after federal courts thwarted Trump's efforts to stop offshore wind development through executive action. Roughly \$3.9 billion has been spent. States that are losing offshore wind energy are suing. California intends to sue.

Separately, a coalition of renewable energy groups sued Pentagon officials over their failure to complete national security reviews for new onshore wind farms on private lands. A federal judge in Oregon ruled in favor of the plaintiffs on Thursday, ordering the Defense Department to resume its review process and provide status reports on the progress.

Commenting on the RWE agreement, Interior Secretary Doug Burgum said Thursday that Americans "deserve an energy system built on common sense, not one dependent on costly subsidies or technologies that can't meet our country's current demand." He said he welcomes RWE's agreement and voluntary investment in projects that strengthen the nation's energy security, provide dependable baseload power and help keep electricity affordable.

But Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse, D-R.I., said the lease buybacks are effectively bribing companies to step away from clean energy that can displace more expensive fossil fuel plants, which in turn will raise costs for consumers.

"They are creating this enormous money pump, pulling billions of dollars out of consumers' pockets," he said. "That's the real story of what is going on here. And that is both a cost story because of the billions in extra costs consumers pay, and it's a corruption story because it's Trump's sneaky way of getting regular families to pay off his big fossil fuel donors. There's method here, and it's a real scam."

Integrated digital solutions enable customers to complete their financial transactions with ease, speed & security

NBK redefines customer banking experience through NBK Mobile Banking App

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 8: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) continues to elevate the customer experience through an integrated suite of innovative banking services and solutions delivered via the NBK Mobile Banking App, enabling customers to complete a broad range of transactions seamlessly, swiftly and securely. This reflects the Bank’s vision of making banking more accessible and responsive to customers’ needs, while empowering them to manage their finances with greater autonomy and flexibility. The approach aligns with today’s fast-paced lifestyles and customers’ evolving expectations for convenient, secure banking services available anytime and from anywhere.

The most significant evolution in the NBK customer experience in recent years has extended beyond the digitalization of banking services to a fundamental transformation in how customers interact with the Bank and manage their finances. Transactions that once required customers to set aside time to visit a branch, taking into account operating hours and waiting times, have now become a seamless part of their daily lives and can be completed quickly and conveniently through the NBK Mobile Banking App.

This evolution gives customers greater control and autonomy by placing banking services directly at their fingertips. It enables them to complete transactions and make financial decisions independently, without waiting or relying on traditional branch-based procedures. This reflects the continued evolution of customer expectations and

- Open accounts, apply for cards and open deposits digitally in just a few simple steps
- Kuwait’s first fully digital loan, enabling customers to complete the entire financing journey through the NBK Mobile Banking App
- Instant issuance of credit cards secured against deposits, without the need to break the deposit
- Benefit from deposit returns and credit card advantages simultaneously
- Smart solutions for everyday transactions, including card top-ups and credit card payments within seconds
- Pay creditcard balances through KNET directly within the App, including from accounts held with other banks
- A smoother e-commerce experience with secure access to card details through the App
- NBK places customers at the heart of innovation, giving them greater control and independence in managing their financial affairs

preferences in an increasingly digital banking environment.

The digital journey begins from the moment customers establish their relationship with the Bank. Through the NBK Mobile Banking App, customers can open new accounts digitally, including Al-Jawhara and Trust Account, through a fast and streamlined process completed end-to-end without paperwork or the need to visit a branch.

NBK’s digital proposition extends well beyond account opening to encompass a broad range of banking products and services, including placing deposits, apply-

ing for and obtaining cards, and accessing a variety of financing solutions. Together, these capabilities deliver a more integrated and seamless banking experience, bringing to life the concept of “Your Branch in Your Pocket.”

As part of its continued efforts to enhance the digital customer experience, NBK recently launched Kuwait’s first fully digital loan, enabling customers to apply for financing and complete the entire process electronically through the NBK Mobile Banking App. The end-to-end journey covers every stage, from submitting the application and obtaining the required

approvals to electronically signing the documentation and completing the financing process. The launch reflects NBK’s commitment to delivering innovative banking solutions that respond to customers’ evolving needs and expectations.

Among the key features demonstrating the Bank’s customer-centric approach is the instant issuance of credit cards secured against a deposit or account balance. The service provides customers with greater flexibility when financing purchases or meeting unexpected financial commitments, without affecting their savings or requiring them to break their deposits before

maturity.

Through the NBK Mobile Banking App, customers can instantly issue a credit card secured against their deposit or account balance, add it directly to digital wallets such as Apple Pay and use it immediately for purchases. This feature allows customers to continue earning returns on their deposits while simultaneously benefiting from the advantages offered by their credit cards, including rewards, cash-back and air miles. In doing so, it enables customers to derive greater value from their funds while enjoying enhanced financial flexibility. NBK places particular empha-



sis on everyday banking services, guided by the belief that an exceptional banking experience is defined by simplifying the recurring transactions that form part of customers’ daily lives and making them faster and more convenient.

Against this backdrop, the NBK Mobile Banking App enables customers to complete a wide range of everyday transactions within seconds, including topping up prepaid cards and settling credit card balances directly from their NBK accounts. The App also provides greater flexibility by allowing customers to make credit card payments through KNET directly within the App, even when the funds are held in accounts with other banks. This eliminates the need for customers to transfer funds in advance and wait for the transaction to be processed.

Extending this focus to e-commerce, NBK has further streamlined the online shopping experience through the NBK Mobile Banking App. customers can securely access their card details whenever required for online purchases, reducing time and effort while making digital payments more convenient and seamless.

Underpinning these developments is NBK’s customer-centric vision, which places customers at the heart of innovation and empowers them to manage their banking needs in a way that aligns with their lifestyles. By continuing to deliver advanced digital solutions that combine convenience, flexibility and security, NBK further reinforces its position as Kuwait’s preferred and most innovative banking partner.

Exports rise on electronics, vehicle demand

China export growth slows to 24% in July

BANGKOK, Aug 8, (AP): China’s exports slowed slightly in July from the month before but still were higher than forecast thanks to strong demand for high-tech electronics and vehicles.

Customs data released Friday showed China’s trade surplus narrowed to \$112.5 billion from \$125.6 billion in June.

Exports rose nearly 24% in July from a year earlier, compared with a 27% increase in June. Imports climbed 27.5% year-on-year, but that was lower than June’s jump of 36%.

Disruptions to port operations due to typhoons helped to slow trade, though the actual figures were slightly better than analysts had forecast.

“The boom in Chinese trade slowed a touch in July but the big picture is that export and import values remain elevated, helped by soaring global demand for electronics and green tech products,” Julian Evans-Pritchard of Capital Economics said in a report.

The Iran war interfered with shipments of aluminum from the Middle East, leading to an increase in Chinese exports of the metal, he noted.

Trade data show China has fully transitioned from providing mostly low cost manufacturing to supplying vital machin-

ery and components for advanced manufacturing.

China’s exports of high-tech items surged nearly 41% in January-July from the same period the year before, while shipments of vehicles, many of them electric, jumped 55%. Exports of electronics and machinery rose 26%.

Sustained demand for such goods, despite rising tariffs and other trade barriers in the U.S. and some other countries, helped push its trade surplus to a record high of nearly \$1.2 trillion in 2025.

After U.S. President Donald Trump boosted tariffs on imports from China and many other countries, China’s exports to the U.S. slowed precipitously. They climbed just 2.6% year-on-year in the first seven months of this year, while imports from the U.S. grew 1.4%.

But trade issues and restrictions on China’s access to advanced technology are likely to be high on the agenda during a planned visit by Chinese President Xi Jinping to the U.S. next month.

In key industries such as autos, its leaders have been adjusting policies to counter price wars due to brutal competition and slack demand, while the U.S. and some other major trading partners have complained Chinese exporters are flooding global mar-

kets due to massive excess manufacturing capacity inside China.

Still, the government issued a report last week condemning what it said was the “myth of overcapacity.”

A commentary issued by the state-run Xinhua News Agency, pointed to a surge in exports of air conditioners to Europe due to skyrocketing demand during a ferocious heat wave.

“Europeans are buying these products, and for good reasons,” the Xinhua commentary said. “These products solve problems local brands often fail to address.”

The data released Friday showed exports to the European Union were up nearly 17% in January-July, while exports to Southeast Asia, which as a bloc is now China’s biggest trading partner, surged 25%.

Among other key categories, the total volume of China’s crude oil imports fell 13.2% in the first seven months of this year, though due to higher prices the value of those imports rose slightly. Imports of natural gas slipped 3% by volume and 1.6% in dollar terms.

China’s exports of strategically vital rare earths fell 10% by volume in January-July, but they jumped 58% in value.

China rebukes US visa threats

US & China tensions rise over Huawei in Argentina

BUENOS AIRES, Aug 8, (AP): China and the United States are clashing diplomatically in Argentina as President Javier Milei seeks to preserve his close alliance with Washington while pursuing deeper economic ties with Beijing.

China’s embassy in Buenos Aires accused the United States of hypocrisy on Thursday after an electricity cooperative in Argentina’s Neuquen province said the U.S. Embassy threatened to revoke its executives’ visas over an agreement with Chinese telecommunications giant Huawei.

“These actions fully reflect the arrogance and prejudice of the United States. They constitute a serious lack of respect for the sovereignty of other countries and a serious infringement of the principles of the free market,” the embassy said in a statement.

It added that the United States should “correct its perception of China and put an end to its hegemonic practices and political maneuvering.”

The diplomatic clash comes as Milei walks a careful diplomatic line, remaining one of U.S. President Donald Trump’s closest allies in the region while deepening commercial ties with China, one of Argentina’s top trading partners.

On Wednesday, Argentina renewed its bilateral currency swap agreement with China for another five years, reinforcing financial cooperation between the two countries. Foreign Minister Pablo Quirno is also expected to visit China in the coming months to strengthen economic and commercial ties. Quirno’s office declined to comment.

China’s statement came days after CALF, the largest electricity distributor in southern Argentina, alleged that its executives had been threatened with the revocation of their U.S. visas for negotiating with Chinese technology giant Huawei. The cooperative said in a statement that an executive received messages through WhatsApp warning that U.S. visa restrictions could apply to those involved in expanding Huawei’s operations in Argentina.

CALF announced in July that it would expand its strategic partnership with Huawei to advance the expansion of its connectivity network in Neuquen.

U.S. Ambassador to Argentina, Peter Lamelas, did not respond to a request to comment but wrote on social platform X: “Deciding who may enter the country and who may not is the responsibility of every sovereign nation. Denying or revoking a visa is not a punishment; it is a decision made to protect the country’s security and interests.”

