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PM reviews Kuwait's compliance with FATF requirements

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 20, (KUNA): His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah on Thursday chaired a meeting on the observations and requirements of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF).

The meeting discussed the latest developments related to cooperation and coordination among various relevant state authorities to ensure compliance with the anti-money laundering and counter-terrorist financing framework as a strategic priority, while enhancing Kuwait's readiness and fulfillment of international requirements and standards.

The meeting was attended by Minister of Justice Nasser Yousef Al-Sumait, Minister of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy Dr. Subaih Abdulaziz Al-Mukhaizeem, Minister of Commerce and Industry Osama Khaled Al-Boudai, Advisor at the Prime Minister's Diwan Sheikh Dr. Basel Hamoud Malik Al-Sabah, Director General of the Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority (KDIPA) Sheikh Dr. Meshal Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Central Bank of Kuwait Governor Basel Ahmad Al-Haroun, and a number of other senior officials.



HH the PM chairs a meeting on the observations and requirements of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF).

PM Diwan photo

KUWAIT ENDS AUTOMATIC VISA EXTENSIONS SEPT 1

New rules 'reset' expatriate return

Sahel sets leave permit expiry dates

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 20: Kuwait will discontinue automatic extensions granted to entry visas and leave permits and reinstate their legally prescribed validity periods effective September 1, 2026, the Ministry of Interior announced.

Under the new measures, the automatic extension of all categories of visit visas for individuals currently in Kuwait will end, with the standard legal validity periods, procedures and regulations coming back into effect.

For residents currently outside the country, the regular validity periods for leave permits will likewise resume.

However, residents who departed Kuwait on or before August 31, 2026, will continue to benefit from the additional exceptional extension, in accordance with the applicable regulations.

The Ministry clarified that the residency permit status certificate issued through the Sahel app will be the official reference for determining the expiration date of a resident's leave permit.

Residents abroad are therefore required to return to Kuwait within the period indicated on the certificate.

The Ministry of Interior called on all concerned to comply with the applicable laws, regulations and procedures to avoid any violations.

Kuwait, US chiefs discuss defense cooperation boost

WASHINGTON, Aug 20, (KUNA): Chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Dan Caine and Kuwait's visiting Army Chief of Staff Lieu. Gen. Khaled Al-Shuraiaan on Wednesday discussed means to develop bilateral military cooperation.

The meeting, which was held at the US Department of War (Pentagon), was part of the Kuwaiti army chief's official visit to the US, said the Kuwaiti Army General Staff in a press release.

Both generals discussed bilateral relations, the existing strategic partnerships and means to promote them to serve common interests, according to the release.

During the meeting, the two sides also tackled ongoing efforts aimed at consolidating regional security and stability.



Kuwait Army General Staff photo
Chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Dan Caine with Kuwait's visiting Army Chief of Staff Lieu. Gen. Khaled Al-Shuraiaan.

KD 3,000 rule: 'declare' it or face penalties

By Munif Naif
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 20: The Kuwait General Administration of Customs (KGAC) issued instructions regarding the declaration of cash, currency and negotiable financial instruments in the possession of travelers entering or leaving Kuwait.

According to KGAC, travelers are obligated to declare cash or negotiable financial instruments valued at KD3,000 or higher, or their equivalent in foreign currency.

It warned that failure to declare the specified amounts will subject the owner to penalties stipulated by Anti-Money Laundering and Financing Terrorism Law No. 106/2013.

Knetco, Skyports ink MoU for future air network

Kuwait enters advanced air mobility race

By Inaas Awadh

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 20: Kuwaiti digital communications and advanced infrastructure solutions provider Knetco signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Skyports Infrastructure to develop advanced air mobility (AAM) infrastructure in the country.

According to SUAS News, Skyports will act as the specialist partner of Knetco in Kuwait, focusing on helipad development, market development, stakeholder coordination, and exploring future business opportunities.



Photo shows AI-generated image of an air taxi.



Photo by Samer Shqair

Cars inch through a wall of dust on a Kuwait highway Thursday, as blowing dust and sand transform the road into a treacherous passage.

47°C weekend as Suhail promises relief

Kuwait heatwave to ease from Aug 24

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 20, (Agencies): The Al-Ujairi Scientific Center announced that the heatwave will subside and temperatures will begin to drop from Aug 24, coinciding with the start of the Suhail season, which lasts 52 days — until Oct 14, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

In a press statement, the center revealed that the country will experience changes in temperatures with the rising of the Suhail star, and rain is expected as humidity levels increase, coinciding with the final days of the Al-Kulaibin season.

The center predicted that temperatures during the Suhail season will fall below 50 degrees Celsius, accompanied by cooler nights and continuous high humidity, particularly in coastal areas.

It explained that the usual signs of the rising of the Suhail star include cooler weather and a break in the heatwave, along with southeasterly winds that ease the hot and dry winds, and bring more humid conditions.

Continued on Page 5

527,223 'I do's,' more goodbyes

By Najeh Bilal

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 20: Official statistics released by the Public Authority for Civil Information (PACI) has revealed that the total number of married Kuwaiti citizens reached 527,223 in mid-2026 -- 274,204 males and 253,016 females.

The total number of married Kuwaiti citizens in mid-2017 was 471,136.

These figures show a remarkable increase in the number of married Kuwaitis over the past nine years, an increase of more than 56,000 marriages.

The comparison of the distribution with the mid-2026 statistics revealed an almost equal number of husbands and wives, with a slight increase in the number of males registered as married in official records compared to females.

The statistics also showed an increase in the number of divorce cases to 84,975 by mid-2026, compared to 83,320 in mid-2025.

The registration of 1,655 new divorce cases in just 12 months prompted the executive and social institutions to intensify their efforts in investigating the underlying causes.

Continued on Page 5

Kuwait, Sudan move to deepen strategic economic partnership

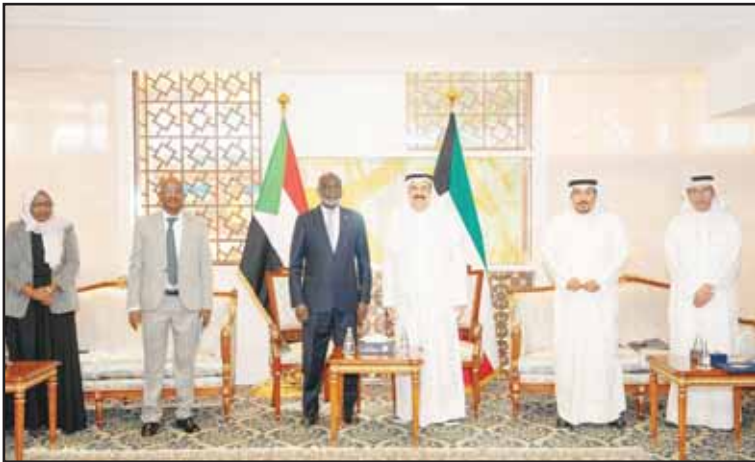
KUWAIT CITY, Aug 20, (KUNA): Minister of Finance Dr. Yaqoub Al-Refai discussed on Thursday with Sudanese Minister of Finance and Economic Planning Dr. Jibril Mohammad a number of financial and economic matters of mutual interest between the two countries, as well as prospects for future cooperation in several priority areas.

The Ministry of Finance said in a press statement that the meeting also discussed ways to strengthen the historic fraternal relations between the two brotherly countries and plans to

develop them during the coming period.

It pointed out that the meeting came as part of the official visit by Sudanese Minister of Finance and Economic Planning Dr. Mohammad, who is heading a government delegation from the brotherly Republic of Sudan to Kuwait.

The meeting was attended by a number of officials from the Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as well as representatives of the Sudanese Embassy in Kuwait.



Ministry of Finance photo
Minister of Finance Dr. Yaqoub Al-Refai with Sudanese Minister of Finance and Economic Planning Dr. Jibril Mohammad.

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Prayer Timings

Fajr	03:56	Asr	15:26
Sunrise ..	05:19	Maghrib ..	18:23
Zohr	11:51	Isha	19:47



HH the Amir



HH the Crown Prince



HH the Premier

Amir congratulates Hungary President on ‘National Day’

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 20, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent on Thursday a cable of congratulations to the President of Hungary Andras Baka, on his country’s national day.

In the cable, His Highness wished the President good health and wellness and hoped for further progress and prosperity to Hungary and its people.

Crown Prince

His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent on Thursday a cable of

congratulations to the President of Hungary Andras Baka on his country’s national day.

In the cable, His Highness the Crown Prince wished the President good health and wellness and hoped for further progress and prosperity to Hungary and its people.

Prime Minister

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KUNA photo
Kuwait's Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Ambassador Hamad Al-Mashaan during the meeting.

Deputy FM chairs Diplomatic, Consular Corps Council meet

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 20, (KUNA): Kuwait’s Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Ambassador Hamad Al-Mashaan chaired a meeting of the Diplomatic and Consular Corps

Council at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs headquarters on Thursday.

The meeting discussed several agenda items, with assistant foreign ministers attending.

Kuwait: Study pros and cons before setting up businesses

‘Switching to global codes enhances trade stability’

By Inaas Awadh

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 20: Kuwait Municipality said it is keen on switching from local to international codes and classifications for economic and commercial activities, as per the directives of the Council of Ministers and the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

In a statement to the newspaper, Head of the Engineering Licensing Department at the Municipality branch in the Capital Governorate Abdulaziz Al-Rashidi disclosed that the country has localized activities in accordance with the International Standard Industrial Classification (ISIC Rev. 4) issued by the United Nations, which aims to standardize the description and coding of economic and productive activities throughout the world.

Al-Rashidi said the ‘License Your Business... Your Steps Are Right’ campaign, recently launched by the Municipality, is part

of its awareness efforts to ensure the business owners’ compliance with regulations and contribute to the rectification of certain activities.

He indicated that the campaign also aims to educate business owners and investors seeking to establish new businesses on selecting the activity that best corresponds to the nature of their work.

He confirmed the commitment of the Municipality to provide information and respond to the questions of business owners. He considers this one of the major factors in protecting investments and enhancing the sustainability and stability of business activities.

He then stressed the importance of engaging in consultations before launching a business, explaining that certain activities cannot be licensed in certain locations or areas.

He added that some activities are subject to requirements concerning their location within a building, including restrictions on licensing certain activities on the first floor.

He underscored the importance of verifying in advance that an activity is suitable for the intended location and complies with applicable regulations to avoid unnecessary costs.

He indicated that the Municipality website

provides information on activities, requirements and procedures, hence, they are readily accessible to individuals and companies.

He also pointed out the existence of Municipality branches in the governorates and the dedication of specialized staff to provide support and guidance to business owners. He said the website urges business owners to avail of services and consultations, submit the necessary documents and data related to their activities, and obtain the required information and guidance before beginning the licensing process.

On the other hand, Head of the Engineering Licensing Department at the Farwaniya Governorate branch of the Municipality Eng. Abeer Al-Arabi reiterated that the ‘License Your Business... Your Steps Are Right’ campaign is raising awareness about three violations related to commercial licenses, including opening or operating a business without a license.

Al-Arabi disclosed that other violations include adding unlicensed space or modifying the premises without the approval of the Municipality, and adding or engaging in an unlicensed activity without obtaining approval from the Municipality.



KUNA photo
Sudanese Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Mohi El-Din Salem during his visit to the KRCS headquarters.

Kuwait support for our people is deeply revered: Sudan’s FM

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 20, (KUNA): Sudanese Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Mohi El-Din Salem on Thursday expressed his country’s appreciation for the major humanitarian efforts undertaken by the Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) in support of the Sudanese people.

Speaking to KUNA, he said that this support reflects the depth of the fraternal and historic ties between the two countries and peoples.

Following his visit to the KRCS headquarters, Salem said the visit was aimed at conveying thanks, on behalf of Sudan’s Transitional Sovereignty Council Chairman General Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan, Prime Minister Dr. Kamil Idris and the Sudanese people, to the State of Kuwait and the KRCS for their continued humanitarian efforts and support for the people of Sudan.

He added that the KRCS was among the first to reach people in need and those affected in Sudan, and at certain stages was ahead of many agencies and organizations in delivering aid to beneficiaries, reflecting the depth of the bonds between the two peoples and the Kuwaiti people’s commitment to standing by their brothers under all circumstances.

Kuwaiti support for Sudan has continued since the beginning of the crisis, with aid and relief flights being provided at various

stages, he said, noting that he had witnessed these efforts firsthand during his previous work in Kuwait and while undertaking responsibilities related to relief efforts in Sudan.

Salem noted that Sudan is currently transitioning from the relief phase to recovery and reconstruction, adding that the KRCS has also been among the first to prepare for this stage by beginning serious and organized work to develop joint plans and programs that contribute to recovery and reconstruction efforts.

He said Kuwait holds a special place in the hearts and minds of the Sudanese people, stressing Sudan’s solidarity with Kuwait and its readiness to stand by and support it under all circumstances and at every stage.

Salem expressed his sincere thanks and appreciation to the Kuwaiti people, leadership and humanitarian institutions for their positions toward Sudan, praying to Allah Almighty to preserve Kuwait’s security, stability and prosperity and protect the country and its people from all harm.

For his part, KRCS Chairman Khaled Al-Mughamis told KUNA that the society has always stood alongside the brothers in the Republic of Sudan, driven by Kuwait’s firmly established humanitarian approach and its continued commitment to extending a helping hand to peoples affected by crises and difficult circumstances.



Ambassador Dr Maksym Subkh

‘Ukraine defending its sovereignty, territory’

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 20: On the occasion of the 35th Independence Day of Ukraine and the 33rd anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Kuwait and Ukraine, the Embassy of Ukraine affirmed that independence for the Ukrainian people is an embodiment of freedom, sovereignty, democracy and the right to self-determination, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

In a press statement, the embassy highlighted the strong Kuwaiti-Ukrainian relations, stressing that the two countries share a deep understanding of the importance of sovereignty, territorial integrity, and adherence to the international law and the United Nations (UN) Charter, while citing the experience of Kuwait in dealing with the 1990 Iraqi invasion.

It confirmed the support of Ukraine for Kuwait in facing the Iranian aggression and the efforts exerted by Kuwait and other Gulf countries to restore security and stability in the region, protect civilians, and ensure the continuation of development and prosperity.

Regarding the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, the embassy clarified that Ukraine is defending its sovereignty and territorial integrity, emphasizing that its objective is to achieve peace and restore its territories within the internationally recognized borders, while rejecting any alteration of borders by force.

It expressed appreciation for the supportive position of Kuwait toward Ukraine, as well as the humanitarian assistance it has been providing since the start of the Russian invasion.

It disclosed that the Kuwaiti government allocated \$1 million in 2023 to purchase generators for Ukraine amid attacks on its energy infrastructure. It affirmed the continuous need for international support for the energy sector of Ukraine.

It also stated that the diplomatic relationship between the two countries officially began on April 18, 1993, and has since been marked by high-level visits, regular contact and political consultations.

It reaffirmed the commitment of Ukraine to expand cooperation in trade, investment, food security, agriculture, energy, technology, education, culture and tourism.

It stressed that the geographical distance between Kuwait and Ukraine has not prevented the two countries from developing relations founded on friendship and mutual respect.



KUNA photo
Minister of Social Affairs, Family and Childhood Affairs Dr. Amthal Al-Huwailah meets Waad Al-Azmi who is selected as member of World Blind Union's Youth Committee for Asia.

Minister extols Al-Azmi selection for World Blind Union panel Asia

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 20, (KUNA): Kuwaiti Minister of Social Affairs, Family and Childhood Affairs Dr. Amthal Al-Huwailah said Wednesday naming Waad Al-Azmi as a member of the World Blind Union’s Youth Committee for Asia marks an unprecedented achievement for Kuwait and the Gulf.

In a press statement, she extolled the selection as reflecting the ability of Kuwaiti youth to participate and represent the country in international forums, while promoting Kuwait’s standing and reputation in supporting and empowering persons with disabilities.

The Kuwaiti minister made the remarks following her meeting with Al-Azmi, underlining the continued commitment to supporting and empowering persons with disabilities, as well as providing them with opportunities for active participation at both local and international levels to showcase their capabilities and contributions across various fields.

She spoke highly of Al-Azmi’s selection as placing her among the six members of the World Blind Union’s Youth Committee, with each member representing one of the world’s continents.

Other Voices

Godiva and legends of yore

By Ahmad alsarraf

The history of nations is replete with countless legends that have become part of their collective memory.

In Kuwait, given the country’s relatively recent history, our legends are limited to a handful of folk tales that our parents used to tell us to frighten us. These tales will likely fade with the rise of Batman and the proliferation of electronic games on smartphones and iPads.

The epic of Al-Zeer Salem is famous in Yemen, while in Egypt, tales of Abu Zayd al-Hilali, the Hilali epic, Al-Naddaha, Umm al-Ghoul, and Abu Rigi Masloukha are well known.

The history of Britain, which once ruled three-quarters of the world’s landmass and dominated the seas, is rich in legends and folk tales, including the story of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table, Robin Hood, and King Canute, who supposedly ordered the tides to stop. Almost all of these stories blend fact and fiction, often blurring historical truths and creating confusion.

One of the most captivating and widely circulated British legends, particularly on social media, is the story of Lady Godiva. Representing the pinnacle of noble sacrifice and peaceful resistance, the tale has captured the public imagination, particularly among men, for centuries. It is a story that blends historical fact with creative embellishment.

The legend tells of Lady Godiva, who was outraged by the exorbitant taxes imposed by her husband, the ruler of Coventry, on the people of the city, which later became the seat of the Archbishop of Canterbury.

Her husband eventually yielded to her pleas on the condition that she ride naked on horseback through the

streets of Coventry. Godiva accepted the challenge. Using her resourcefulness, she issued a decree ordering all citizens to remain indoors at a specified time and keep their windows closed that day.

Then, she mounted her horse, naked except for her famous long hair, and began riding through the city in complete silence. Her husband was impressed by her intelligence, courage, and devotion to her people, and he honored his promise by abolishing the heavy taxes imposed on them.

The legend later gave rise to other figures who remain etched in popular memory to this day. Among them is “Peeping Tom,” a tailor who could not resist looking at the beautiful Lady Godiva as she rode naked through the city. According to the story, he was struck blind as a result of his transgression.

While the characters themselves were real, there is no historical record confirming that the story actually occurred. The first written account describing Lady Godiva as riding completely naked appears in the writings of Roger of Wendover, a monk at St. Albans Abbey who lived hundreds of years after Godiva.

Coventry continues to celebrate its association with Lady Godiva through statues, festivals, and annual processions, reflecting its pride in a woman who appears to have been a prominent historical figure. Regardless of whether she actually undertook her famous ride, she was a powerful woman whose philanthropic legacy endured even amid the turmoil of the Norman Conquest.

A Belgian chocolatier capitalized on the fame of the name “Godiva” and named one of his products after it 200 years ago. Since then, the company has expanded, and its products are now manufactured in several countries, including Turkey, where a factory owner eventually acquired full ownership of the Godiva company.



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Participation in Oman congress underscores growing Kuwait importance

Al-Bseis highlights Kuwaiti vision for CSR future, ways to enhance charity

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 20: Kuwait made a remarkable appearance at the 2026 International Congress on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in Salalah, Oman, with the participation of prominent figures, experts and specialists in corporate social responsibility, sustainability and governance from several Gulf and Arab countries, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The Regional Network for Social Responsibility, in co-operation with the Omani newspaper Al-Ru'ya, organized the seventh edition of the congress, which addressed several issues related to institutionalizing social responsibility like regulatory legislation, governance, sustainability, and the role of companies and the private sector in achieving developmental impact.

The congress witnessed active Kuwaiti participation, underscoring the growing presence of Kuwaiti expertise and institutions in forums specializing in CSR.

It also featured a lecture by Professor Dr. Ali Al-Ibrahim, Vice President of the Regional Network for Social Responsibility.

Al-Ibrahim expounded on the concept of CSR and the importance of linking its practices to governance, ethics, international standards and the Sustainable Development Goals.

Congress

Meanwhile, Hamad Zaid Saud Al-Bseis, United Nations Ambassador for Community Partnership and Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Al-Awazem Charitable Foundation, represented Kuwait at the congress.

Al-Bseis presented the Kuwaiti vision for the future of corporate social responsibility (CSR) and ways to advance charitable and community work from traditional initiatives toward a more efficient and sustainable institutional framework.

He affirmed that Kuwait has a pioneering historical experience in charitable and humanitarian work, which has become a model at numerous regional and international forums.

He stressed that maintaining this position requires continuous development of charitable work tools, strengthening governance and transparency, and moving beyond simply implementing initiatives to measuring their actual and sustainable impact.

He added that CSR is no longer a concept limited to providing aid or implementing seasonal initiatives, as it has evolved into an integrated development system that requires strategic planning, setting priorities, unifying efforts, benefiting from expertise and modern technologies, and establishing clear indicators to measure results and impact.

Moreover, the participation of the Al-Awazem Charitable Foundation as a gold sponsor of the congress affirms its commitment to support knowledge, exchange of expertise and promotion of sustainable institutional practices.

Al-Bseis disclosed that one of the difficult challenges in community work is the duplication of initiatives and fragmentation of efforts. He affirmed that strengthening partnerships between government entities, private sector, charitable organizations and civil society institutions is the optimal path towards achieving integration, thereby, rais-

ing the efficiency of resource utilization and enhancing developmental outcomes.

Shift

He revealed that the next phase requires a shift from individual and fragmented efforts to institutional work based on governance, partnerships and impact measurement, ensuring that each initiative has clear objectives and measurable performance indicators.

He pointed out that the success of community work should not be measured solely by the amount of money spent or the number of projects implemented, but rather by the tangible and sustainable change these projects bring to the lives of beneficiaries.

He added that establishing balanced legislative and regulatory frameworks for social responsibility will organize the work, and encourage institutions and companies to launch innovative initiatives.

During the congress, the Al-Awazem Charitable Foundation was awarded the 2026 International Excellence Award for Institutionalizing Sustainable Impact, in recognition of its experience in developing institutional work.

Al-Bseis accepted the award on behalf of the foundation, considering the recognition a new achievement added to the record of Kuwaiti charitable work and reflecting the ability of Kuwaiti institutions to present exemplary institutional experiences.

He also received a certificate of appreciation for his participation in the congress and his contribution to enriching the specialized discussions.



Hamad Zaid Saud Al-Bseis

Minister reviews KFAS, Korea University program

‘AI vital tool to solve hurdles in energy sector’

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 20: Minister of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy Dr. Subaih Al-Mukhaizeem underscored the need to support initiatives and projects that utilize modern technologies and artificial intelligence in providing solutions to the challenges that the electricity and energy sector is facing, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Al-Mukhaizeem also commended the efforts of the team participating in the ‘2026 Korea AI in Action Program’, particularly its focus on a project related to one of the major digital transformation initiatives of the ministry.

He made the statement during his meeting with the team, in the presence of Undersecretary Dr. Adel Al-Zamel.

Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS), in cooperation with Korea

University, organized the program.

During the meeting, the minister reviewed the team’s project on applying artificial intelligence technologies to smart meters.

The team consists of Noura Saad Al-Rashidi, Ghalia Fahad Al-Mukhaizeem, Fawzan Dawood Al-Fahad and Jarrah Fahad Al-Mulaifi.

Al-Mukhaizeem affirmed the commitment of the ministry to encourage national talent and benefit from innovative ideas and projects that support its plans in digital transformation, and energy efficiency

and conservation, in line with the directives of the state on sustainability and innovation.

He was briefed on the concept of the project and how it utilizes data provided by smart meters, particularly using artificial intelligence technologies to analyze electricity consumption patterns.

The team drew inspiration for their project from the national energy and water conservation campaign, ‘Wafer’, as well as its objectives to promote conservation and raise resource efficiency.

To achieve these goals, the team developed an innovative technology based on artificial intelligence and smart meter data to support conservation efforts and promote the optimal use of energy.



Al-Mukhaizeem

‘Sea not place for enjoying’

Eco-knowhow for youth

By Inaas Awadh
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 20: Marwa Abel, Head of the Capacity Building Unit at the Regional Organization for the Protection of the Marine Environment (ROPME), confirmed that the second edition of the ‘Blue Pioneer’ camp, organized by ROPME in cooperation with the Environment Public Authority (EPA), offers a unique experience in environmental awareness through the two-week program.