CALF said on Thursday that Lamelas had sent the cooperative a letter requesting a meeting and offering assistance in evaluating technological alternatives from U.S. companies. According to CALF, the ambassador also confirmed that the messages sent to one of its managers via WhatsApp reflected official U.S. policy.

The Argentine Federation of Electricity and Public Services Cooperatives (FACE), which represents electricity and public service cooperatives across the country, said on Thursday that its members “do not respond to corporate interests or geopolitical strategies” and that any disputes should be resolved through “institutional, transparent and respectful dialogue.”

FACE added that it would formally request a meeting with Lamelas.

The Trump administration has stepped up efforts to counter China’s growing influence in Latin America, increasingly invoking what officials describe as a modern-day version of the Monroe Doctrine - the 1823 policy warning European powers against interference in the Western Hemisphere.

The U.S. has revoked the visas of three senior Chilean officials and threatened to reassert U.S. control over the Panama Canal in the ongoing geopolitical dispute.

Milei has become one of Trump’s closest allies in the region and, during his presidential campaign, referred to China’s Communist government as “assassins.”

Washington has backed his administration with political and financial support, including a \$20 billion financial package to boost Milei’s electoral prospects and halt the peso’s precipitous slide. Yet nearly three years into his presidency, Chinese goods have flooded Argentine markets and economic ties with Beijing have continued to deepen.

E-commerce platforms such as Shein, Temu and AliExpress have become some of the most popular shopping apps in Argentina, more than 20 Chinese automakers now sell over 60 models in the country, and China’s Ganfeng Lithium has poured billions of dollars into lithium deposits in the country’s north.

“In some ways, Trump has given Argentina a breathing room,” Benjamin Gedan, senior fellow and director of the Latin America Program at the Stimson Center, told The Associated Press. “But deals with Huawei are often a red line for the United States” because they tend to involve sensitive infrastructure and strategic assets, he added.

Mexico deploys 1,500 troops over avocado crisis

US-Mexico avocado trade hit by security fears

MEXICO CITY, Aug 8, (AP): Mexico began sending 1,500 more troops to the western state of Michoacan on Thursday, a day after the U.S. announced the suspension of government operations in that region - including halting avocado inspections required for their export - because of a non-specific threat to U.S. interests.

Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum announced the increase of security in avocado production areas to spur the resumption of the exports as soon as possible and to prevent any serious impact on Mexico’s economy or U.S. supply.

The United States is a major consumer of Mexican avocados: More than 80% of the avocados consumed come from its southern neighbor, amounting to \$3.7 billion in sales for Mexico in 2025.

But before export, U.S. Department of Agriculture inspectors verify the quality on-site to prevent pests from entering the country. Without inspections, imports stop and prices in the U.S. may increase.

These agricultural inspections were suspended on Wednesday for security reasons in Michoacan, the main avocado producer and an area with high cartel activity.

It’s not the first time the exports have been halted - a pause in early 2022 on the eve of the Super Bowl lasted a week, though it didn’t impact game day guacamole consumption because those avocados had already been shipped.

Here’s a look at what’s driving the shutdown:

Numerous cartels operate in Michoacan,

which is the main state exporting avocados to the United States and one of just two states authorized to do so. In Michoacan, the cartels produce and traffic drugs and engage in violence and extortion across multiple industries, including the avocado industry where payments to the cartels can impact prices of the fruit.

Previous pauses on exports were triggered by violence against U.S. inspectors - in 2024, two USDA employees were assaulted and temporarily held by assailants in Michoacan. This time, no specific incident was reported, and Michoacan authorities stated that the suspension was “preventive” due to recent arrests linked to extortion cases.

The California Avocado Commission, which supports the state’s avocado industry, called for stronger monitoring of fruit headed to the U.S. after a pest was reported at a Mexico packinghouse and said cartels shouldn’t be allowed to intervene in the industry.

“The Trump administration is right to protect American personnel and confront the cartels,” Ken Melban, the commission’s president, said in a statement, adding that “cartels cannot be allowed to exploit the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement to undercut American growers and destroy domestic production.”

Avocado consumption has soared in the United States in recent decades, and California grows only a fraction of the avocados needed to meet that demand.

Mexican analyst David Saucedo believes

that issues with avocado exports are among the reasons the Trump administration has designated four cartels operating in Michoacan as terrorist organizations.

The suspension solely affects avocados grown in Michoacan, but only one other Mexican state, Jalisco, is authorized by the USDA to export to the United States since 2022, and its volume is much smaller.

Generally, the situation is resolved within a matter of days because export pauses hurt both Mexico and the U.S. - and the cartels. In Michoacan, the main producer, the industry employs about 200,000 people. Lengthy pauses could lead to shortages or price increases. And if the avocados aren’t moving, criminals can’t collect their extortion payments.

A producer from Michoacan told the AP this week that he pays 1 peso per kilo exported in extortion fees and exports about 90 metric tons a day, which amounts to more than \$5,000 in daily payments for him. He spoke on condition of anonymity out of fear for his safety.

When inspections are halted, Mexican authorities typically respond with offers of increased security, as Sheinbaum announced on Thursday. She also suggested that Mexican officials could do the inspections. This option has been considered in the past, but the USDA remained in charge of the verifications, albeit with Mexican security forces accompanying them.

Although the situation generally calms down quickly, producers say that doesn’t mean the extortion stops.

Kingdom balancing roots and renewal

Heritage at the heart of Bahrain's cultural momentum

By Hind Karam

MANAMA, Aug 8, (KUNA): Bahrain's cultural sector continues to strike a balance between preserving authenticity, national identity, collective memory and the Kingdom's unique historical heritage, while embracing development and looking toward the future.

Through this approach, Bahrain has established a distinctive cultural identity and strengthened its position as a regional and international hub for creativity across a wide range of fields.

The Kingdom's cultural sector has witnessed sustained activity and momentum, reflecting the directives of King Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa, King of Bahrain, and the continued support and follow-up of Prince Salman bin Hamad Al-Khalifa, Crown Prince and Prime Minister.

These efforts seek to strengthen Bahrain's cultural identity and national heritage while investing in culture as a vital component of the Kingdom's civilizational

image and its openness to diverse cultures and civilizations and reflect Bahrain's commitment to the values of peace and tolerance, alongside its rich and diverse national cultural output.

A range of seasonal cultural programmes and events has demonstrated the Kingdom's ongoing efforts to preserve national memory while presenting Bahraini culture through a contemporary and competitive lens. Among the most prominent developments has been the accelerated enhancement of Bahrain's heritage infrastructure, particularly the ongoing development of the historic city of Muharraq.

The Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning, in cooperation with the Bahrain Authority for Culture and Antiquities, has continued detailed fieldwork and restoration and rehabilitation efforts involving 16 heritage buildings in the first phase of the project. The initiative aims to preserve Muharraq's distinctive urban character and safeguard its heritage identity.

At the same time, the UNESCO-listed

Pearling Path has been transformed into open-air artistic exhibition spaces that recount the stories of pearl divers and merchants through oral history and rare archaeological artefacts.

Muharraq also remained a focal point for cultural celebrations through the fourth edition of the annual Muharraq Nights Festival 2025, organized by the Bahrain Authority for Culture and Antiquities. The festival has become an established feature of Bahrain's National Day celebrations, attracting growing participation from Bahrain, the Gulf region and the Arab world.

The festival further highlights Muharraq's cultural significance as a member of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network. Events were held along the 3.5-kilometre Pearling Path, extending from the coast of Bu Maher Fort to the Pearling Museum and Siyadi Majlis.

The festival hosted more than 560 events and presented over 800 musical, artistic, heritage and traditional performances, drawing broad participation from Bahraini citizens

and visitors of various nationalities. Its program included artistic activities, exhibitions, tours and interactive workshops.

Bahrain's capital, Manama, hosted Hawa Manama 2025 during the Kingdom's National Day season. Organized by the Bahrain Tourism and Exhibitions Authority, the event highlighted the capital's history, markets and commercial activities while showcasing its cultural and social diversity.

The program offered visitors an experience combining the character of the old city with modern elements, creating a rich cultural landscape through activities and participation from a variety of sectors. The events were warmly received by Bahraini citizens and visitors to the Kingdom.

In recognition of the heritage and cultural value established by the annual Muharraq Nights Festival and Hawa Manama, both events received royal recognition from the King.

Museums and archaeological sites have also played an increasingly active role in preserving and presenting Bahrain's cultural heritage.

The Bahrain National Museum hosted an exhibition featuring cultural artefacts from the Ibrahim Yusuf Al-Hassan Collection. The exhibition included documents, manuscripts, traditional tools and rare coins belonging to the Al-Hassan family.

The exhibition was the result of cooperation between the Bahrain Authority for Culture and Antiquities and the Al-Hassan family, which donated the collection to the Bahrain National Museum. The artefacts belonged to pearl merchant Hassan bin Ibrahim Ahmed Al-Hassan, the family's patriarch, who lived from 1887 to 1982. The Al-Hassan family is among Muharraq's well-known families historically associated with the pearl trade.

Bahrain has also maintained strong momentum in regional visual arts through major exhibitions. In February 2026, the Kingdom successfully hosted the 52nd Bahrain Annual Fine Arts Exhibition, featuring more than 75 visual artists who presented a diverse range of artistic and visual approaches.

Where time meets defiance

Kofan awakens Taqah heritage

Photo feature by Safeyah Al-Hajeri

At a time when historical sites around the world are struggling to survive due to modern urban expansion, Kofan Heritage Lodge, located in the coastal state of Taqah in southern Oman, offers a different model for reviving heritage and integrating the preservation of local history with sustainable tourism growth.

This historical monument, which was built 150 years ago, houses hundreds of artifacts and household items that document details of daily life and family ties, attracting researchers and anthropologists from around the world to explore chapters of the region's commercial and social history.

The house, with its ancient building methods of Dhofar, built with stone, red clay, and wood extracted from the Taqah Mountains reflects the human capacity to adapt to the surrounding environment and utilize its natural resources.

The details of the stone corridors and narrow staircases to the wooden doors reveal aspects of traditional life. Restoration work maintained the house's original character while adding modern touches, transforming it into a lodge for visitors seeking a distinctive heritage experience.

Today, Kofan Heritage lodge stands as a model to preserve architectural heritage in the Sultanate of Oman, combining its status as a historical landmark. (KUNA)



Top and above: Kofan Heritage Lodge is a living storehouse of memory, where the fragrance of the past meets the spirit of the present.