Al-Qattan

Abel disclosed that the camp includes interactive activities, practical applications and field visits. She said the participants engage in practical experiences from the first day, enhancing their knowledge of the marine environment and developing their skills.

She explained that the primary goal is to instill environmental responsibility in children and youths, as well as to familiarize them with the fact that the sea is not just a place for recreation, but rather an integrated system encompassing organisms, habitats and ecosystems that require protection.

She added that the camp’s objective is to teach participants to interact with the sea responsibly, given its direct connection to human life, particularly in the areas of water and food security.

She pointed out that the sea is an important source of food and fish stocks, and that pollutants reaching it could have negative repercussions for humans through the food chain.

Meanwhile, Bashayer Al-Qattan from the Public Relations Department at EPA

affirmed that investing in human capital is fundamental to achieving sustainable development, indicating that the students are the future of Kuwait.

She said the camp introduces young people to the importance of protecting the environment and marine resources, as well as familiarizing them with the efforts of governmental and private entities in this field through a practical and interactive program.

Several organizations participated in the camp like the Scientific Center, Public Authority for Food and Nutrition (PAFN), Aquamarine Company and Kuwait Oil Company (KOC).

Participants set up and care for their own fish tanks, in addition to visiting the Ahmed Al-Jaber Oil and Gas Complex to learn about the history of oil, its importance to the country, and the relationship between oil activity and environmental responsibility.

Other activities include a visit to the fish market to learn about the types of fish found in the Kuwaiti environment, methods of preserving them, criteria for selecting fresh fish, and procedures for monitoring, collecting, testing and analyzing samples in laboratories.

Registration for the camp witnessed a large turnout, with applicants subject to age and academic level requirements and personal interviews. Around 30 students are participating after passing the selection process.

The second edition of the camp began on Aug 16 and will conclude on Aug 26.

Field activities include a visit to the General Directorate of Coast Guard to learn about its efforts in protecting the marine environment and the dangers of harmful behaviors, particularly littering and plastic dumping into the sea and its impact on marine life and habitats.

The program includes a visit to the Scientific Center to learn about local marine life, fish species, and their nutritional needs.

Al-Qattan emphasized the importance of continuous cooperation between government agencies, specialized organizations, and the private sector in building a generation equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to protect the environment.

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Farwaniya Governor and acting Governor of the Capital Sheikh Athbi Nasser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah with the visiting KFH officials.

KFH community role wins praise

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 20: Farwaniya Governor and acting Governor of the Capital Sheikh Athbi Nasser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah on Thursday met with Executive Director for Media and Government Relations at Kuwait Finance House (KFH) Mohammad Al-Fares, as well as Rashid Al-Rashid and Abdullah Al-Anbaei from the Public Relations Department.

They discussed various topics of mutual interest and ways to enhance cooperation and communication in order to better serve the community and support

community initiatives.

The Governor affirmed the importance of the role of private sector institutions in serving the community and supporting initiatives and activities that are beneficial to the citizens and residents. He also commended the community role of KFH.

On the other hand, Al-Fares expressed his gratitude to the Governor for the warm reception, confirming that KFH remains committed to continue cooperation with the governorates and support community initiatives.

Initiatives build skills and confidence among Kuwaiti youth

Scientific Center wraps up 2026 summer programs

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 20: The Scientific Center, one of the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS) centers, has concluded its 2026 summer programs following a season of educational, training and interactive activities designed for children and young people.

The programs aimed to develop participants’ scientific, practical and personal skills while nurturing their interest in science and learning through experiences that combined knowledge with hands-on practice.

This year’s activities included the 10-week Scientific Summer Camp, the Summer Field Training Program and the Volunteer Program. Each initiative was designed to meet the needs of different age groups and provide participants with opportunities to explore, learn and develop their abilities in an engaging environment.

The Scientific Summer Camp, which targeted children aged six to 12, featured a wide range of scientific and interactive activities. Participants took part in science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics (STEAM) experiments, workshops, creative and sporting activities, as well as educational field trips.



KFAS photos

Some photos during The Scientific Center 2026 summer programs.

The program encouraged exploration, experimentation and teamwork, while allowing participants to engage with scientific concepts through practical activities.

The Summer Field Training Program gave participants first-hand experience of the working environment at the Scientific Center. Through involvement in a variety of tasks and activities,

and by interacting directly with teams from different departments, participants gained practical knowledge and developed new skills.

The Volunteer Program, meanwhile, reflected the Scientific Center’s commitment to promoting volunteerism and social responsibility among young people. Participants supported the Center’s activities and programs, in-

teracted with visitors and strengthened their communication, teamwork and leadership skills.

The program also reinforced the values of initiative, community service and giving back.

Scientific Center Director General Eng. Abdulaziz Al-Yassin said the organization views investment in children and young people as an invest-

ment in Kuwait’s future.

“At the Scientific Center, we believe that investing in children and youth is an investment in Kuwait’s future,” he said. “Therefore, we ensure that our summer programs go beyond being seasonal activities and become comprehensive educational and practical experiences that give participants the opportunity to explore, learn and develop their skills

in an environment that encourages creativity and innovation.”

He added that the enthusiasm and engagement demonstrated by participants throughout the Scientific Summer Camp, Summer Field Training Program and Volunteer Program highlighted the importance of creating spaces where future generations can learn through experience and practice.

“We are also proud of the role played by the Center’s teams in sharing their expertise and knowledge with participants, while reinforcing the values of responsibility, teamwork and initiative,” Al-Yassin said.

The Scientific Center said the success of this year’s programs reaffirmed its commitment to simplifying science, promoting scientific culture and investing in the capabilities of children and young people.

Since its opening in 2000, the Center has accumulated more than 25 years of experience in scientific communication and public engagement. It continues to develop its educational and community initiatives as part of its mission to inspire future generations and support the development of a knowledge-based and innovative society.

Continued from Page 1

527,223 ‘I do’s,’

On the other hand, the total number of Kuwaiti widows and widowers reached 32,880 by mid-2026, comprising of 27,917 widows (85 percent) and 4,963 widowers.

Compared to the mid-2017 statistics when the number of widows and widowers was 31,024, it entails an increase of 1,856 cases or six percent. This increase is considered normal and consistent with the overall population growth and the evolving age demographics of Kuwaiti citizens.

Kuwait enters

The agreement combines the expertise of Knetco in critical infrastructure and communications with the global experience of Skyports in helipad infrastructure.

The economic value of the agreement lies in its targeting of the ground floor of the new aviation economy, as the commercial deployment of eVTOL aircraft will not be achieved simply by having the aircraft. It requires a network of helipads, charging and power management stations, highly reliable communications,

digital reservation and monitoring systems, operations centers, and clear safety and regulatory standards.

International estimates indicate that the majority of the future economic value of advanced air mobility will not come from aircraft sales alone, but from the surrounding ecosystem, including airports, runways, cargo, energy, software and operational services.

Some global market studies estimate the value of the AAM market at hundreds of billions of dollars in the long term. Estimates vary considerably, because the sector is new and its market definitions differ from one organization to another.

This partnership comes at a crucial time as Kuwait continues to develop its air infrastructure, specifically the new Terminal Two (T2) at Kuwait International Airport.

It is significant not only because of connecting the vertical takeoff and landing (VTOL) terminal to the new terminal, but also the potential to develop a multi-modal air transport system that will connect airports, seaports, commercial areas and urban centers in the future through short-haul air solutions.

The scale of Kuwaiti investment in air infrastructure gives the agreement added dimension, as a modern and high-capacity airport can serve as the cornerstone

for a new air transport network linking the airport to business centers, economic and coastal areas, and vital facilities, provided the technology and regulatory frameworks are developed up to the commercial operation stage.

The memorandum of understanding does not specify the financial value of the deal, so any figure circulating should not be considered a confirmed investment value.

According to the published information, the MoU is for cooperation and opportunity development, not an announcement of a contract to build the network of helipads with a fixed value.

The potential value of the agreement could later be derived from several separate projects, such as feasibility studies, helipad design, construction, operation, digital platforms, charging systems, maintenance and logistics services.

The Gulf experience provides an indication of the scale of expenditure that infrastructure development might require.

In Dubai, Skyports is working with the Roads and Transport Authority (RTA) to develop a network of helipads to serve air taxi operations, with a plan to launch the service commercially in the coming years.

At the regional level, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Saudi Arabia are

moving towards an electric aviation economy and advanced air mobility.

For instance, Dubai is one of the vital markets for commercial testing of helipads and electric aircraft in the region.

The Gulf competition will not only be about owning the aircraft, but also about building the first infrastructure network capable of operating the aircraft commercially and on a large scale.

This project is in line with the strategy of Kuwait to diversify its economy and invest in value-added sectors. If the memorandum of understanding translates into concrete projects, it could create a range of opportunities for Kuwaiti companies in engineering, construction, telecommunications, energy, software, cybersecurity and logistics.

The economic impact could also extend to new sectors, such as low-altitude air traffic management services, electric aircraft maintenance, energy storage and charging systems, data management, insurance, training and digital services.

Kuwait heatwave

It also confirmed the appearance of some leafy plants, longer shadows and morning dew. It indicated that water and

air temperatures will cool slightly, while the sun will begin moving southward after being nearly overhead during summer.

It pointed out that with the appearance of the Suhail star, the days will be shorter and the nights longer.

It also stated that the Suhail star will be visible on the Kuwaiti sky starting Sept 4, 2026, according to observations documented by a group of Kuwaiti astronomers.

Meanwhile, Kuwait is expected to experience hot to very hot weather from Friday through Saturday, with relatively humid conditions along the coastal areas and occasional dust caused by northwesterly winds.

Meteorological Department Director Dhirar Al-Ali told the Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) that the country is being affected by an extension of the Indian monsoon depression, accompanied by a relatively hot and humid air mass. Winds will be light to moderate, occasionally becoming active and shifting direction at intervals.

On Friday, the weather will be hot, with northwesterly winds shifting at times and ranging from light to moderate at speeds of 10 to 38 kilometers per hour. Maximum temperatures are

expected to reach between 44 and 46 degrees Celsius, while the sea will be light to moderate, with waves ranging from 1 to 5 feet.

Friday night will be hot to very hot and relatively humid along the coastal areas. Northwesterly winds will remain light to moderate at speeds of 15 to 35 kilometers per hour. Minimum temperatures are forecast to range between 30 and 32 degrees Celsius, with sea waves reaching between 2 and 5 feet.

Saturday’s weather will be very hot and relatively humid along the coastal areas. Winds will be light to moderate, ranging from 8 to 35 kilometers per hour. Some high clouds are expected to appear, while maximum temperatures will range between 45 and 47 degrees Celsius. The sea will be light to moderate, with waves between 1 and 5 feet.

Saturday night will remain hot to very hot and relatively humid along the coastal areas. Winds will be light to moderate, shifting between northwesterly and variable directions at speeds of 8 to 32 kilometers per hour. Some scattered clouds are expected, while minimum temperatures will range between 31 and 33 degrees Celsius. Sea waves will range from 2 to 4 feet.

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America

Pilot killed in collision with police helicopter: An airplane pilot died Wednesday after a violent collision with a Pennsylvania State Police helicopter near a runway at a small airport, but both state troopers aboard the helicopter survived, authorities said.



Bivens

The plane was coming down on the runway and veered into the helicopter that was near the ground, Lt Col **George Bivens**, the state's acting police commissioner, said during a news conference. The FAA and NTSB called it a midair collision but state police didn't clarify if the plane was off the ground.

"When I say it was a very violent crash, that plane was cut into a lot of pieces," he said, explaining that part of the investigation will be making sure the pilot was the only person on board. He said the helicopter lost its blades and tail boom and crashed onto its side.

The crash at the small airport in Carlisle, about 110 miles (170 kilometers) northwest of Philadelphia, involved the Bell 407 helicopter and the Cessna 150, according to the Federal Aviation Administration. The Cessna is a two-seat aircraft that is typically used as a trainer aircraft, according to Bivens. (AP)



2 college cyclists dead in Tennessee car crash: Two members of a university cycling team were killed and seven others were injured Wednesday when a car collided with a group of riders in northeastern Tennessee, state officials said.

Milligan University, a private Christian school with just over 1,200 students, said 11 of its cyclists were out together on a morning training ride when they were struck by a driver in Hampton, about 11 miles (18 kilometers) from the campus in the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains.

The county's district attorney, Steve Finney, said a 69-year-old man from North Carolina had been arrested and faced two counts of reckless vehicular homicide and five counts of aggravated assault by vehicle with recklessness. (AP)

Dems narrow list of '28 presidential convention sites to Boston, Denver and Philadelphia

WASHINGTON, Aug. 20, (AP): Democrats on Thursday narrowed the list of potential host cities for their 2028 presidential convention to Boston, Denver and Philadelphia as their party looks ahead to a wide-open primary to succeed President Donald Trump.

Democratic National Committee Chairman Ken Martin said in a statement the cities put forward "incredibly strong bids," and he promised the convention would be an "inspiring celebration of our party's future nominee."

A final decision is expected to be made later this year by party leaders. Republicans have already chosen Houston for the site of their 2028 convention.

The Democratic convention, scheduled for Aug. 7-10, 2028, traditionally gives the party a chance to formally introduce its nominee to the country, rally the base and kick-start the most intense period of campaigning ahead of the general election.

The party didn't specify why Atlanta and Chicago, which was the site of the 2024 convention, were eliminated. Officials visited all five cities in April and May, considering logistical and fundraising capacity



The Boston harbor and the city skyline are photographed on Oct. 28, 2022, in Boston. (AP)

among other factors.

The three finalists are liberal strongholds surrounded by the type of suburban areas that have become increasingly important to the party in recent elections. They also provide access to fundraising and key demographic and interest groups, like labor unions.

While Colorado and Massachusetts have gone Democratic in recent

presidential elections, Pennsylvania has been among the biggest battlegrounds. Trump, a Republican, won Pennsylvania in 2024.

Philadelphia last hosted the convention in 2016, Denver in 2008 and Boston in 2004.

Before the presidential primary gets into gear, Democrats are looking at this year's midterm elections as an opportunity to flip the narrowly

divided Republican-led House and maybe take back control of the Senate.

Democrats face fundraising disadvantages compared with Republicans, along with financial debt, and Martin has confronted criticism over his stewardship of the party.

Also:

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo.: A Missouri judge has allowed new US House districts backed by President **Donald Trump** to be used in the November elections, rejecting a bid by to put the Republican-friendly districts to a statewide vote of the people.

The ruling Wednesday by Cole County Circuit Judge **Daniel Green** is a victory for Republicans seeking to hold onto their slim majority in the U.S. House. But the case is likely to end up in the state Supreme Court.

Missouri's new districts already were used in the August primaries. On that same day, Republican Secretary of State **Denny Hoskins** rejected a petition with thousands of signatures seeking to force a November referendum on the map. Hoskins asserted that Missouri's Constitution doesn't allow a referendum on congressional redistricting.

'This will be here long after we're gone'

Trump plays WH tour guide to show off work on helipad and ballroom

WASHINGTON, Aug. 20, (AP): US President Donald Trump played White House tour guide on Wednesday, showing off the helipad he is building on the lawn before leaning over to autograph a piece of it and bragging about the ballroom he's rushing to complete despite legal challenges.

Trump gushed for several uninterrupted minutes about granite being laid and said the chopper landing area would leave visiting foreign leaders "very impressed" - including Chinese President Xi Jinping, who is coming next month.

At times, he sounded almost like a construction manager, singing the praises of granite over asphalt in painstaking detail and noting for reporters he brought out for the show that the stone could withstand 35,000 pounds per square inch of pressure.

"That's stone that, if you took a hammer and you started hammering right now - all day long - you wouldn't see a mark on it, literally, that's the kind of power it is," Trump said, at times straining to be heard over the thrum of ongoing work be-

hind him.

The president also revealed for the first time that he has replaced the walkway from the White House's diplomatic entrance along with a portion of the asphalt driveway around the South Lawn with white granite.

"One thing I know how to do is build," he said, asserting that asphalt is "not appropriate for a great house, or a great place like the White House." He said that, had he instead merely used "really powerful concrete," it would have supported "just a tiny fraction of that in terms of strength."

The president is called upon to fill many roles as president, but embraces none with as much zeal as managing various building projects to mold the White House and large swatches of Washington in his own image, seeming happiest recalling his days as a real estate developer.

Trump also likes to show off his handiwork and having the White House press pool on hand at all times gives him a ready-made audience. Last year, he made an appearance



US President Donald Trump speaks outside the White House on Aug. 19, in Washington, at the construction site of the new helicopter landing zone on the South Lawn of the White House. (AP)

on the roof of the briefing room to survey a future work site, and earlier this summer, he took reporters for a closer look at the ballroom construction site.

It suggests Trump remains focused on such projects, even as his war in

Iran nears the six-month mark, his approval ratings sink with just 2 1/2 months to go before critical midterm elections, and as voters are increasingly worried about a weakening economy.

Trump drove home just how im-

portant the construction projects are to him, calling the work "very exciting."

"This will be here long after we're gone," Trump said of the projects. "No matter what happens with the world."

But whether it will endure after he leaves office remains to be seen. Trump once suggested that his refurbishing of the Lincoln Memorial's Reflecting Pool would last a century, only for the paint to fade and its liner to peel away in chunks just days after it was laid.

The president has increasingly insisted that the \$400 million ballroom will add security to the White House and include things like anti-drone technology. His administration even unsuccessfully sought \$1 billion in congressional funding to make military improvements to the structure.

"This will be the greatest military complex slash ballroom anywhere in the world," he said.

Trump also scoffed at court orders seeking to block its construction without congressional approval, saying work is continuing regard-

less and predicting that the Supreme Court will eventually side with him and allow the project to be completed.

The president found time to talk again about one of his favorite subjects of late - grass - and praised at length Scotts-Miracle Gro. The company's former CEO is a Trump supporter, and it donated \$1 million to repair the grass on the White House lawn after it was damaged by Trump's UFC fight marking his 80th birthday in June and by the helipad construction.

At one point on Wednesday, Trump signed the back of one of the granite stones that was marked "Donald Trump 45-47 president" for the occasion. Its front is shaped like an eagle and will be laid into the helipad's presidential seal once work is completed.

"I thought this would be a little different kind of a news conference," the president said. "We were going to sign this privately and just put it in. I said, 'This is something I think the press should see,' and I hope you liked it."



Severe damage is visible on several houses in Solms-Oberndorf, Germany on Aug. 20, 2026, following a violent thunderstorm. (AP)

Balkan countries fight wildfires

Deadly overnight storms batter Germany

BERLIN, Aug. 20, (AP): A woman died and at least two other people were injured as severe storms caused extensive damage overnight across parts of Germany. Further southeast, in the Balkans, firefighters continued to battle wildfires that have been raging across Europe all summer.

In Waldorf, in the southwestern state of Rhineland-Palatinate, a woman was struck by a falling tree and fatally injured, the German news agency dpa reported Thursday. Another woman suffered serious injuries in the accident, police said.

The women, 58 and 47, were walking together when a storm rolled in and they sought shelter under a covered seating area. Both women were struck when a tree was uprooted and fell onto the seating area. The 58-year-old died at the scene, a police spokesperson said. The 47-year-old was taken to a hospital.

A tornado struck the town of Fürstenwalde, 78 kilometers (49 miles) southeast of Berlin. Roofs were torn off and several cars were damaged by falling trees, and one person was injured, according to dpa.

In Höhr-Grenzhausen in the Westerwald district in western Germany, a storm tore walls from buildings. At least two homes were affected, according to dpa. Falling pieces of building facades and flying debris caused additional damage, and several trees were uprooted. A widespread power outage also hit the area, while strong gusts of wind overturned a truck on the A61 highway.

There were also numerous weather-related emergency

calls overnight in Hesse, Thuringia and Bavaria.

A village festival in Kronach, Bavaria, was partially evacuated due to severe storms. About 3,500 guests had to leave the outdoor area of the festival grounds late Wednesday evening, local police said. They were able to continue celebrating inside the beer halls.

In Wetzlar, in Hesse, the storm damaged about 60 houses, according to the fire department. In some cases, pieces of roofing were blown as far as 100 meters (110 yards) away, dpa reported.

The German Weather Service warned that further severe storms could occur later in the day, particularly in Baden-Württemberg and Bavaria in southern Germany.

While the storms in Germany were accompanied by cooler temperatures, high temperatures continued to be recorded in southeastern Europe, and fires raged in some parts of the region.

In Serbia, a Russian firefighting plane joined efforts in Serbia on Thursday to fight wildfires that devastated a nature reserve in the northeast as the Balkan country faces a fresh heat wave in the coming days.

The Il-76 plane landed in Serbia on Wednesday evening, also illustrating continued friendly relations between the two countries despite Belgrade's proclaimed intention to join the European Union.

The fire in Deliblatska Pescara, or Deliblat Sands, first erupted a month ago, but was under control until early August when it started spreading swiftly, engulfing thousands of acres of pine forests and shrubbery.

Russian missile, drone barrage kills 16 in Ukraine's Kyiv region

KYIV, Ukraine, Aug. 20, (AP): Russia pounded the Ukrainian capital of Kyiv and the surrounding region with scores of missiles and drones in a nighttime aerial attack that lasted for hours and killed at least 16 people, officials said Thursday.

Moscow's forces have in recent months intensified their ballistic missile attacks on Kyiv, exploiting Ukraine's chronic shortage of US-made Patriot air defense interceptors, the sole weapon in its arsenal able to shoot down the missiles.

Such large-scale Russian missile strikes have become a regular occurrence this summer. Just over two weeks ago, a Russian attack on Kyiv and its surrounding region killed 17 people, and nine were killed in the city two days before that. The United Nations said last week that Kyiv was also one of the hardest hit cities in Ukraine in July, with at least 54 civilians killed and 202 injured.

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has pleaded for countries to send more Patriot interceptors but international stockpiles are low amid the Iran war and Ukraine's more than four-year fight against Russia's all-out invasion.

Russia's overnight barrage also included cruise missiles and jet-powered drones that further strain air defenses, the Ukrainian air force said.

Explosions boomed across Kyiv in the dark, but the air force said hits were recorded at 28 locations across the country. Emergency services said 15 people were killed in the capital, with another death in the wider Kyiv region. About 40 people were wounded, Zelenskyy said, as air raid warnings lasted until after dawn.

More than 38,000 people, including over 2,000 children, sheltered in Kyiv's subway stations overnight, the system's operator said.

"It was a massive attack," Zelenskyy said on social media, adding that Russia "had been preparing (it) for a long time, combining different types of ballistic missiles, cruise missiles and drones, aiming to cause as much damage as possible to civilian infrastructure."

The Russian Defense Ministry said it struck a Kyiv industrial site manufacturing components for Flamingo cruise missiles. Sites involved in the production and storage of drones, an ammunition depot and a logistics

center were also hit, it said.

Russia and Ukraine have battered each other with drones and missiles as their armies struggle to gain the upper hand on the 1,250-kilometer (780-mile) front line, where huge numbers of drones are pinning down troops.

Ukraine has tried to shift the war onto Russian soil through long-range drone strikes on oil facilities and other infrastructure.

Ukraine's General Staff said its forces struck an oil refinery in Nizhnekamsk, in Russia's Tatarstan region, starting a fire, and the Tataneftegaz oil terminal in Volna, in Russia's Krasnodar region, where there was also a blaze. Ukraine has hit both facilities in recent months as part of its campaign to disrupt Russia's vital oil industry.

Tatarstan leader Rustam Minnikhanov confirmed there had been a "massive attack" in the region, state news agency Tass reported, citing his press service. Many of the drones targeted Nizhnekamsk's Zakamsk economic area, disrupting production at industrial sites and damaging residential buildings, Tass quoted him as saying.

The Russian Defense Ministry said air defenses shot down 726 drones

overnight over a number of Russian regions, annexed Crimea and the Black and Azov seas, in one of Ukraine's biggest aerial attacks of the war.

Russia's relentless onslaught has spooked other European countries, especially those bordering Ukraine, which fear spreading attacks from Moscow.

Amid the attack on Kyiv, the Polish Armed Forces Operational Command activated its military aviation operations, ground-based air defense systems and radar reconnaissance. Polish and other NATO military aircraft were deployed to monitor its airspace, Polish news agency PAP reported.