Stone ladder

Oman's green season beckons

Photo feature by Safeyah Al-Hajri

DHOFAH, Aug 8, (KUNA): Oman's Dhofar Governorate is one of the Gulf region's leading tourist destinations during the annual Khareef season, offering visitors a unique blend of lush landscapes, mountains, plains, beaches and coastline alongside a rich selection of cultural and entertainment attractions.

The Dhofar Khareef 2026 season greets visitors with green mountain slopes, flowing valleys and dense white mist that blankets the peaks and softens the summer heat.

Beyond its scenic mountains, plains, beaches and coastline, Dhofar also offers a wide range of cultural, entertainment, artistic and sporting activities, making it a family-friendly destination catering to diverse interests as seasonal attractions spread across several venues.

The experience is further enriched by visits to some of Dhofar's best-known natural landmarks, including Ayn Razat, Ayn Darbat and Ayn Athum, where flowing springs, abundant greenery and towering trees create picturesque landscapes that attract visitors from across Oman and abroad.



Dhofar's dramatic coastline stretches into the blue, where rugged shores meet the misty magic of Khareef.

Variety

MIAMI: Attorneys for social media influencers Andrew and Tristan Tate argued Friday that the brothers' high-profile, public lives and other factors constitute special circumstances for their release as they fight extradition to the United Kingdom, where the brothers are accused of rape and sex trafficking.

The defense attorneys filed a motion for release in Miami federal court, where a judge will next week determine if the brothers should stay in jail or be released during what could be a months-long extradition process.

The brothers have repeatedly denied wrongdoing. Prosecutors must file a response to the motion by Monday.

The detention hearing is likely to be the first time the Tates leave the Federal Detention Center in Miami since making a brief court appearance two days after their July 18 arrest. (AP)



LONDON: Amanda Knox, the American student convicted and later acquitted of the murder and sexual assault of her British roommate Meredith Kercher 19 years ago in Italy, is defending herself against accusations from Kercher's sister that her comedy show at the

Edinburgh Fringe festival in Scotland trivializes violence against women.

Knox, now 39, said Thursday in a post



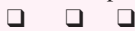
Knox



Towle

on Instagram that her show "honors Meredith Kercher's memory and calls out the violence that was done to her and to me."

The show is called "Cartwheel," a reference to a story that claimed Knox did cartwheels in the police station after Kercher's death. The show debuts Friday evening and is due to run for 11 straight nights at the annual mish-mash of stand-up, theater and musical offerings in the Scottish capital. (AP)



LOS ANGELES: Sydney Towle, a social media content creator who projected enduring optimism as she chronicled her life with a rare form of cancer, has died, according to

her family. She was 26.

Towle was diagnosed with cholangiocarcinoma, an aggressive form of cancer in the bile ducts, in August 2023. Her mother, Elizabeth Morrow, and brother, Austin Towle, posted a video to her TikTok account confirming she died Wednesday.

"Syd went peacefully last night after an almost three-year long battle with cholangiocarcinoma," her brother said. "She fought really hard, and we're so proud of her, and we thank all of you for your support over the years." Towle's mother said they appreciated the messages of support and that "she will not be forgotten." (AP)

Technology

Smartphone guide to capturing August’s total solar eclipse across Europe

NEW YORK, Aug 8, (AP): Millions of people will get to experience - and film or photograph - a rare total solar eclipse set to sweep over parts of Europe next week.

The event is expected to boost tourism to Spain as eclipse enthusiasts flock to a swath of the country’s north that will be in the path of total darkness on Aug. 12. Parts of Greenland, western Iceland and a corner of Portugal are also in the shadow’s path.

Eclipse chasers may also join eclipse cruises in the north Atlantic. Much of the rest of the northern hemisphere will see a partial eclipse.

Interest surged for 2024 ‘s total eclipse over North America, with many people using their smartphones to document it. This year’s event is expected to be no different.

But an eclipse poses unique challenges for photos, such as drastic changes in lighting. Here are pointers on how smartphone shooters can get the best shot.

Location is key. If you’re travelling to view the eclipse, you’ll want to be as close as possible to the path of totality.

The European Space Agency has posted a map of Spain on its website showing how many minutes of totality there will be for different parts of the country.

For more detail, eclipse expert

Xavier Jubier’s website overlays the eclipse’s path on Google Maps, which allows zooming down to the street level.

Be aware that for most places in Europe the eclipse won’t happen until close to sunset, and the sun and moon will get closer to the horizon as it continues. So try to find a high point with clear views of the western horizon.

Weather conditions can change so consult forecast and cloud coverage apps like Astrospheric ahead of time to find locations with clearer skies.

The American Astronomical Society has a list of recommended iOS and Android apps, which can do helpful things like play an audio countdown to the moment of totality, and simulate how the eclipse will look from your position so you can set up a shot in advance.

A digital SLR camera is your best bet for dramatic close-up photos of the moon passing in front of the sun.

But you can still take a good photo with a smartphone.

Be aware that iPhones and Android devices aren’t really designed for photographing objects in the sky. Their lenses are great for wide-angle shots but not so good for capturing close-up detail from faraway.

But newer phones have sophisticated sensors, multiple lenses and



The partial solar eclipse is framed by youngsters jumping on a trampoline in the outskirts of Lahore, Pakistan, Oct. 25, 2022. (AP)

image stabilization software that give you a better chance. Many also have exposure controls, so you can darken or lighten the image amid tricky eclipse lighting.

“The main challenge with using smartphone cameras for astronomical photography is that they tend to overexpose bright objects” such as the moon or the inner solar corona, the American Astronomical Society says in its online guide to photographing eclipses. At the same time,

smartphones have trouble focusing on dim objects, which is “almost everything else in the sky,” the group says.

“Zooming in to make the subject bigger often helps.”

Just don’t use flash. It won’t be effective and can spoil the moment for anyone around you whose eyes have adapted to darkness.

And don’t just focus on the sky. Look at the scene around you. As the moon passes in front of the sun, the

landscape will be “bathed in eerie lighting and shadows,” NASA says in photo tips it posted for the 2024 eclipse.

“As light filters through the overlapping leaves of trees, it creates natural pinholes that project miniature eclipse replicas on the ground,” NASA says. “Anywhere you can point your camera can yield exceptional imagery, so be sure to compose some wide-angle photos that can capture your eclipse experience.”

If you’re photographing the sun during the partial phases of the eclipse, the lens must be protected by a special-purpose solar filter, said Antonio Garcia Fernandez of Volunteer Astronomy Observers of Spain, a group of astronomers and professors that set up a website, Eclipse Seguro, to share safety information ahead of this year’s eclipse.

The group recommends the Solar Snap filter, the only one designed for smartphones that’s certified to the international ISO 12312-2 standard for solar filters.

Or just use a pair of eclipse glasses, which are more widely available, over the lens.

“This makeshift method is a great low-cost DIY alternative and was widely and successfully practiced by millions of observers during the recent 2023 and 2024 solar eclipses

in the Americas,” Garcia Fernandez said.

Don’t forget to also wear a pair of eclipse glasses if you’re looking at the sun while lining up a shot.

Watch out for fake glasses. Eclipse Seguro and the American Astronomical Society list models that they’ve vetted for compliance with the ISO standard.

“Online marketplaces are currently flooded with uncertified or counterfeit glasses” with fake ISO labels, which can cause permanent blind spots in seconds, Garcia Fernandez said.

Use a tripod for steady shots or if you plan to shoot for an extended time. To keep your gear from overheating as you wait for the big moment, grab a white towel to cover it up.

To prevent jostling your device when hitting the shutter, use a smart-watch shutter button app or set a timer to take the photo.

It’s tempting to make a TikTok or Instagram-friendly eclipse video. Perhaps you want a selfie video, narrating into the camera while the cosmic ballet between sun and moon plays out over your shoulder.

While you might think your vision isn’t at risk because you’re not looking at the sun, your phone’s screen could reflect harmful ultraviolet light, eye experts have warned.

Order restricts minors, AI & platforms

New Mexico judge orders new child-safeguard rules for Meta

WASHINGTON, Aug 8, (AP): In a landmark ruling against Meta, a New Mexico judge likened the company’s social media platforms to factories. The psychological harm to children who use Facebook and Instagram, he said, can be seen as their pollution.

Judge Bryan Biedscheid fined the company \$567 million in his ruling, but he also prescribed steps to clean up what he described as its byproducts. He ordered new safety measures, including a time limit of 90 hours per month for users under 18, AI chatbot restrictions, and mandatory warnings on the platforms.

How easily those features can be implemented, and how effective they could be at protecting young users from mental health harms, are unresolved questions. They also would apply only to children in New Mexico. Meta has no deadline to introduce them, and the company has said it will appeal the ruling.

But the judge’s order showed a possible path forward for other court fights around the country as Meta faces mounting legal, regulatory and public pressure to do more to protect young people.

The ruling came in the second phase of a trial in a lawsuit the state of New Mexico filed against the social media giant. The new financial penalty is in addition to the \$375 million in civil penalties that jurors ordered against Meta in March after determining the company knowingly harmed children’s mental health and concealed what it knew about child sexual exploitation on its platforms.

Meta said in a statement Thursday that it works to keep people safe on its platforms and has been transparent

about the challenges of identifying and removing bad actors and harmful content.

“We remain confident in our record of protecting teens online and will continue to defend ourselves against claims that misrepresent the facts,” the company said.

Many of the changes ordered by Biedscheid hinge on strong age-verification measures. The ruling says Meta must improve its age assurance models and tools in New Mexico and proactively request proof of age for users they know or estimate to be under 13.

What that proof of age could look like, however, is unclear.

Age verification “can be done well in a privacy-protective way, but it is not easy,” said Peter Ormerod, an associate professor of law at Villanova University.

Federal children’s privacy laws prevent Meta from applying age-verification tools to children under 13. The Children’s Online Privacy Protection Act means the court cannot order Meta to request children to submit personal data or be passively tracked online, even for age verification purposes.

Identifying which users are in New Mexico, and subject to the court-ordered protections, could also pose a challenge. Ormerod said Meta could likely check if a user is accessing the platform from an IP address associated with New Mexico, a solution “that works reasonably well enough.”

Meta has several safety tools already in place. Instagram Teen Accounts, for one, have built-in protections to limit who can contact teens and what content they can see, and give parents the ability to set time limits.