Romania's Defense Ministry said that an unidentified drone crashed and burned in an uninhabited area near the Ukrainian border. Two Spanish F-18 jets, deployed on a policing mission in Romania, were scrambled after 2 a.m. local time to monitor a group of "air targets" near the border, the ministry said.

In addition, two Romanian F-16 fighter jets were deployed to destroy a naval drone seen near a major Black Sea gas project, Romania's acting Defense Minister Radu Miruta said.



A woman whose grandson was killed during an overnight Russian missiles and drones attack sits on a bench in front of heavily damaged residential buildings in Kyiv, Ukraine on Aug. 20. (AP)

Pyongyang shrugs off Trump’s scaled-back drills with Seoul

N.Korea fires barrage of short-range ballistic missiles toward sea: S.Korea

SEOUL, South Korea, Aug 20, (AP): North Korea launched a barrage of ballistic missiles toward the sea on Thursday, South Korea’s military said, a day after the North shrugged off a U.S. decision to scale back military drills with South Korea in an apparent bid to resume diplomacy.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff said the launches of about 10 short-range ballistic missiles happened from North Korea’s capital region around 5 p.m. (0800 GMT) on Thursday. The military said the missiles flew about 300 kilometers (185 miles) each toward North Korea’s eastern waters.

The military said South Korea has bolstered its surveillance posture and was closely coordinating information on the launches with the U.S. and Japan. South Korea’s presidential national security council issued a statement urging North Korea to halt ballistic missile launches.

The Japanese prime minister’s office had earlier said that it detected a suspected missile launch.

US President Donald Trump earlier ordered the Pentagon to “substantially reduce” the Ulchi Freedom Shield exercises, just before they began Monday. Trump cited what he said was a good relationship with Kim and South Korea’s refusal to support him over the war in Iran.

On Wednesday, the South Korean and US militaries confirmed they shortened the 11-day drills by shortening their duration by about half and canceling some field training exercises. The reduction of the exercises raised worries about the allies’ joint defense posture.

Kim Yo Jong, the influential sister of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, dismissed Trump’s overture later Wednesday, saying “the provocative, aggressive nature of the drills won’t change even though their duration and size were reduced.”

“If the U.S. calculates that it can propagate its recent measure as the one of so-called good faith, they will not get the desired answer,” she said in a statement.

She denied Trump’s claim that Kim Jong Un had responded to his request for a conversation.



A TV screen shows a file image of North Korea’s missile launch during a news program at Seoul Railway Station in Seoul, South Korea on Aug 20. (AP)

Kim Yo Jong still refrained from the typical North Korean reaction of fiery rhetoric and said personal relations between her brother and Trump are “still excellent.” That signals North Korea would want to wait for

any talks with the US., pushed to modernize weapons arsenals and expanded cooperation with Russia.

Kim has said he won’t place his nuclear program back on the negotiating table. Experts say Kim has more leverage than when he first held talks with Trump in 2018 and 2019. They say Kim likely hopes to eventually win international recognition as a nuclear state and extensive sanctions relief in exchange for only limited steps toward denuclearization.

At separate parliamentary hearings Wednesday, South Korean Foreign Minister Cho Hyun and Defense Minister Ahn Gyu-back said neither South Korean nor US officials were informed of Trump’s move before his social media post. Cho said the alliance remains strong, while Ahn said South Korean and US defense officials were maintaining close consultations.

Some experts say Trump’s cut of the drills was more likely designed to apply pressure on South Korea to give him substantial support over the Iran war than to reach out to North Korea.

answer a question about whether he is exchanging letters with Kim but said he gets along with him.

The Ulchi Freedom Shield is one of the main military exercises conducted by the US and South Korea annually to enhance their ability to cope with potential North Korean aggression. Washington and Seoul say their drills are defensive in nature, but North Korea calls them an invasion rehearsal and often reacts with weapons tests.

Before this month’s drills started, North Korea accused the US and South Korea of plotting more provocative exercises this summer and vowed to respond with “a new level of a deterrent.” Days before the drills’ start, North Korea fired two ballistic missiles into the sea in its first such launches since late June.

Trump’s earlier diplomacy with Kim Jong Un collapsed in 2019 due to disputes over how much sanctions relief North Korea should be given in return for dismantling its main nuclear complex, a limited denuclearization step. Kim has since shunned



This aerial photo shows the Spacia X express train stop after coming into contact with four workers at Shin-Kanuma Station on the Tobu Nikko Line in Kanuma, north of Tokyo on Aug 20. (AP)

Japan express train hits, kills 4 workers at railway station

Four people doing weed control work on a railway track in Japan died after being hit by an express train as it entered a station while they were still working there on Thursday, officials said.

The accident occurred at Shin-Kanuma Station, north of Tokyo, on the Tobu Nikko Line, and involved the Tokyo-bound Spacia express train, the Tochigi prefectural police said.

The four - three workers and a supervisor - were rushed to a hospital but later pronounced dead, according to police and train operator Tobu Railway Co.

Six other people at the site - two other workers, three on lookout duty and an on-site supervisor - were safe, Tobu Railway said. They had been assigned to spray herbicide. About 50 passengers on the train were also uninjured. (AP)



This photo provided by Kenya Red Cross shows Kenya Red Cross emergency response teams during a multi-agency rescue and recovery operation in response to a helicopter crash near Mt. Ololokwe in Samburu, Kenya on Aug 19. (AP)

Safari helicopter crash in Kenya kills seven, including 5 Americans

NAIROBI, Kenya, Aug 20, (AP): A safari helicopter crashed Wednesday morning in a remote part of northern Kenya, killing seven people, including five Americans, according to local police and the U.S. State Department.

Among those killed were an executive with Telemundo, the US-based Spanish-language network owned by NBCUniversal, and the director of Ecuador’s national intelligence service.

The helicopter crashed at 9:13 am while flying from the Loisaba Conservancy to the Ewaso Nyiro area in Samburu County, according to the Kenya Civil Aviation Authority, which said in a statement that an investigation was underway. It said there were seven people on board - six passengers and the pilot.

Late on Wednesday, David Nkoroi, the police commander for Samburu, told reporters that all seven people on board had died.

The US State Department said five of those killed were US citizens.

“The US Embassy is in touch with local authorities and is providing consular assistance,” it said. “We extend our deepest condolences to the families and loved ones on their loss.”

The identities of the victims were not revealed but a local television station in Miami, Florida, said that José Suárez, 55, president and general manager of several Telemundo stations in Florida, was among those killed.

“We are heartbroken to learn the tragic news that José was killed in a helicopter accident in Kenya,” the NBC affiliate in Miami quoted from a joint statement from NBC

Universal and Telemundo leadership.

The helicopter crashed in a rugged area in the foothills of Mount Ololokwe, a popular tourist destination in the country, local media reported. The helicopter, owned by local company Lady Lori Helicopters, was carrying guests with travel company &Beyond. Lady Lori Helicopters said in a statement that the aircraft was operating a charter flight when it crashed.

Tropic Air Kenya, a local safari operator, said in a statement that it dispatched two of its helicopters to aid search and rescue operations.

The aviation authority said the aircraft was a Eurocopter EC130 B4.

Ecuador confirmed later Wednesday that Michele Sensi-Contugi, director of the country’s National Intelligence Center, died in the crash.

Also:

BANGUI, Central African Republic: Hopes of finding survivors of a collapsed gold mine in Central African Republic were fading Thursday, two days after the disaster killed more than 100 people and left others buried under debris.

Rescuers continued recovering bodies from the artisanal mining site in **Zamboye**, near the border with **Cameroon**, but local workers said the response lacked the equipment and expertise needed for a disaster of such scale.

“The rescue effort is being organized, but it is not up to the task,” said **Jérémie Ngbiri**, a miner at the site who lost his brother and a friend in the collapse.

Asia

Indonesia seizes 2.6 tonnes of meth: Indonesian authorities seized about 2.6 tons of liquid methamphetamine from a ship intercepted off Sumatra and detained 10 Myanmar nationals suspected of involvement in an international trafficking network, officials said Wednesday, in one of the country’s largest drug busts.

The operation was carried out Monday by a joint task force of Indonesia’s National Narcotics Agency, customs officials and Riau Islands police after authorities received intelligence about a vessel allegedly transporting narcotics from Malaysia’s Sarawak state toward Indonesian waters, said Roy Hardi Siahaan, the National Narcotics Agency’s director of enforcement.

Indonesia is a major hub for drug trafficking in Southeast Asia despite having strict drug laws, with convicted smugglers sometimes executed by firing squad.

Siahaan said authorities intercepted the Tanzania-flagged MV Ocean Porter in waters off Tanjung Parit in Bengkalis regency, Riau province, and towed it to a customs operations base on Batam island, next to Singapore, for inspection. Investigators believe the vessel previously operated as the MV Rain Maker, altering its identity to evade detection. (AP)

☐ ☐ ☐

‘Triple-murderer should never be released’: Triple-murderer Erin Patterson should never be released from prison after she poisoned four of

her estranged husband’s relatives with death cap mushrooms, a prosecutor told an Australian court on Thursday.

Prosecutor Brendan Kissane told three judges of the Victoria state Court of Appeal that a judgment that Patterson must serve 33 years of a life sentence before she can apply for parole was “manifestly inadequate,” in an appeal on the leniency of her sentence.

Kissane said Patterson should never be considered for parole but that if the judges did not agree, then they should impose a nonparole period longer than 33 years.

Patterson on Wednesday began her appeal against convictions on three counts of murder and one of attempted murder relating to a lunch of beef Wellington pastries she prepared at her rural home in Leon-gatha in July 2023. (AP)

☐ ☐ ☐

Vietnam police charge man: Vietnam has charged a man with rape after an American student said she was assaulted while in her bed during a group holiday.

Nguyen Thi Quynh Tam, 24, said she was raped on July 5 and pressured by the man’s family to accept money and not go to police. She said the police also initially urged her to settle the matter privately.

The AP does not usually identify people who say they have been assaulted. Her candor is unusual for Vietnam, where violence is rarely discussed publicly, but she said she wanted to speak out to help protect other women.

“I’m doing this not just for me. But for everybody else that has been harmed,” said Tam. (AP)

Attacks on aid workers and contractors surge in S.Sudan as UN urges protection

JUBA, South Sudan, Aug 20, (AP): At least 36 humanitarian workers and contractors have been killed in South Sudan since January, surpassing the 31 killed in all of 2025, as violence persists in the country that’s one of the most dangerous for aid workers, the UN humanitarian coordinator there said Wednesday.

“These are not just statistics,” Ramanathan Balakrishnan said in a statement marking World Humanitarian Day, adding: “Every killing must be investigated, and those responsible held accountable. The continued loss of humanitarian personnel, overwhelmingly South Sudanese nationals, is unacceptable.”

More than 450 incidents of violence against humanitarian workers and assets were reported between January and July, more than double the number recorded during the same period last year, according to the UN Mission in South Sudan.

Renewed fighting between government forces and opposition fighters has forced aid organizations to relocate from some areas, further restricting access to vulnerable communities in a country of about 12 million people that has struggled with both conflict and the effects of climate change since independence from Sudan in



Medical staff with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and South Sudan Red Cross, move a wounded patient to an ambulance in Akobo, South Sudan on May 24, 2025. (AP)

2011.

Humanitarian organizations are calling on the South Sudan government and all parties to the 2018 peace agreement meant to end civil war to protect aid workers, investigate attacks and ensure safe and unhindered access to people in need.

Around 10 million people are expected to need humanitarian assistance this year, including more

than 7.5 million facing high levels of acute food insecurity, according to the U.N.

Last week, the UN refugee agency and World Food Program warned that more than 650,000 refugees and asylum seekers in South Sudan risk losing access to lifesaving food, nutrition and other assistance because of severe funding shortages.

Lat/Am

Brazil minibus, truck crash kills 23: A minibus and a truck collided head-on in the southern Brazilian state of Parana, killing at least 23 people and injuring five others early Wednesday, police said.

Preliminary evidence suggests that the truck, which wasn’t carrying cargo, crossed into incoming traffic and collided with the minibus at around 3:30 a.m., Brazil’s traffic police said.

The crash happened on a highway near Ipiranga, a city of 14,000 residents in central Parana state and 560 kilometers (350 miles) south of Sao Paulo. The minibus came from Imituva city in the same region. The truck’s plate is from Erechim city further south in Rio Grande do Sul state.

It was the deadliest crash in the region since 2021, when 19 people died after a bus crashed outside Curitiba.

Local media said three of the five people injured were in serious condition. They were en route to hospitals, police said.

The minibus passengers included healthcare workers, patients and a few family members, authorities said. The company that runs the highway’s toll booths said 13 women, eight men and two children had died. (AP)

☐ ☐ ☐

OAS warns Haiti needs help: Albert Ramdin, secretary general of the Organization of American States, said Wednesday during a trip to Haiti that the country needs help fighting gangs and seizing back territory as it prepares to hold general elections for the first time in more than a decade.



A boy plays at a shelter for families displaced by gang violence in Port-au-Prince, Haiti on Aug. 17, 2026. (AP Photo/Odelyn Joseph)

Ramdin spoke as he concluded a trip to the troubled Caribbean country, where he met with the prime minister and other officials.

He said the new UN-backed gang suppression force needs more personnel, equipment and funding.

“The efforts of the (force) are essential to improving security and public safety, and to creating the conditions for a safe electoral process,” he said. “Progress must be visible and measurable as soon as possible.”

Ramdin said priorities are securing the main route to the main international airport; ensuring ongoing access to the airport and seaport; and restoring safe access to Haiti’s southern region. Gangs currently control the main routes leading in and out of the capital. (AP)

Kuwait oil up \$3.18 to \$88.41 pb

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 20, (KUNA): Kuwait crude oil gained USD 3.18 during Wednesday’s trading to reach USD 88.41 per barrel compared with USD 85.23 pb the day before, Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC)

said Thursday. Benchmark Brent crude edged 60 cents higher to USD 91.62 pb and West Texas Intermediate rose 89 cents to USD 85.83 pb.

Joint tenders, assets cut gas costs

KNPC merger lifts LPG bottling output & sales

By Najeh Bilal

Al-Seyasaah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 20: The recent decision to merge the two liquefied gas bottling plants under the umbrella of the Kuwait National Petroleum Company (KNPC) has had a positive impact on the logistical and commercial performance indicators of the company, culminating in a remarkable increase by the end of the previous fiscal year.

According to official data obtained by the newspaper, cooking gas sales in the country surpassed 17 million cylinders. The Shuaiba plant recorded incredible growth, producing 7,989,195 cylinders (12 kg size) -- an increase of 3.57 percent compared to the previous fiscal year. The domestic sales of the plant increased by 3.32 percent, reaching 7,909,168 cylinders, all of which were marketed.

Official information also confirmed that the Umm Al-Aish plant continued its operational and integrated excellence under KNPC, producing 9,290,648 cylinders, an increase of 2.2 percent compared to the previous periods, and its sales jumped by 2.2 percent, reaching 9,131,842 cylinders.

KNPC now relies on a broad and integrated distribution network, comprising 83 strategically located gas distribution centers (gas branches) to cover all governorates and meet the rising demand.

A reliable source affirmed that transferring the liquefied gas plants to KNPC yielded a comprehensive package of major strategic, operational and financial benefits, such as higher production

efficiency, reduced expenses, and guaranteed sustainable supply for the local market.

The source added that unifying management and decision-making eliminated procedural duplication and bureaucracy, thereby, streamlining the paperwork.

The source cited the achievement of real integration in supply chains by directly linking filling and distribution operations to the main liquefied gas sources at the refineries and major gas projects of KNPC. The source explained that this feature ensures a safe, seamless and continuous flow of products.

The source added that the merger granted exceptional geographical flexibility to the management, enabling them to reallocate production and instantly exchange supply and logistical quotas between the Shuaiba plant in the southern area and Umm Al-Aish plant in the northern area, based on supply and demand.

The source stated that the merger plan remarkably reduced expenses and curbed financial waste by reducing costs and consolidating redundant administrative, logistical and technical functions.

The source reiterated that this step contributed to the optimal and economical utilization of the assets and infrastructure of the two plants through the exchange of engineering expertise, implementation of regular maintenance plans, and procurement of spare parts and heavy equipment through competitive and cost-effective joint tenders.

Business

Promotes environmental awareness and public-sector engagement

Warba sponsors workplace sustainability workshop for General Secretariat of Awqaf personnel

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 20: As part of its institutional outreach and environmental sustainability initiatives, Warba Bank sponsored a workshop titled “Style Your Desk Plant” for employees of the General Secretariat of Awqaf (GSA) at its headquarters. The event combined environmental awareness with direct engagement across the GSA workforce.

The workshop forms part of Warba Bank’s corporate social responsibility strategy to encourage sustainable workplace practices and expand its community engagement initiatives.

Workshop Activities:

■ Workplace Sustainability: The workshop introduced practical sustainability concepts and encouraged the use of plants and green elements in workplace environments.

■ Employee Engagement: A specialized team from Warba Bank introduced the bank’s retail banking products and digital services and responded to employee inquiries.

■ Institutional Recognition: At



A scene from the honoring ceremony for Warba Bank after the workshop conclusion.

the conclusion of the event, the Secretary-General of the General Secretariat of Awqaf recognized Warba Bank for its sponsorship of the initiative.

Executive Commentary: Sherifa Hamad Al-Falah, Director of Priority Banking at Warba Bank, stated:

“Sponsoring this initiative reflects Warba Bank’s commitment

to building lasting relationships with public institutions. These events provide an opportunity to engage directly with employees, introduce our banking services, and respond to their needs and inquiries.”

Al-Falah added that the workshop also supports the bank’s environmental objectives by encouraging simple and sustainable

practices in the workplace.

About Warba Bank:

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

Smuggling boom in Gaza lifts prices, enriches middlemen

CAIRO, Aug 20, (AP): Palestinians face inflated prices for groceries and batteries, hospitals have turned to smugglers for medicine and equipment, and Israeli soldiers and other middlemen are accused of pocketing millions of dollars as the smuggling of goods restricted by Israel into the Gaza Strip has boomed, according to an Associated Press investigation based on court documents and interviews with traders, truckers and officials.

Cigarettes and tobacco - banned from entry to Gaza since the start of the Israel-Hamas war in October 2023 - rake in the biggest profits for smugglers and merchants, officials and residents say. But everything from iPhones and solar panels to fuel and anesthetics are also brought into the tiny coastal territory illegally. Israel restricts quantities of some goods and bans others outright. It defines many as “dual use” - including concrete, vehicle parts and X-ray machines - asserting they could be repurposed by Hamas militants for military functions.

To build a picture of the illicit trade, The Associated Press analyzed Israeli court documents and spoke to five major traders who import smuggled goods, three merchants who sell them, and two truckers - all on condition of anonymity because of their roles in the illegal smuggling business and concerns about their safety in Gaza. AP also interviewed four Palestinian officials, two on condition of anonymity because of worries about retribution from Israel, Hamas or merchants; two U.N. officials, on condition of anonymity over concern for their jobs; and a dozen Palestinian residents, who spoke about how they get everyday items and their skyrocketing costs.

AP found a rush from all sides to profit off the tight restrictions imposed by Israel on Gaza and its 2 million residents, most of whom have been displaced by the war. Smuggling rings - which have long flourished, circumventing two decades of Israeli blockades and building a network of businessmen and collaborators - pull in millions of dollars. Payoffs go to Israeli troops, drivers, warehouse workers and others on both sides of the border, according to traders and court documents.

“The occupation has left no other option before us. Smuggling has become routine,” one trader said, noting that some in Israel’s military are willing to help - for a price. “We benefit, they benefit and the people in Gaza benefit because we provide goods, including food, to the market.”

The Israeli military said via email that it takes the issue of smuggling “very seriously and works to prevent it.” It said any cases of suspected involvement by Israeli military personnel are “examined and handled in accordance with the law.” But military



A Palestinian vendor fills bottles with diesel as he offers them for sale in al-Maghazi refugee camp, central Gaza Strip, Saturday, Aug. 15, 2026. (AP Photo/Abdel Kareem Hana)

officials did not answer a list of detailed questions from AP on the roles of soldiers or Gaza’s government in smuggling.

Gaza’s Hamas-led government also takes in some of the profit, according to merchants and one Palestinian official. Merchants call it “taxing” - on both smuggled goods and those brought in legally.

Mohammad Barbakh, of the Palestinian Economy Ministry in Gaza, told AP the government receives up to 20% of the price of any smuggled goods if the merchant reports them to authorities, and that increases to 80% if the items go unreported and authorities discover them. But he said authorities don’t refer to their cut as “taxes” and that they haven’t taxed goods entering legally since the war’s start.

Since the war began, Israel has tightly controlled all entry of food, aid and goods into the Gaza Strip, including a total aid blockade that shut off entry entirely for nearly three months last year, pushing parts of the territory into famine. The flow of goods has increased since a fragile ceasefire deal went into effect in October but remains well below prewar levels.

Besides the U.N. and other humanitarian groups bringing in aid, Israel has given 12 senior traders in Gaza permits to import commercial goods. Contents of shipments must be approved by Israeli authorities, a process aid workers and merchants say can be long and opaque, sometimes ending with a rejection on grounds of “dual use.”

The military classifies a list of some 150 broad categories of items as “dual use,” including concrete, asphalt, steel pipes and wooden planks, according to documents provided by COGAT, the military department in charge of coordinating entry of goods into Gaza. In a statement to AP, COGAT said it has let in some “dual use” items including generators and X-ray machines, in specific cases under strict monitoring.

Some senior traders turn to smuggling networks to meet de-

mand in Gaza, where smaller merchants look to sell contraband.

Two merchants and a trucker who is part of Gaza’s union told AP that sometimes government agencies ask for specific items to keep functioning - fuel, spare parts for civil defense vehicles or generators. Hospitals also turn to smugglers, for drugs and some equipment.

And tribal elders request smuggled goods for their communities, including medicines that are in short supply, a tribal leader told AP, on condition of anonymity over concerns for his safety.

Two senior traders and an aide to a third told AP they send lists of contraband goods they want to import to “coordinators” - Israeli and Palestinian middlemen in Israel and the West Bank. Coordinators line up merchandise, then arrange a route into Gaza.

Commercial goods and aid mostly go through the Kerem Shalom crossing in the south, where every truck is inspected. The military also has routes in and out of Gaza for its vehicles. Smugglers use both avenues, bribing soldiers to smooth the way for trucks or carry goods in military vehicles, according to the traders and Israeli court documents.

Trucks belonging to humanitarian groups are also used sometimes, though less often, according to merchants and Israeli government statements.

Smuggling has become vital to Gaza’s economy - it’s a major source of income as most of the population “lost their source of living,” the tribal leader said.

Several top merchants estimated that smuggling makes up over half their total operations and can bring in more than 70% of profits.

Payments go to many players, including drivers and warehouse workers in Israel and Gaza, said one major trader. “You are paying at every step, plus the price of the goods themselves,” he said.

All those costs get passed on to the people in Gaza. Residents say a vehicle battery can go for more than \$2,300, compared with \$140 prewar. Solar panels sell for



A vendor displays packs of cigarettes at his kiosk in Deir al-Balah, central Gaza Strip, Friday, Aug 14, 2026. (AP Photo/Abdel Kareem Hana)

\$3.25 per watt, from 16 cents a watt.

“The smuggling flourished in the second half of 2024 as the market started to dry up,” said Mohamed Abu Taha, a Gaza resident and father of one, noting that chicken, meat, and other food staples were brought in covertly. “Baby formula and pet food were also smuggled.”

But perhaps no items are as in demand as cigarettes and tobacco. The price per pack, residents say, has hit as much as \$140 recently, and over \$1,000 during Israel’s total blockade.

“You could find two or three men sharing one cigarette,” Abu Taha said. Some resort to smoking a dried green called molokhia. COGAT did not reply when asked why cigarettes are banned.

For smugglers, cigarettes and nicotine products are easy to hide and the potential profit huge. Shipments of thousands of packs have been hidden in Israeli military vehicles, commercial trucks, aid shipments and even hollowed-out pineapples, according to traders, court documents and Israeli official statements.

On smuggled goods, Gaza’s government profits primarily by taking its percentage of the price but doesn’t engage in commercial smuggling directly or oversee the trade, according to merchants and Barbakh, the economy ministry official.