Left-right: Shaka Smith, a vegan influencer who’s politically an independent, poses for a portrait at his fast-food restaurant in Santa Monica, Calif., Thursday, Aug. 6, 2026. (AP)



Candidates use creators to reach niche voters through sponsored content

When influencer culture meets campaign politics

SACRAMENTO, Calif., Aug 8, (AP): Weeks before voting ended in California’s primary for governor, Los Angeles-based influencer Shaka Smith took to Instagram to tell his more than 700,000 followers whom he was voting for and why.

“Healthcare shouldn’t bankrupt you, housing should not feel impossible, polluters shouldn’t pass their bill to us and artists should not be replaced by AI,” Smith said. “That’s why I’m supporting Tom Steyer for governor.”

But Smith started the video with a disclaimer: “This is an ad, and honestly, I wish more political content said that first.” His caption specified that he was paid by Steyer’s campaign.

California is one of two states, along with Texas, that have passed policies requiring content creators to say if they’ve been paid by a political campaign to post, and the Golden State is considering cracking down by fining people who don’t.

Campaigns have long worked with celebrities and major influencers to win over voters, but now they are teaming up with smaller creators - sometimes with fewer than 100,000 followers - to reach more tailored audiences. That has sparked debates about whether disclosure rules for political advertisements should apply to content creators, who are expected to play prominent roles in the upcoming midterms and the 2028 presidential election.

“If you’re running for president and you are not currently trying to court some of these people or lining up your own people to act

as surrogates for you, you’re already behind,” said Mike Nellis, a Democratic strategist who worked for Kamala Harris’ presidential campaign.

Questions about transparency have been fueled by high-profile instances of influencers making content intended to change minds or votes without disclosing they were paid for it.

In 2022, the campaign of then-Senate candidate John Fetterman paid Nicole “Snooki” Polizzi of “Jersey Shore” to record a video teasing his GOP rival for leaving New Jersey before announcing his run in Pennsylvania. In 2023, content creators were paid by an influencer marketing agency with conservative ties to defend Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton, a Republican, after he was impeached for alleged bribery and other accusations of misconduct, according to the Texas Tribune. The payments weren’t clearly disclosed in either case.

Steyer, a Democratic billionaire who spent more than \$215 million of his own money in his unsuccessful bid for governor, took fire from rivals for paying content creators. He wasn’t the only hopeful in the race paying influencers, but he faced much of the blowback since he’d already been accused of trying to buy the election. Many of the creators who worked with Steyer’s campaign disclosed that they were paid, but the state’s campaign finance watchdog is investigating several other instances in which creators allegedly didn’t.

California Sen. Adam Schiff introduced federal legislation last

month, but it hasn’t received a vote yet. Some outside groups are urging the Federal Election Commission to pass its own rule.

California’s law requiring disclosure, passed in 2023, is difficult to enforce. The state’s campaign watchdog can seek a court order compelling an influencer to disclose that they were paid, but that can take months.

That prompted Democratic Assemblymember Marc Berman to write a new bill to penalize content creators and political committees if the creator fails to state they were compensated. The bill would give the state’s Fair Political Practices Commission the power to fine influencers and committees if they are found to have violated the law, allowing the commission to bypass the court process. They could face fines of up to \$5,000 per violation, according to the commission.

“Voters should have a right to know whether or not campaigns are paying for the messaging that they’re seeing,” Berman said.

Texas’ campaign watchdog passed a rule in 2024 requiring content creators to include disclaimers when they are paid for political advertisements, and the New York Legislature is considering a similar requirement. Other disclosure bills failed in recent years in Utah and Georgia.

Smith, the L.A. influencer, hadn’t committed to a candidate for governor when a trusted friend told him to look into Steyer. That friend had been paid to post about Steyer.

Smith liked Steyer’s promise to

increase taxes on billionaires and his refusal to accept donations from corporate political action committees.

He ended up doing two paid ads, both of which included compensation disclaimers that the Steyer campaign told him were a requirement.

Smith wouldn’t say exactly how much the campaign paid him, but he said it was in the thousands of dollars. He thinks the posts had an impact on his followers, with only a few detractors pushing back.

“They kind of trust my voice,” he said of his audience. “They knew that if I’m saying it, it’s at least something they should look into.”

Dustin Torreverde, a content creator in Southern California who hasn’t been paid by a political campaign for social media posts, said it’s important for influencers to be transparent with their audiences. But the bill could pose an unfair burden on creators who are just trying to make a living, he said.

“A lot of us are very small creators,” he said. “So if we were to get penalized and we have to get lawyers, stuff like that, it’s going to be very difficult for us.”

Adina Flores, a libertarian content creator in Northern California who votes for both parties, said influencers should have to disclose if they are paid and she generally supports penalties. She worries that some people may take money to post political content without doing a “deep dive into the candidate to make sure that’s somebody they should support.”



New Mexico Attorney General Raúl Torrez speaks during a rally to protect kids online on Capitol Hill in Washington, Wednesday, Jan. 31, 2024. (AP)

The Conversation

Parents’ stress may drive kids’ screen time more than other factors

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

By Enid A. Moreira, Florida International University; Daniel M. Bagner, Florida International University, and Shayl Griffith, Florida International University

It is 6 p.m. after a full workday. A tired parent is trying to prepare dinner and clean up the kitchen before their children’s evening routine implodes. A minor disagreement between the children quickly escalates into shouting and shoving.

The parent also suddenly remembers an email from their supervisor about an upcoming deadline. Quiet and a sense of control is an arm’s reach away. All the parent has to do is place a tablet in each child’s hands, knowing it will quickly stop their fighting.

I am a doctoral student of child and adolescent clinical psychology. My new research suggests that whether a parent reaches for the tablet during stressful moments de-

pends less on the child’s behavior and more on the adult’s ability to cope with the stress of a particular situation.

Screens have become an almost integral part of childhood and parenting. Nearly all U.S. children use or view screens every day, and 42% of children ages 2 to 4 have their own tablets.

The American Pediatric Association offers different screentime recommendations for children depending on their age. The organization recommends that parents not allow children ages 18 months to 2 years to use media by themselves and that they limit media use among children 2 to 5 to less than one hour per day.

Most young children do not meet these recommendations.

It is no surprise, then, that managing children’s screen use can be very stressful for parents.

Parenting a child comes with unique stressors, from small daily hassles like getting kids out the door on time for school to the bigger assignment of raising a functioning, happy and healthy human. These particular stressors that come with the job are what researchers call parenting stress.

Nearly 70% of parents in a 2020 national survey said that managing their child’s technology and social media use is a primary source of their parenting stress.



Parents’ level of stress weighs more heavily than their children’s actual behavior when it comes to setting screen time limits. (AP/Sigrid Olsson/PhotoAlto Agency RF Collections via Getty Images)

While research on children’s screen use is growing, most of it has focused on how a child’s behavior and temperament influence how much time they spend on screens.

Yet far less attention has gone to parents’ role in children’s media use.

In 2024, the U.S. surgeon general identified parenting stress as a public health concern.

Researchers, clinicians and policymakers were called to action to better understand parents’ needs, with the goal of supporting them in raising children and maintaining a healthy family.

Every day, caregivers make big and small decisions about their child’s media and screen use.

Researchers call these screen media parenting strategies. For example, caregivers may decide that kids can use a smartphone or tablet to speak with other family members or while they are traveling. Caregivers also often place time limits on how long their child can spend on screens each day or week.

My 2025 research set out to test parents’ stress in relation to their screen media parenting strategies. (AP)

An estimated 1 million Americans carry Lynch syndrome

Testing underway on vaccines to intercept brewing colon cancer before it takes root

WASHINGTON, Aug 8, (AP): Dr. Stacy Norton was only 7 years old when her mother died of colon cancer, one of several family members struck by aggressive tumors at unusually young ages. Decades later, Norton rolled up her sleeve to help test if a new kind of vaccine might protect her and her own children from cancer.

The Houston doctor is among an estimated 1 million Americans who have Lynch syndrome, a faulty gene passed from a parent that puts them at extremely high risk of colorectal cancer and more vulnerable to certain other cancers, too. They're often urged to get yearly colonoscopies - far more often than usual - that can spot and remove precancerous growths called polyps.

Now scientists are creating vaccines that aim to go further, teaching the immune system to intercept this type of brewing colon cancer before it turns into a full-fledged tumor. At least three potential Lynch syndrome vaccines are in development, including two in early clinical trials in the US and a third beginning in Britain.

The shot that Norton helped test appears promising enough that its lead researcher, Dr. Eduardo Vilar-Sanchez of the MD Anderson Cancer Center, expects a larger study to begin early next year.

"It gives me hope," said Norton, 59, of Houston Methodist Willowbrook Hospital. She had already survived a different Lynch-caused cancer and has two children in their 20s who inherited her mutation. If a vaccine pans out, "perhaps they won't have to have a colonoscopy every single year for the rest of their lives."

Everyone has what are called mismatch-repair genes, which are essentially spellcheckers to help fix DNA mistakes that can occur when our cells multiply. With Lynch syndrome, one of those genes can't do its job properly, making it harder for the body to stop a buildup of abnormalities that can lead to tumors, often before age 50.

Colorectal cancer is the most common consequence. The average person has a 5% risk of developing it during their lifetime. A Lynch carrier's risk can reach as high as 80% depending on which faulty gene they inherit, Vilar-Sanchez said.

Another big risk is endometrial, or uterine, cancer. Lynch carriers also are more likely to get other cancers including pancreatic, stomach, ovarian and certain skin cancers - and a kind of brain tumor that killed Norton's sister at age 25.

Norton knew some of her mother's relatives had also experienced colon cancer, but she was in her 40s before a gene test confirmed she has Lynch syndrome. She switched from every-so-often to yearly colonoscopies. As an



In this photo provided by Dr. Stacy Norton, she receives a trial vaccine for Lynch Syndrome at the MD Anderson Cancer Center Infusion Center in Houston, on April 11, 2023. (AP)

obstetrician/gynecologist familiar with other Lynch risks, Norton also decided to have a precautionary hysterectomy. Surgeons discovered early-stage cancer in her removed uterus.

Today there are two cancer-preventing vaccines, the HPV and hepatitis B shots that block infection from those tumor-causing viruses. But developing vaccines to prevent gene-caused cancer is more challenging than alerting the

body to foreign intruders like a virus.

Lynch-fueled growths "tend to accumulate hundreds of mutations that are going to generate proteins that are novel, not made by our normal cells," Vilar-Sanchez said. "You can train the immune system to recognize those proteins."