Two major traders said the government demands for money increased since the ceasefire deal. Both said they were summoned by Hamas authorities over goods they smuggled to Gaza over the course of the war. A settlement was reached, and one of the traders said he paid \$3.5 million; the other, around \$3.75 million.

Two senior officials in the Hamas administration said - on condition of anonymity because they weren’t authorized to speak to journalists - the money helps fund social services and pay salaries for the tens of thousands employed in Gaza’s civil service and police force. They estimated up to \$100 million had been collected on smuggled goods since

the ceasefire.

Barbakh said the government doesn’t have exact figures on smuggled goods “because these operations are conducted clandestinely, away from the oversight of relevant authorities.”

In response to AP questions, Ismail al-Thawabta of the government’s media office said none of the collected funds go to Hamas’ military wing. He said all resources are directed to providing services to people and “maintaining the continuity of public facilities under the exceptional circumstances in the Gaza Strip.”

The government destroys any expired goods it confiscates, including groceries.

But the two senior officials - as well as two merchants and one trucker - told AP that Hamas sells confiscated cigarettes. Al-Thawabta did not respond when asked about the claim.

Smugglers appear to wield enormous influence. In court documents, Israeli prosecutors pointed to one mysterious smuggler known only as Abu Bassel who they said has “numerous connections within the Israel Police.”

In one instance described in the documents, Israeli police stormed a warehouse in a Jewish settlement in the West Bank full of cell phones and cigarettes that smugglers were loading onto trucks for Gaza. One of the smugglers called Abu Bassel and handed the phone to an officer, the document says, and after a conversation, police called off the raid, leaving without arresting anyone or confiscating any goods.

All of those who spoke to AP said Abu Bassel is the smuggling world’s biggest coordinator. They also said they knew nothing about him - his real name, whether he was Israeli or from the Palestinian territories, or how he built his network.

“He is the master,” a senior Gaza Chamber of Commerce official said. “Nothing can enter Gaza without his stamp.”

One Gaza merchant said he has spoken by phone with Abu Bassel but wouldn’t provide AP the number. He said the shadowy

figure uses connections with the military and intelligence to resolve problems for shipments. “Many police raids have been thwarted because of him.”

The Israeli court documents also have no details about Abu Bassel’s identity but said he uses an aid organization, Al-Mughtarib Al-Falastini, as a cover. The group denied in a Facebook post that it was involved in smuggling.

Since late 2025, Israeli authorities have broken up several alleged smuggling rings, indicting more than a dozen people, including reserve soldiers operating in Gaza. But the traders, merchants and truckers who spoke to AP say that’s only a fraction of those involved.

In one of the biggest cases, prosecutors accused two Israeli brothers, Eliran and Avi Algarabli; business partner Yaron Peretz; and another Israeli of running a smuggling ring out of the central town of Kiryat Gat.

According to a series of indictments against them and others, they’re accused of bribing reserve soldiers in Gaza, chief among them Bezael Zini, brother of the head of the Shin Bet, Israel’s powerful domestic security agency.

The documents say Zini was a commander in a military engineering unit. The ring allegedly paid Zini the equivalent of about \$120,000 to smuggle three shipments totaling some 6,000 packs of cigarettes in his vehicle, according to the indictments. Two other reservists enlisted by the ring ran four trips into Gaza in one day, ferrying in 20,000 packs of cigarettes, hundreds of iPhones and medical equipment, the indictments say.

Court documents assert that millions of dollars are changing hands in smuggling rings. The Algarabli brothers earned some \$2.2 million from a series of smuggling runs from October to December, when they were arrested, documents say. Other defendants in cases are accused of making \$1 million to \$3 million.

For Gaza residents, living through another summer with limited resources has become almost unbearable.

Fans that once cost \$100 can run \$500.

“When we ask the merchants why they don’t import fans, they say the Israeli army refuses to allow them in because they’re dual use,” resident Mohamed Abu Olwan said.

Mohamed Abuel-Enein, a displaced man from the southern city of Rafah, said that’s illogical. “I don’t understand the harm in allowing fans through the crossings,” he said.

“What would they make with them? Rockets? We can’t live in these tents. All day long, we use cardboard to light a fire, or we splash water on the children because of the heat.”

Canada says dairy sector ‘well protected’ in emerging deal

Quebec’s premier says Canada-US trade talks are ‘far from over’

TORONTO, Aug 20, (AP): Quebec’s premier said Canada-U.S. trade negotiations are “far from over” and demanded more information from Prime Minister Mark Carney before deciding whether an emerging agreement adequately protects Quebec’s dairy and forestry sectors.

Premier Christine Fréchet te also pushed back against quickly restoring U.S. alcohol to provincial stores, saying Quebec alone would decide whether American products return to shelves at the SAQ, the Quebec government corporation that controls most retail sales of wine and spirits in the province.

“Information is missing before I can make the right decisions to ensure Quebecers are protected. I am awaiting clarifications from Mr. Carney,” she said in a social media post late Wednesday.

Canada and the United States moved closer Wednesday to finalizing a trade agreement that would avert threatened 50% U.S. tariffs. Trump has said the agreement was “very fair” to both sides and predicted U.S. farmers and manufacturers would benefit. Tariffs on about \$20 billion worth of Canadian imports have been postponed until 12:01 a.m. Saturday.

Quebec does not have a veto over a Canada-U.S. trade agreement, but it controls provincial measures such as whether U.S. alcohol is sold through the SAQ.

Carney asked provincial premiers during a briefing Wednesday to return U.S. alcohol to store shelves, Nova Scotia Premier Tim Houston said, a step aimed at addressing one of the Trump administration’s key trade complaints.

The White House says the emerging deal



Quebec Premier Christine Fr chet te is greeted by French President Emmanuel Macron (unseen) before a meeting at the Elysee Palace in Paris, on May 18, 2026. (AP Photo/Thibault Camus, File)

includes a Canadian commitment to address restrictions on U.S. alcohol. But Carney cannot order provinces to restore sales.

Fr chet te’s Coalition Avenir Qu bec faces voters in an October provincial election, adding political pressure as she weighs concessions affecting dairy, forestry and U.S. alcohol sales.

Houston and two other premiers voiced support for the direction of the talks, though Houston said whether Canadians would actually buy U.S. alcohol again “is a whole other discussion.”

Eight of Canada’s 10 provinces restrict or ban U.S. alcohol - measures imposed in retaliation for Trump’s previous tariffs on Canadian goods and amid anger over his repeated talk of making Canada the 51st U.S. state.

Ontario, Canada’s most populous province, is especially important. Its government-

run LCBO, one of the world’s largest alcohol purchasers, sold nearly C\$1 billion (\$723 million) in U.S. products annually before pulling them from shelves last year.

While details of the emerging agreement remain vague, Trump has claimed Canada agreed to end tariffs on U.S. agricultural products.

Canada currently allows a set amount of dairy imports at low tariffs. Once imports exceed that limit, much higher tariffs apply. The U.S. says Canada’s supply-management system makes it harder for American dairy producers to gain full access to the Canadian market.

Dominic LeBlanc, the Canadian minister responsible for trade with the U.S., said Canada’s “agriculture sector will be well protected and we have maintained our tough line.”

10-year Treasury tops 4.7%

Bond market alarm pushes Trump team to act on yields

NEW YORK, Aug 20, (AP): Normally quiet, the bond market can occasionally send warning signals loud enough to hit stock markets worldwide and even grab the attention of U.S. presidents and other world leaders.

After the bond market’s alarm bells rose in volume through the summer, the Trump administration announced on Wednesday a move that could help calm it down. The U.S. Treasury Department said it will more than double the amount of U.S. government bonds that it will buy back, and the move worked in getting longer-term yields lower, for now at least.

Yields worldwide had earlier climbed to heights not reached in years and, in some cases, decades, because of the jump in oil prices due to the war with Iran, worries about big and growing debts for governments and other concerns.

The stakes are high because high yields drag on economies and bring downward pressure on stock markets after Wall Street hit records on excitement about big corporate profits and the promise of artificial-intelligence technology.

But what’s to come is still uncertain, and some analysts warn the Treasury Department’s move could even ultimately backfire.

Here’s a look at what’s going on and how things got this way:

In the United States, the centerpiece of the bond market recently touched its highest yield in more than a year. The 10-year Treasury yield, which shows how much interest investors want the U.S. government to pay them before they’ll lend it money for a decade, topped 4.70%, before falling back to 4.65% Wednesday.

That’s up from just 3.97% before the Iran war began in late February, and it’s a significant move for the bond market.

More notably, the 30-year U.S. Treasury yield has jumped well above 5%, back to where it was in 2007, before the 2008 financial crisis sent yields crashing toward zero worldwide.

In Japan, the yield on the 10-year government bond has touched its highest level in nearly 30 years, while the German 10-year yield is back to where it was in 2011.

When the U.S. and other governments have to pay more in interest to borrow money, so do people and companies.

For many U.S. households, that’s most easily seen through rates for mortgages. Such rates have climbed with the 10-year Treasury yield since the Iran war began, and the average rate on a 30-year fixed mortgage is near its highest level in a year.

Higher yields also make it more expensive for U.S. companies to borrow money to build factories and otherwise grow. That’s particularly dangerous at this moment, when big investments in data centers to power AI are a major driver of the U.S. economy’s growth.

If high yields slow the economy, that puts pressure on the stocks. An economic slowdown would threaten how much profit companies can make, which is the lifeblood of the stock market.

High yields undercut the stock market in other ways too. When a Treasury is paying more in interest, that can draw investors away from investments that carry more risk. Why pay record prices for U.S. stocks when a U.S. government bond is paying more than before to wait in relative safety? Gold, bitcoin and many other

investments can also feel downward pressure from high yields.

When yields rise, the U.S. and other governments have to pay more in interest to cover their debts. That’s painful when debt loads for governments worldwide are ballooning as they spend far more than they’re bringing in through revenue.

And if the U.S. government is already paying this much to borrow money when the economy is growing, what will happen if it needs to borrow even more to manage the pain when the next severe recession hits?

That’s why jumps in yields can scare politicians even more than swings in the stock market.

The bond market helped make Liz Truss the United Kingdom’s shortest-serving prime minister in 2022, when it revolted against her plan to cut taxes and raise spending without a way to pay for them.

Last year, President Donald Trump said the bond market may have played a role in his decision to delay many of his proposed tariffs, saying that he noticed investors there “were getting a little queasy.”

U.S. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent’s move is a high-stakes effort to contain the rise in long-term yields, and some analysts are skeptical the impact will last.

“The operation changes almost nothing in terms of the fundamentals, in particular the unchanged need to finance the tidal wave of hyperscaler debt in addition to very large government deficits,” Krishna Guha, an analyst at Evercore ISI, and colleagues wrote in a note to clients.

“Hyperscalers” refers to the Big Tech companies that are borrowing mountains of money to build AI data centers. The bonds they’re selling are competing with U.S. Treasuries for buyers, which can push bond yields higher.

The U.S. government, meanwhile, continues to run its own large deficits regardless of what the Treasury Department does with its repurchases.

“The move could even backfire if the limited firepower results in little sustained impact,” Guha said.

The Federal Reserve could always cut the federal funds rate, which affects very short-term, overnight loans.

But longer-term yields like the 10- and 30-year Treasury yields are set by investors in the bond market. And recently, they have been demanding more in interest to make up for the growing risks of high inflation, continued government deficits and other factors.

The Fed also appears more likely to raise its benchmark short-term rate than to cut it. At its last meeting in late July, three Fed policymakers voted to raise the fed funds rates even as nine voted to keep it unchanged. And Fed Chair Kevin Warsh’s decision to signal little about the Fed’s next moves appeared to push longer-term Treasury yields higher amid questions about what the central bank will do to get inflation back to its 2% target.

The government’s most recent inflation data suggest inflation may be slowing, leading many on Wall Street to forecast the Fed will keep the federal funds rates steady at its next meeting in September. The next big potentially market-moving event may come on Aug. 28, when Warsh will give a speech at the Fed’s annual economic symposium in Jackson Hole, Wyoming.

WASHINGTON, Aug 20, (AP): The national debt surpassed a record \$40 trillion on Wednesday, a staggering milestone as defense costs, social programs like Social Security and Medicare and interest on the burgeoning deficit make up an enormous share of federal spending.