In a first-step study, Norton and 44 other Lynch carriers tested a vaccine made by Swiss biotech Nausom that teaches the immune system to spot 209 of those abnormalities in Lynch-caused precancers. That revved up tumor-eliminating T cells and a year later, colonoscopies showed fewer precancerous growths and no advanced polyps, the MD Anderson team reported in Nature Medicine.

"Can we even further stimulate the immune system" to keep up with Lynch syndrome-spurred tumor formation, asked Dr. John Marshall, a Georgetown University oncologist and adviser to the Colorectal Cancer Alliance who wasn't involved with the study. "This early paper suggests that yeah, maybe we can."

For the first time since 2014, Norton's own colonoscopies one and two years after vaccination were polyp-free. She's also part of a subset of study participants given a booster shot a year later; more data on that is expected this fall.

Oxford University researchers are beginning initial testing of a similar approach to attack Lynch-spurred precancers, a vaccine made by Massachusetts-based Moderna using the mRNA technology behind its COVID-19 shot.

And scientists are awaiting results from a slightly larger study comparing California-based ImmunityBio's Tri-Ad5 vaccine, which flags some different cancer markers, to a placebo.

About 158,000 people are diagnosed with colorectal cancer in the U.S. each year, most of them over 50. Cases in younger adults are increasing, though it isn't clear why.

Lynch syndrome affects about 1 in 279 people. While most don't know it, more may be learning they have the inherited disorder, Vilar-Sanchez said, as genetic testing is increasingly discussed with people with Lynch-related cancer in the family or who get certain tumors at young ages. That in turn can show if close relatives might also be at risk.

For the average person, U.S. guidelines call for routine colorectal cancer screening - with a colonoscopy or other kinds of tests - to begin at age 45. But at any age, get a checkup for symptoms such as blood in stool or rectal bleeding; changes in bowel habits such as diarrhea, constipation or narrowing of stool that lasts more than a few days; unintended weight loss; and cramps or abdominal pain.

FDA OK's Moderna's mRNA-based vaccine

New kind of flu shot on the way

WASHINGTON, Aug 8, (AP): The Food and Drug Administration has approved a new kind of flu vaccine for older people, the first made with the same mRNA technology that was key to ending the COVID-19 pandemic, manufacturer Moderna said.

The shot, named mFlusiva, is intended for adults age 50 or older. Other brands of flu shots already have begun arriving in pharmacies ahead of fall vaccination season, and Moderna said late Wednesday that it expects some of its new version to be available soon at select retailers.

While there already are multiple flu vaccine options in the U.S., including three specifically recommended for people age 65 or older, tens of thousands of Americans die from influenza every year and older adults are among the most vulnerable.

Flu vaccines must be updated annually to best match circulating strains of the virus. Vaccines made with the Nobel Prize-winning mRNA technology are faster to manufacture than other types, and experts say this additional option might help if the shape-shifting flu virus mutates in a way that requires suddenly brewing new doses.

Moderna said the FDA granted full approval for mFlusiva's use in people ages 50 to 64, based on a study of 40,000 people that found 27% fewer flu cases among people who got the new shot compared with those who got a different common flu vaccine brand.



The Food and Drug Administration seal is seen at the Hubert Humphrey Building Auditorium in Washington, April 22, 2025. (AP)

For people 65 or older, the Cambridge, Massachusetts-based manufacturer said the FDA granted what's called accelerated approval for the shot -- based on a smaller study showing it generated a strong immune response compared with an existing high-dose vaccine for seniors - while it conducts an additional study.

Moderna's data showed no major safety issues although the shot did cause some temporary reactions including injection site pain, fever, headache, tiredness and aches that occurred somewhat more than with today's flu shots. The FDA action comes after a highly unusual public dispute over mFlusiva earlier this year. A then-top FDA official blocked the company's application, a

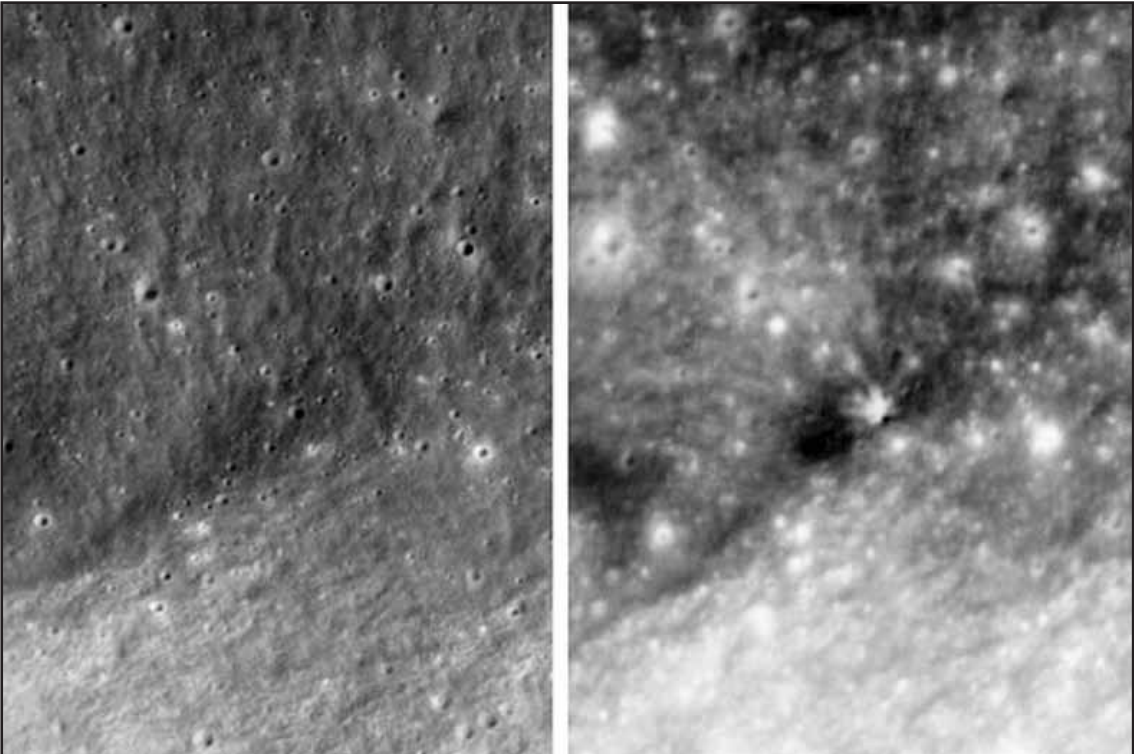
sign of the agency's heightened vaccine scrutiny under Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. Days later, the agency changed course after Moderna publicly challenged the ruling - and in June a panel of independent advisers to the FDA unanimously recommended the vaccine's approval.

Also:

NEW YORK: The Senate confirmed Dr. Erica Schwartz as director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, placing her in charge of a public health agency beleaguered by political meddling and low morale.

Schwartz was confirmed in a 51-44 vote. The 54-year-old becomes the 22nd leader of the Atlanta-based CDC, which is charged with protecting Americans from preventable health threats, and the agency's first confirmed director in nearly a year. Her resume includes medical and law degrees, a stint as deputy surgeon general, and a leadership position at the U.S. Coast Guard.

Schwartz's nomination appeared to be on shaky ground after a hearing before the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee last month. The chairman, Sen. Bill Cassidy, R-La., and others questioned whether she would be willing to stand up to Republican President Donald Trump's health secretary, Robert F. Kennedy Jr., if he ordered CDC to do something unsupported by science and good public health practice.



This combination of images provided by NASA and the Korea Aerospace Research Institute shows an area of the moon's surface before, left, Oct. 1, 2015, and after, right, on Aug 5, a SpaceX rocket segment collided with the moon. (AP)

Danuri captures before, after views of SpaceX rocket's moon crash

A South Korean satellite has captured the first pictures of the moon's fresh crash scene caused by a stray SpaceX rocket.

The Korea Aerospace Research Institute's Danuri spacecraft flew over the impact site soon after the Falcon 9 upper stage inadvertently plowed into the moon on Wednesday. Danuri made multiple passes, snapping photos from lunar orbit that were released by the space agency Thursday.

The terrain is noticeably darker where the rocket hit and carved out a crater, sending dust and rock everywhere. Korean space officials said Danuri gathered before and after shots.

NASA expects its Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter to fly over the crash site next week to view the aftermath. Elon Musk's SpaceX launched Danuri from Cape Canaveral in 2022.

The company also sent a pair of private lunar landers to the moon last year. The upper stage from that launch is what crashed into the moon this week at 5,400 mph (8,700 kph), placed on an accidental collision course by solar activity and gravity, according to SpaceX. (AP)

200 passengers in quarantine near Kinshasa after traveler dies with Ebola-like symptoms

BUNIA, Congo, Aug 8, (Agencies): Congolese health authorities held nearly 200 boat passengers in quarantine near Kinshasa after one traveler who was previously aboard the boat died with symptoms matching the Ebola virus.

Congo has been battling an Ebola outbreak since May that has been deemed the fastest in history in terms of transmission, with confirmed cases reaching 4,000, including over 1,800 deaths, according to Dr. Jean Kaseya, Director-General of Africa CDC.

The passenger had become sick and disembarked nearly three weeks ago in Pimu, in the province of Mongala, more than 1,000 kilometers (more than 600 miles) from Kinshasa along the Congo River, Kaseya said Thursday, adding that the capital has no confirmed Ebola case. The passenger later died.

Authorities did not give the current location of the boat other than to say that it was near the capital. They did not say if the nearly 200 remaining passengers were being held aboard the ship or in some location on land, nor how long they would be held. But they said they were awaiting test results.

"We decided to do that even if some of them didn't have symptoms because we want to make sure that we don't miss anything," Kaseya added.

Ebola is highly contagious and spreads in the human population through contact with bodily fluids such as vomit, blood or semen, and with contaminated surfaces and materials such as bedding and clothing.

News of the passenger's death caused panic in Kinshasa, which is far from the eastern region hit by the outbreak, the second-largest outbreak on record, behind the 2014-2016 West Africa outbreak that recorded more than 28,000 cases,



Wiza Bondele, (right), a health worker on the prevention and control team, seen at work in Ituri province, eastern Congo on Aug 5. (AP)

including over 11,000 deaths.

Authorities say 60-70% of new cases in the current outbreak are recorded outside of contacts being monitored, and that the outbreak is spreading at an "alarming" rate faster than efforts to track it.

Dozens of Congolese health workers at the epicenter in Ituri province, meanwhile, staged protests Thursday to demand payment for their wages, abandoning several health facilities and further disrupting critical care.

The health workers were protesting at the governor's office in Bunia, the capital of Ituri province, which accounts for nearly 90% of the Ebola cases in the country. They are the latest group to walk off their jobs since protests over pay issues began weeks ago.

The health workers, including nurses providing critical care to Ebola patients, said they haven't received wages and bonuses for their work fighting Ebola since the outbreak was declared in mid-May in one of Congo's most remote and

vulnerable areas ravaged by rebel conflict.

Also

YAOUNDE: Chad has concluded one of its largest health campaigns to date, with health officials reporting that more than seven million children were vaccinated against polio.

Abdoulaye Annour, director of vaccination, disease control and epidemiological surveillance, said that the campaign exceeded its goal of reaching six million children, ending up covering 110 percent of the target.

Annour said that more than 99 percent of households welcomed vaccination teams, and over 90 percent of vaccine refusals were resolved through outreach. Refugees, displaced people and other vulnerable groups were included in the effort.

Chad was declared polio-free by the World Health Organization (WHO) in 2016. However, cases of circulating vaccine-derived polio type 2 have since reappeared.

Genomics can help insect farmers avoid pitfalls of domestication

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

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By Christine Picard, Indiana University and Hector Rosche-Flores, Indiana University

Insects are becoming increasingly popular to grow on farms as feed for other animals, pet food and potentially as food for people. The process of bringing a wild animal into an artificial environment, known as domestication, comes with unique challenges. Luckily, there are important lessons to be learned from all the other animals people have domesticated over millennia.

As researchers who study how domesticating animals changes their genes, we believe that recognizing the vulnerabilities that come with domestication is important. Today's powerful biotechnology tools can help researchers anticipate and head off issues early on.

From grain domestication starting as far back as 12,000 years ago to today's high-tech, genome-based breeding strategies, humans have long bent nature to suit their purposes. By selectively breeding individual plants or animals that have desirable traits - be it appearance, size or behavior - humans have domesticated a whole host of species.

The same principle underlies all domestication attempts, from dogs to crops. A breeder identifies an individual with a desired trait - whether that's a dog's talent for tracking or a plant's ability to withstand pests. Then they breed it to confirm that the desired trait can be passed down to offspring. If it works, the breeder can grow lots of descendants in a lineage with the genomic advantage. People have made crops resilient to disease and environmental challenges, docile cows that yield more milk or meat, large-breasted poultry and cute dogs.

Insect domestication is also far from new. People have reared silkworms (*Bombyx mori*) to produce silk for over 5,000 years. But selective breeding and isolation from wild relatives have led to their inability to fly, dependence on one food source and need for assistance to reproduce. As a result, silkworms are wholly reliant on humans for survival, and the original species doesn't exist anymore.

Similarly, people have maintained colonies of the western honeybee (*Apis mellifera*) for pollination and honey production for centuries. But bees are at risk due to colony collapse disorder, a phenomenon where worker bees disappear from seemingly healthy hives. The causes of colony collapse disorder are unknown; researchers are investigating disease and pesticides as possible factors.

Now the insect agriculture industry has set its sights on

domesticating some other insects as a source of sustainably farmed protein for other animals or people.

Insects such as the black soldier fly (*Hermetia illucens*) and the mealworm (*Tenebrio molitor*) can grow on existing organic waste streams. Rearing them on organic farm and food waste circularizes the agricultural system and reduces the environmental footprint of growing proteins.

But these insects will need to be grown at scale. Modern agriculture relies on monocultures of species that allow for uniformity in size and synchronized growth and harvest. Domesticating wild insects will be necessary to turn them into farmed animals.

Chickens today grow faster and bigger than ever. But factory-farmed animals are genetically very homogeneous. Moreover, people take care of everything for these domesticated animals. They have easy access to food and are given antibiotics and vaccines for their health and safety.

Consequently, industrially-farmed chickens have lost a lot of their immune abilities. Building these strong disease-fighting proteins requires a lot of energy. Since their spotless, controlled environments protect them, those immune genes are just not needed. The energy their bodies would typically use to protect themselves can instead be used to grow bigger. In the wild, individuals with faulty immune genes would likely be killed by pathogens, quickly wiping these bad genes out from the population. But in a domesticated environment, such individuals can survive and pass on potentially terrible genes.

The H5N1 bird flu provides a recent example of what can go wrong when a homogeneous population of domesticated animals encounters a dangerous pathogen. When disease broke out, the poor immune systems of domesticated chickens cracked under the pressure. The disease can spread quickly through large facilities, and eventually all chickens there must be euthanized. Weak immune systems aren't the only reason the bird flu spread like it did.

Domestication often involves growing large numbers of a single species in small concentrated areas, referred to as a monoculture. All the individuals in a monoculture are roughly the same, both physically and in their genes, so they all have the same susceptibilities.

Banana cultivars are one example. Banana plants grown in the early 1900s were all descendants of a single clone, named Gros Michel. But when the deadly Panama disease fungus swept through, the plants had no defenses and the cultivar was decimated. Banana growers turned to the Cavendish variety, grown in the largest banana farms today. The banana industry remains vulnerable to the same kind of risk that took down Gros Michel. A new fungal strain is on the rise, and scientists are rushing to head off a global Cavendish banana collapse. (AP)

Players to gain major league equity, says CEO O’Neil

LIV Golf has lead investor and planning ahead for another season

WASHINGTON, Aug 8, (AP): LIV Golf CEO Scott O’Neil announced an agreement Wednesday with a lead investor that would allow the rival league to forge ahead without the backing of Saudi funding while making players major equity holders.

“So many of them came because this was a good opportunity for them to make some money, and this second bite at the apple is equity instead of cash,” O’Neil said at a news conference at Trump Bedminster, site of this week’s LIV Golf New York event.

O’Neil was short on details, starting with the identity of the investor and how much money was involved. He said the lead investor “has signed a term sheet approved by our board, which will carry and fund LIV going forward.”

“It’s very good news for all of us,” O’Neil said.

O’Neil said LIV is getting “strong interest” from more than a dozen other parties who would be minority investors as the league tries to survive.

“We don’t need them, but we have the opportunity to do it,” he said of other investors.

LIV Golf New York is the penultimate individual event in a season that has been marked by upheaval, particularly the stunning announcement in March that the Public Investment Fund of Saudi Arabia - the financial muscle of LIV since it began - is withdrawing funding after 2026.

One tournament in New Orleans already has been scrapped, and there are serious doubts the season-ending team event in Michigan on Aug. 27-30 will be played, particularly after reports the tournament has not even started preparing for it.

“We have not made any final formal decisions and hope to in the coming weeks,” O’Neil said.

LIV Golf, which launched in 2022, has spent more than \$5 billion on the league. That includes some of the nine-figure bonuses to lure top players like Brooks Koepka, Dustin Johnson, Bryson DeChambeau, Jon Rahm and Phil Mickelson.



Captain Bryson DeChambeau, center right, of Crushers GC hits from the first tee during the second round of LIV Golf United Kingdom in Rocester, England. (AP)

Prize funds were \$20 million, with an additional \$5 million for the team component.

But it all began to fall apart earlier this year. Koepka was let out of his contract and returned to the PGA Tour, and Patrick Reed chose not to renew his deal. He is leading the European tour points list and will be eligible to return to the PGA Tour next year.

Lucas Herbert, who has won twice on LIV Golf this year, said Tuesday his management has been in touch with PGA Tour officials.

“If LIV were to go away and you’ve got nowhere to play, I think ultimately you need somewhere to play as a professional golfer. So we’re just doing due diligence,” Herbert said.

O’Neil met with team captains on Tuesday, and DeChambeau led a player-only meeting later in the afternoon, though none of the players shared details.

O’Neil said he expected to finalize terms with the lead investor in the next few weeks with the goal of getting it done in September. The plan for what is being referred to as “LIV Golf 2.0” is for 10 team events each year, five of them in the United States and five others around the world.

It also wants to stage events leading into the majors and having a schedule that allows its player to compete on other circuits. Rahm and Tyrrell Hatton already play on the European tour. The PGA Tour still has a one-year ban on anyone competing on LIV.

The \$20 million prize money - now matched by the PGA Tour at its signature events - will have to be substantially less going forward. Even with a lead investor, questions remain whether the biggest names will stick around.

“I think we have enough support from enough players, and we have such an interesting format and global format, I think we’ll do quite well in getting the right stars for this game,” O’Neil said.

Among speculation is whether LIV would file for bankruptcy as it sought a new structure.

“When you’re in a situation that is a bit fluid, where there’s a bit of uncertainty, where there’s some challenges and maybe some surprises here or there around the corner, we want to make sure that we are giving ourselves the best opportunity to do what’s best for this organization to carry forward,” O’Neil said. “We’ll consider the best options at that time. That’s not a decision we have to make, and we’ll continue to do what’s best.”



FIFA’s embattled president Gianni Infantino.

‘There is no trust now’

Norway’s soccer federation calls on Infantino to resign over failed plan

MANCHESTER, England, Aug 8, (AP): Norway’s soccer federation wants Gianni Infantino to step down immediately, piling more pressure on FIFA’s embattled president.

Infantino is facing a revolt after his failed plan to sell stakes in the World Cup.

The Norwegian federation held a meeting on Thursday and president Lise Klaveness said the decision had been made to ask Infantino to resign.

“We decided that there is no trust in Infantino now,” Klaveness told the Guardian. “We have been worried consistently and there has been one more step in worrying direction every year, every part of the year. The trust is now gone for us, there is no way back for Infantino.”

The announcement is the latest blow for Infantino as the fallout continues over his controversial plan to sell profits in the World Cup through a commercial subsidiary called the FIFA Forward Enterprise (FFE).

European soccer’s governing body UEFA said Thursday its threat to boycott the World Cup and other FIFA competitions remained in place despite FIFA abandoning and apologizing for its failed plan.

It reiterated its stance that it had lost confidence in Infantino.

Earlier this week Infantino appeared to have held off the potential of an internal revolt during a summit meeting with top staff in Rabat, Morocco.

FIFA said the president had been given the full support of those in attendance.

But UEFA’s response, followed by Norway’s direct call for him to resign shows the sense of anger from Europe, in particular, remains strong.

The English Football Association has also withdrawn its support for Infantino’s re-election next March.

He did, however, receive backing from Mexico’s federation.

Norwegian broadcaster NRK said the national federation would also file a new complaint with FIFA’s ethics committee, which will include FFE, the peace prize awarded to Donald Trump and the suspension of Folarin Balogun’s one-match ban at the World Cup.

“We have reached a situation where extraordinary measures are needed to create lasting change,” Klaveness said.

Best of the Rest

Al-Salmiya signs Gabon international Sambissa: Al-Salmiya has completed its foreign-player roster with the signing of Gabon international winger David Sambissa from Turkish club Istanbulspor ahead of the new season.

The 30-year-old joins Congolese defender Tresor Tshibwabwa, Uzbek Shakhzod Azmiddinov, Bahraini Abdullah Yusuf and Syrian Mahmoud Al-Aswad as the club’s foreign players. (AP)

Brighton sends Buonanotte on loan to Elche: Brighton midfielder Facundo Buonanotte will play for Spanish team Elche this season in what is the Argentinian playmaker’s fourth loan spell since joining the Premier League club in January 2023.

The 21-year-old Buonanotte, who signed with Brighton from Rosario Central, was loaned to Leicester for the 2024-25 season and split last season between Chelsea and Leeds. Buonanotte played regularly for Leicester but had trouble getting minutes at both Chelsea and Leeds. (AP)

UNCASVILLE, Conn., Aug 8, (AP): **Kennedy Burke scored 15 points, Brittney Griner blocked a 3-point attempt at the buzzer, and the Connecticut Sun rallied to beat the Phoenix Mercury 75-72.**

Connecticut guard Leila Lacan went 1 of 2 at the free-throw line with 32.2 seconds left for a 73-70 lead, and added two free throws on the Sun’s next possession to regain a three-point advantage.

Phoenix inbounded with 12.9 seconds left with no timeouts and Kelsey Plum’s 3-point attempt was blocked by Griner at the top of the key, sealing the win.

Aaliyah Edwards added 14 points off the bench for Connecticut (8-23), which did not have a starter score in double figures. Griner finished with five points, seven rebounds and two blocks against her former team.

Plum led Phoenix (12-21) with 25 points. Kahleah Copper added 16 and Alyssa Thomas had 10 points, eight rebounds and five assists. Phoenix struggled at the free throw line, going 13 of 23.

Connecticut trailed by 16 points in the first half before opening the third quarter on an 11-4 run. Then, the Sun took their first lead at 47-46 with 3:05 left in the third.

Phoenix was held to just nine points in the third after shooting just 4 of 16 from the field, including 0 of 6 from 3-point range, with three turnovers.

Connecticut honored Thomas before the game, retiring the No. 25 jersey she wore when playing for the Sun for 11 years. The team is moving to Houston next year, so the Sun have been honoring many of their former great players and coaches this season.

Mystics 79, Dream 74

In Washington, Shakira Austin had 21 points, 11 rebounds and five blocks, Kiki Iriafen added 15 points, and the Washington Mystics beat the Atlanta Dream for their sixth straight victory.

Washington had a 64-48 lead early in the fourth quarter before Atlanta closed within 77-74 with 32.3 seconds to go. But, Austin got a friendly roll on a contested shot in the lane to seal it.



Minnesota Lynx guard Kayla McBride (21) is called for an offensive foul against Los Angeles Sparks guard Monique Akoa Makani (1) in the first quarter of a WNBA basketball game in Minneapolis, Minn. (AP)

Valkyries 94, Wings 76



Los Angeles Sparks guard Monique Akoa Makani (1) scores on a jump shot against Minnesota Lynx guard Courtney Williams (10) late in the fourth quarter of a WNBA basketball game in Minneapolis, Minn. (AP)

Washington (18-12) current win streak matches the franchise-record six-game run by the 2019 championship team.

Sonia Citron had 14 points, rookie Cotie McMahon added 11 and Cassandra Prosper scored 10 off the bench for Washington. Rookie Lauren Betts had a career-high 11 rebounds. The Mystics set a franchise record for blocks in any half with nine in the first and had a franchise-record 12 overall.

Allisha Gray scored 26 points to reach 20-plus points for the 15th time this season for Atlanta (19-12). The Dream have lost back-to-back games following a five-game win streak. Rhyne Howard added 19 points despite playing with five fouls throughout the fourth quarter.

Angel Reese grabbed 16 rebounds and scored seven points on 1-for-12 shooting. The Dream shot a season-worst 32.5% (25 of 77).

Washington Wizards teammates Bilal Coulibaly and Kyshawn George sat courtside.

finished with 11 points and 10 rebounds as Golden State Valkyries beat the Dallas Wings.

The Valkyries (22-9) had a franchise-high 27 assists and extended their winning streak to three games in front of a crowd of 16,444 at American Airlines Center, home of the NBA’s Dallas Mavericks. The Wings will play their 2027 home games at the arena.

Golden State led 44-36 at half-time and opened the third period with a 10-2 run. The Valkyries shot 35% from 3-point distance and went 16 for 18 from the line.

Paige Bueckers led the Wings with 17 points, including 10 in the first quarter. It is the fourth time this season that she has scored in the double digits in the opening frame. Aziaha James added 13 points for Dallas, and Alanna Smith scored 11. Jessica Shepard had 11 rebounds.

The Wings (19-13) played without Azzi Fudd, who warmed up but was ruled out due to right knee soreness.

Emotional farewell

Thomas honored as Sun retires her No. 25 jersey

UNCASVILLE, Conn., Aug 8, (AP): Alyssa Thomas was the engine that made Connecticut go when she played for the Sun for 11 years.

The franchise that she helped reach two WNBA Finals and six consecutive playoff semifinals honored her, retiring her No. 25 jersey. The team is moving to Houston next year, so the Sun have been honoring many of their former great players and coaches this season.

Thomas was serenaded pregame with chants of “AT” from the crowd, which also gave her a standing ovation when the short ceremony started.

“What a heck of a ride we had here. This place truly meant something to me,” Thomas said to the crowd. “It was a great 11 years. Sad to see it go. I will never forget the memories, the hard fought battles we had here. Bottom of my heart thank you. I love you guys.”

The Sun spoiled Thomas’ night, beating Phoenix 75-72. Thomas had 10 points, eight rebounds, five assists and four steals, but was 4 for 10 from the foul line.

Thomas left Connecticut for Phoenix after the 2024 season. She was the heart of Connecticut after the team got her in 2014 in a trade on draft night that was held at Mohegan Sun.

She was the centerpiece of the franchise for so many years, playing through injuries, including torn rotator cuffs.

She is the team’s all-time leader in points, rebounds, games, minutes and assists. She was affectionately known as the engine by the fans for her work ethic and how she made the team go.

“I think it’s forever my nickname. That’s what everyone knows me by,” Thomas said. “It definitely started here. Before I got here they won a lot of basketball games and you know I was a part of the rebuilding, getting it back to where it was.”

Thomas wasn’t sure before the game how she would handle the emotions of the ceremony. She appeared to get a little choked up, but made it through without crying. That was something her partner and teammate DeWanna Bonner was worried about.

“It’s so funny because we were warming up and I was bothering her, like dancing and stuff. She’s like leave me alone right now. I got a lot going on,” Bonner said.

Bonner, like all of her Phoenix teammates, wore a No. 25 shirt in warm-ups to honor Thomas. Bonner’s was bedazzled.

“It’s crazy to think that some people are saying they’re playing one last time, because they’re retiring,” Thomas said. “So it’s definitely sad. I know how much this franchise meant to this fan base and how much they love basketball.”

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Announcement

Mr. Sabah Mubarak Al Jalawi, in his capacity of Restructuring Trustee (أمين إعادة الهيكلة) of HOT Engineering and Construction Co. K.S.C.C (the Company) as per the court resolution issued by the Bankruptcy Judge on 27/07/2026

(Application No. 5 /20226 – Restructuring) opening the Restructuring Proceedings of the Company, invites and requests hereby all the Company's creditors to present and register their claims along with relevant supporting documents within a period of (1) one month from the date of this announcement according to Article 105 of the Bankruptcy Law No 71/2020.

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Email: sabah.aljalawi@kwaqa.org

Phone: 99744026

‘I’m at the point of my life where I need a challenge like this’

Arsenal lands Guimarães from Newcastle ahead of Premier League title defense

LONDON, Aug 8, (AP): Arsenal completed the signing of Brazil midfielder Bruno Guimarães from Newcastle.

The Premier League champion paid a reported 75 million pounds (\$101 million) for Guimarães, who signed a long-term deal at the Emirates.

“I’m very excited,” Guimarães said. “I’m at the point of my life where I need a challenge like this. I want to win trophies, I want to make history and I think I’m in the right place to do it.”

Newcastle did not want to sell its captain, but the 28-year-old Guimarães had told the club he wanted to leave.

Newcastle signed Guimarães

from Ligue 1 club Lyon in January 2022 and he swiftly established himself as a talisman for the team, as well as one of the most influential midfielders in the Premier League.

Guimarães helped Newcastle win the English League Cup in 2025 - the club’s first major domestic trophy in 70 years - and also played a pivotal role in the team twice qualifying for the Champions League.

He joins an Arsenal midfield anchored by Declan Rice as the team bids for back-to-back Premier League titles.

Guimarães has made 48 appearances for Brazil, including at the recent World Cup. He won a gold

medal at the 2020 Olympic Games in Tokyo.

“It’s massive what I have done so far, but I want more. I want to win for Arsenal. I want to win more trophies in my career, and I think I’m in the right place, at my peak at 28 years old,” Guimarães said.

“I want to put my name in the club history. Someday, when I leave, I want players to come here and say I want to do exactly what Bruno did for the club.”

Guimarães’ departure is a further blow to Newcastle after star players Anthony Gordon and Sandro Tonali also left during this transfer window. Eddie Howe stepped down as coach at the end of last



In this file photo Newcastle’s Bruno Guimaraes reacts after a Premier League soccer match between Newcastle United and Manchester City in Newcastle, England. (AP)

Howe was replaced by Matthias Jaissle.

“This is one of the toughest decisions of my life,” Guimarães said in a statement on Newcastle’s website. “When I arrived, the club was in a challenging position and I am incredibly proud of what we achieved together. I fell in love with this place. I really mean that.

“This move is very tough because Newcastle means so much to me, but I wanted to experience something new in my life. I feel ready for a new challenge for myself and my family. I had a very positive conversation with Matthias Jaissle, and I leave knowing the club is in very good hands.”

Guimarães will continue his tradition of wearing shirt number 39 - the dispatch number of his father’s taxi in Rio de Janeiro.

“It means everything to me. I have the tattoo of the 39 as well,” Guimarães said. “My father was a taxi driver in Brazil for more than 20 years. The taxi, of course, gave me everything for my family, the place we live, the food, my clothes, everything.

“So when I got the chance to sign to a top club in Brazil, I asked my father which number I should take and he said 39. I was upset a little bit because I wanted to take the 97. He said: ‘No, no, take the 39. The 39 gave you everything.’”

Australia ‘holds off’ Japan rally for win on Les’ debut



All Blacks’ Peter Lakai, center, breaks away from Stormers’ players during a friendly rugby match between Stormers and All Blacks, in Cape Town, South Africa. (AP)

All Blacks begin South Africa tour with flattering victory

OSAKA, Japan, Aug 8, (AP): Australia held on for a tight 35-32 win over Japan on Saturday, in Les Kiss’ first match in charge.

The Wallabies were forced to dig deep after a first-half red card for Miles Amatosero, battling the heat and a strong comeback from Japan to emerge victorious.

Kiss took over from Joe Schmidt as Wallabies head coach last month after Australia went 1-2 in the Nations Championship, finishing the first phase with a win over Italy following losses to Ireland and France.

For Australia’s two-test series against Japan, Kiss included only one uncapped player, center Isaac Henry, recalled big, versatile Reds forward Lukhan Salakaia-Loto and left out veteran James Slipper.

The temperature stayed close to 30 C (86 F) throughout the game and the Wallabies were forced to scramble after Amatosero was red-carded in the 32nd minute for a dangerous cleanout on Warner Deans. Amatosero was initially shown a yellow card but that was upgraded just before the break, which the teams entered locked at 14-14.

Tries from Max Jorgensen and Fraser McReight early in the second half helped Australia build a nine-point lead but Japan steadily ate into that advantage with a pair of penalties from Takuro Matsunaga.

The quality of the Wallabies’ bench proved the difference as it

The scoreline flattered a scratch All Blacks side which was fa-



Australia’s Harry Potter, center, vies for the ball against Japan during the second half of their rugby match in Higashi Osaka, western Japan. (AP)

allowed the visitors to keep up the pressure on Japan, and Taniela Tupou crashed over to give Australia a 10-point lead with 10 minutes remaining.

Japan captain Deans set up a grandstand finish when he found a way over, reducing the lead to three, but Australia held on.

Eddie Jones, the former Wallabies head coach, is in his second stint in charge at Japan.

Meanwhile, New Zealand’s first full-scale tour of South Africa in 30 years began with an underwhelming 38-21 win over the Stormers.

vored by at least 30 points.

The makeshift Stormers in pre-season mode rallied twice to tie the score, which was knotted at 14 until 13 minutes to go. When the Stormers lost their second scrum-half and had no more reserve backs, the patched-up backline was ruthlessly exposed by New Zealand, which piled on three tries in the last eight minutes.

But the result papered over a performance that was blighted by ill-discipline - three yellow cards - and struggles with the Stormers’ scrum and maul. The All Blacks overcame those with six tries to

three by the Stormers in front of a non-sell-out crowd of 47,130.

The good news for the tourists was the injuries appeared limited to Billy Proctor’s shoulder, seven players made their first appearance in the black jersey this year, and two more debuted off the bench; prop Siale Lauaki and inside back Josh Jacob.

The standout players in Cape Town Stadium were Stormers fly-half Yaqeen Ahmed, who looked serene in his first-class debut at age 20, and flanker Deon Fourie, the dynamo who will be 40 next month.

No All Black seemed to push a persuasive case to start in the much-anticipated four-test series that begins in two weeks. There will be big pre-planned changes in the lineup to play the Sharks in Durban on Tuesday.

“We know we can be a lot better and we’ve only got to wait four days to get another crack at it,” All Blacks coach Dave Rennie said.

New Zealand was brilliant out of the blocks with cleverly worked breaks for Peter Lakai and Leroy Carter. Hooker Samisoni Taukei’aho scored the tour’s first try from a lineout drive in the fifth minute. Beauden Barrett converted then dribbled to the tryline only to knock on under pressure.

But for the next 20 minutes they were pinned in their half by the Stormers thanks to a string of penalties - starting with the first of three against New Zealand tight-head Pasilio Tosi for scrum collapses.



In this file photo, San Diego FC midfielder Hirving Lozano (11) plays during the second half of MLS soccer’s Western Conference semifinal against Minnesota United in San Diego. (AP)

Messi’s father and longtime agent, dies at 68

MONTEVIDEO, Uruguay, Aug 8, (AP): Jorge Messi, the father of soccer star and Argentina captain Lionel Messi, died Saturday at a hospital in the central Argentina city of Rosario. He was 68.

The Rosario-based Club Atlético Newell’s Old Boys announced his death in a social media post that said he had undergone treatment in recent months for an unspecified illness. The post described him as “the pillar and the person who, with vision, rigor and affection, supported the career of the best player of all time, alongside his wife, Celia Cuccitini.”

The South American Football Confederation, CONMEBOL, in a statement also offered its condolences “with respect and affection for Lionel.”

Lionel Messi led Argentina to a runner-up finish in this year’s World Cup. In the team’s first match, against Algeria, he was visibly emotional after scoring the first of his three goals. He said later that he wept for “a reason unrelated to sports.”

“I went through some difficult, complicated days,” he said. “I am grateful to the delegation, to all my teammates, because they were always by my side wishing me strength so that I would be OK.”

Media reports at the time outraged the Messi



Jorge Messi

family, which days later released a statement confirming that “Jorge is experiencing a health issue,” without specifying the nature of his condition.

“A person’s health and the peace of mind of their loved ones should not be the subject of speculation or irresponsible media interest,” according to the statement, which also expressed “discomfort at the lack of sensitivity, respect and scruples with which some people have treated a strictly private and family matter.”

Jorge Messi was a chemical technician and worked as a steelworker. He played soccer as a midfielder and reached the youth ranks of Newell’s Old Boys but had to abandon the sport to complete his mandatory military service in Argentina.

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NEWS



Javier Alessandro Mariona of Philippines, left, and Muhammad Faris Danish Bin Asrul of Malaysia fight for the ball during a final group B soccer match of the 2026 Hyundai ASEAN Cup in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Malaysia beat the Philippines to reach AFF Cup semifinals. (AP)

Sports

Tour represents important opportunity for refs to gain international experience

Kuwaiti handball referees head to Slovenia and Hungary for season preparation



The delegation of Kuwaiti handball referees.

By Khaled Al-Enezi
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff
KUWAIT CITY, Aug 8: A delegation of Kuwaiti handball referees left for Slovenia to participate in the Challenge Tournament before heading to Hungary for the Cell Cup, as part of an intensive preparation program ahead of the new sports season.

The participation is designed to provide the referees with valuable international exposure and the opportunity to officiate a large number of matches against teams with different playing styles and technical standards. The experience is expected to sharpen their decision-making and improve their ability to handle a wide range of match situations.

The program also includes a physical training camp aimed at enhancing fitness and overall physical readiness. Maintaining a high level of fitness is crucial for referees to keep pace with the action and make accurate decisions throughout a match.

Alongside the physical preparations, the referees will attend technical and academic lectures covering the latest amendments and updates to the international handball rules. The sessions will also examine and analyze different refereeing cases, helping to ensure consistency in the interpretation and application of the rules.

International referees Ahmed Al-Mutawa and Abdulrahman Al-Mulla are part of the international lecturers' team. They will contribute to the academic and technical sessions, drawing on their extensive experience in international competitions to share their knowledge with the participating referees.

The European tour represents an important opportunity for the Kuwaiti referees to gain international experience, interact with different refereeing schools and further develop their physical, technical and theoretical skills.

The program underlines the growing focus on strengthening handball refereeing in Kuwait. With the game continuing to evolve, referees must keep pace with changes to the laws while maintaining high physical and technical standards to ensure they are fully prepared for the demands of the new season.

Al-Sahel regains league lead

Promotion race heats up

By Hassan Mosa
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff
KUWAIT CITY, Aug 8: With just four rounds remaining in the First Division League, the battle for promotion to the Premier League has intensified, with Al-Sahel, Yarmouk, Al-Sulaibikhat and Al-Jazeera competing for the two available promotion spots for the 2026-27 season.



Players fighting for the ball during the First Division match between Khaitan and Yarmouk.

Al-Sahel reclaimed the top spot after capitalizing on dropped points by Yarmouk and Al-Sulaibikhat. The Abu Halifa-based side secured a crucial 2-0 victory over Sporty in the 17th round to move to 37 points.

The victory was particularly important for Al-Sahel, which had been held to draws in its previous two matches. Those results against Khaitan and Burgan cost the team four points and allowed its rivals to move ahead temporarily.

Yarmouk first-team manager Abdulaziz Al-Failakawi expressed disappointment after his side was held to a goalless draw by Khaitan. "We wasted three valuable points that were within our reach," Al-Failakawi said, noting that Yarmouk had created numerous clear chances but failed to convert them.

OCA, Caribbean Oly Committees strengthen sports cooperation

MADRID, Aug 8: The Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) and the Association of National Olympic Committees of the Caribbean signed a cooperation agreement in Barcelona, Spain, aimed at strengthening sporting ties between Asia and the Caribbean.



OCA President Sheikh Joaan bin Hamad Al Thani and Keith Joseph, President of the Association of National Olympic Committees of the Caribbean, sign the six-year agreement.

OCA President Sheikh Joaan bin Hamad Al Thani and Keith Joseph, President of the Association of National Olympic Committees of the Caribbean, signed the six-year agreement, which will remain in effect from 2026 through 2032, with the possibility of an extension by mutual consent.

The agreement covers the exchange of expertise in sports event organization, athlete development and sports management. It also includes plans to hold joint seminars, conferences and other scientific and educational sports programs.

Kuwait opens campaign against Saudi Arabia

Kuwait volleyball season resumes Oct 22 as Arab U-17 Championship begins in Bahrain

By Khaled Al-Enezi
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff
KUWAIT CITY, Aug 8: The Kuwait Volleyball Federation will resume the 2025-26 domestic season on Oct. 22, following the conclusion of the Arab Volleyball Championship in Bahrain, scheduled for Oct. 8-18.

The decision was taken at the federation's latest board meeting to allow the Kuwait national team to compete in the Arab championship before domestic competitions resume. The remaining local fixtures had previously been postponed due to the prevailing situation in the region.

Federation Secretary-General Talal Al-Nimsh said the Arab Volleyball Federation had officially confirmed the tournament dates, prompting the federation to meet with the national team's technical staff, headed by Argentine coach Julian and assistant coach Zaid Al-Kadhimi, to finalize the preparation program.



Kuwait U-17 team coach talks to players during training session.