The milestone figure was recorded just five months after the U.S. hit a record \$39 trillion debt in March. It reached \$38 trillion five months before that, in October.

The unprecedented \$40 trillion figure highlights competing administration priorities, from boosting defense spending that the U.S. relies on to carry out President Donald Trump’s almost-6-month-old war in Iran to lowering the cost of gas and groceries.

Kush Desai, a White House spokesman, said the Trump administration “has been focused on slashing waste, fraud, and abuse in federal spending while accelerating economic growth to get America’s debt-to-GDP ratio trending in the right direction.”

However, experts say the exploding debt and the latest record milestone are already affecting Americans’ pocketbooks by raising borrowing costs for things like mortgages and cars, lowering wages from businesses that have less money available to invest, and creating more expensive goods and services.



Twenty dollar bills are counted in North Andover, Mass., on June 15, 2018. (AP Photo/Elise Amendola, File)

“If we want to improve our living standards, today and for the next generation, now is the time for lawmakers to put our nation on a more affordable and sustainable path,” says Michael A. Peterson, CEO of the Peter G. Peterson Foundation, a think tank focused on U.S. fiscal challenges.

The debt has exploded over several presidential administrations, as the nation’s leaders spend more money than it collects in taxes. In recent memory, the multi-year COVID-19 pandemic shut down much of the U.S. economy, where the federal government borrowed heavily during President Trump’s first term and under former

‘No hire, no fire’ market persists amid cautious employers

US jobless claims fall to 206K, signaling tight labor market

WASHINGTON, Aug 20, (AP): Fewer people applied for U.S. unemployment benefits last week, another sign that layoffs remain low and that most Americans enjoy job security.

The Labor Department reported Thursday that jobless claims dropped to 206,000 last week from a revised 212,000 the week before. The four-week average of claims, which smooths out week-to-week ups and downs, ticked up to 204,000 last week from 199,750.

Claims for jobless benefits are a proxy for layoffs, and economists watch them because they can be a harbinger for where the job market is headed. For the past year, claims have been at a historically low range of around 200,000 to 230,000 a week.

“The labor market has yet to show any sign of wear and tear from the surge in oil prices since the start of the war with Iran and the global energy supply shock,” Carl Weinberg, chief economist at High Frequency Economics, wrote in a commentary.

The number of people collecting unemployment benefits the week that ended Aug. 8 rose to 1.8 million from 1.78 million the week before.

The U.S. unemployment rate is low at 4.1%, partly because the economy has proved resilient in the face of higher energy prices. But it’s also

because President Donald Trump’s immigration crackdown and the ongoing retirement of baby boomers mean that fewer people are competing for jobs: More than 1.3 million people have dropped out of the U.S. labor force over the past year.

The job market is tough for those looking for their first job and for those who lost their jobs and are looking for new work. At the same time, companies, remembering the worker shortages that followed the end of COVID-19 lockups, are still reluctant to let go of staff, but they aren’t eager to take on new workers. Economists regularly refer to a “no hire, no fire” job market.

In July, companies, government agencies and nonprofits together cut 23,000 jobs. So far this year, employers are adding 61,000 jobs a month. That is an improvement on the 9,700 they averaged last year - the weakest hiring outside a recession since 2002. The lingering effects of high interest rates and Trump’s erratic trade policies discouraged companies from hiring in 2025.

Hiring this year remains well below the 166,000 monthly jobs created, on average, in 2023 and 2024, let alone the 491,000 a month recorded during the 2021-2022 hiring boom that followed pandemic lockdowns.

Wendy’s, Uber, Lyft pricing tactics fuel backlash, scrutiny

FTC proposes cracking down on hidden personalized pricing

NEW YORK, Aug 20, (AP): Companies that secretly vary prices based on how much they think individual customers will pay could face federal charges under a proposed policy released Wednesday by the Federal Trade Commission.

“When consumers see a listed price, they expect it to be (the) same price that everyone else sees, not the retailer’s estimate of how much they are willing to pay based on their personal data,” FTC Chairman Andrew Ferguson said in a statement.

The FTC has had its eye on personalized pricing for several years. In a preliminary report filed in January 2025, the agency found that grocers, clothing companies and others were using third-party companies to help them individualize online prices based on shoppers’ locations, browsing histories and other factors, including how long they left items in their virtual shopping carts.

In one hypothetical example, the FTC said a consumer profiled as a new parent might be shown higher-priced baby thermometers on the first page of their search results.

Ferguson said the FTC doesn’t have the legal authority to ban personalized pricing in all circumstances. But under the proposed policy, businesses would have to “clearly and conspicuously disclose” if they are engaging in personalized pricing and share the types of data they’re using to set those prices.

The proposed policy states that companies engaged in personalized pricing without revealing the practice and the data behind it could violate the FTC Act, which prohibits unfair or deceptive practices in the marketplace.

The FTC is seeking comment on the policy for 30 days.

Several retail trade groups didn’t comment directly on the FTC’s proposal Wednesday.

The National Retail Federation, which represents big companies like Walmart, Target and



FTC Chairman Andrew Ferguson speaks in the Eisenhower Executive Office Building at the White House complex, May 26, 2026, in Washington. (AP Photo/Mark Schiefelbein, File)

Macy’s as well as smaller stores, said retailers want to continue to offer incentives like loyalty and rewards programs, which collect personal data and provide offers tailored to individuals.

“NRF has and will continue to aggressively advocate to protect these programs that deliver timely savings and personalized offers that are relevant to each shopper’s interests,” said David French, NRF’s executive vice president of government relations.

FMI, a trade group for the U.S. grocery industry, said Wednesday it was reviewing the proposal and didn’t have immediate comment. But in a letter FMI sent to U.S. senators this month after a subcommittee hearing on personalized pricing, FMI also said it hoped to preserve shopper loyalty programs.

In the letter, FMI also noted that electronic shelf labels, which are becoming increasingly common at grocers and retailers like Walmart, don’t automatically change prices based on individual shoppers.

The Retail Industry Leaders Association,

a trade group that represents Best Buy, Home Depot, Dollar General and 200 other retailers, didn’t comment on the new proposal Wednesday but cited its own letter sent to U.S. senators earlier this month.

In the letter, the association said retailers don’t use consumers’ personal data to increase prices because that would jeopardize customer loyalty.

“As shoppers demonstrate an increased willingness to seek out lower prices, competition among retailers intensifies to meet customers’ needs, creating a strong and continuous incentive for retailers to offer attractive prices, discounts and value,” the letter said.

The FTC’s action comes amid consumer unease about pricing tactics. Wendy’s faced a backlash in 2024 after it said it was considering charging more for its menu items during peak times. Uber and Lyft have also been in lawmakers’ crosshairs for their surge-pricing practices.

Several states, including Maryland, Connecticut and New Jersey, have already passed laws prohibiting personalized pricing at grocery stores. California and New York are also considering legislation that would ban personalized pricing.

New Jersey also placed a one-year moratorium on new electronic shelf labels despite retailers’ assurances that the labels aren’t used for personalized pricing and can actually help consumers by, say, automatically lowering prices for foods that are about to expire.

The consumer advocacy organization Consumer Reports said Wednesday that the FTC’s proposal was encouraging but might still require consumers to read detailed disclosures on pricing while shopping online.

The group said the FTC and Congress should instead follow the states’ lead and ban companies from using customer data to personalize prices in the first place.

Why early-retirement inflation can be especially costly

Inflation can be scary for retirees. True, Social Security provides inflation increases in line with the consumer price index, or CPI. But any portfolio income, save allocations to inflation-protected bonds, isn't inherently inflation-protected. And if inflation occurs early in your retirement, those higher prices will do more damage throughout retirement, potentially jeopardizing your portfolio's ability to last.

To gauge your inflation risk and how strenuously you need to defend against it, ask yourself three questions.

You may not have stopped to consider it before, but CPI is meant to capture the spending experiences of all consumers. Categories like housing receive the biggest weighting in the CPI calculation, while recreation and apparel get smaller weightings.

But a retired older adult who no longer has a mortgage will likely have smaller housing-related outlays, as a percentage of household spending, than the general population, but healthcare expenditures may well be a bigger share of the budget.

Given those variations, it can be helpful to use the CPI's weightings as a starting point for understanding inflation's impact on your household. But you can get closer to a personal inflation rate by looking at your actual spending in each of the major categories alongside the inflation we're seeing in those areas.

Next look at how much of your cash flow needs are coming from income sources that have some inflation insulation.

Social Security is an ideal income source because individuals receive income adjustments that track CPI. Some public-sector pensions also

track CPI or offer inflation adjustments that are even more generous. If you have a fixed annuity with an inflation rider, you'll also see your income adjusted by a fixed percentage per year, though it won't perfectly track CPI. (You can't buy an annuity whose payouts are linked to CPI today, unfortunately.)

On the portfolio side, I bonds and Treasury Inflation-Protected Securities are the only investments that are specifically structured to protect against inflation. That's why building a laddered portfolio of TIPS bonds, with one to mature in each year of retirement, can be a straightforward way to address inflation risk with your portfolio withdrawals. You could invest enough in the TIPS ladder to deliver inflation-adjusted income to cover any fixed living expenses, above and beyond what you can address with Social Security and/or a pension.

Other portfolio constituents don't offer as precise a structural defense against inflation, but some asset types do have a good track record of gaining during inflationary periods. Commodities-tracking investments, quite intuitively, top the list: As Amy Arnott notes in this article, they gained ground in all six of the inflationary periods she examined. Stock returns, meanwhile, have been inconsistent or poor in inflationary periods. However, they've done a phenomenal job of beating inflation over time. Inflation has run at about a 3% rate since the late 1920s, while equities have gained about 10% on a nominal basis. Thus, a way to think about stocks is that they're a long-run defense against inflation but won't necessarily protect your purchasing power year in and year out.

At the other extreme, fixed-income sources that deliver income in nomi-

nal/noninflation-adjusted terms, whether cash or bonds, will tend to be vulnerable in inflationary periods; rising prices have the potential to gobble up all of your income. There are still good reasons to hold cash and bonds in your portfolio- ballast in recessionary environments, for one thing-but their vulnerability in inflationary environments is a major reason not to overdo them.

Finally, consider where you are in your retirement. As Jamie Hopkins and others have pointed out, high inflation early in retirement is just another form of sequence risk, like bad market returns early in retirement. The reason is that if inflation flares up early in someone's retirement period, those higher costs will elevate costs through the whole retirement period; deflation is very rare.

In our retirement spending research, we found that those who started retirement at the beginning of a period with unusually high inflation would have a more difficult time sustaining spending for a full 30-year period. To be clear, not every person who retires into a high-inflation environment will run out of money: There have been historical periods where market returns have been strong enough to offset the drag of higher costs. However, because you can't know how the market will behave as retirement unfolds, it's wise to curtail spending (to the extent that you can) if inflation happens to flare up early in your retirement. Amy has written extensively about various dynamic withdrawal strategies that can help improve retirees' odds of success in varying market conditions and boost their lifetime portfolio income. (AP)

Imports, exports hit record highs

Japan trade deficit widens for 3rd month

TOKYO, Aug 20, (AP): Japan's imports and exports set records in July and soaring energy costs and a weak yen helped extend a trade deficit for a third month, government data showed.

Japan's trade deficit totaled 634.5 billion yen (\$4 billion) last month, marking the third straight month of red ink, the Finance Ministry said in a preliminary report Thursday.

Imports surged 27.8% from the same month a year ago to a seasonally adjusted 12.15 trillion yen (\$77 billion).

The war in Iran has sent crude oil prices soaring. Japan, which imports almost all its oil, previously relieved heavily on oil imports from the Middle East through the Strait of Hormuz, which remains effectively closed.

Exports rose 23.2% to 11.51 trillion yen (\$73 billion), as auto exports to the U.S. and

other nations remained strong. Shipments of semiconductors and other electronic devices were also healthy. Japan's exports have now grown every month for almost a year.

By value, both imports and exports rose to the highest levels in July, since comparable data became available in January 1979, according to the ministry.

Japan has been seeking alternative sources for energy imports, including the U.S.

Japan's central bank has intervened to prop up the currency, but that has had little lasting impact. The yen's weakness is related to larger causes like Japan's socioeconomic clout, which has been weakening, analysts say.

The U.S. dollar is trading at about 158 yen lately, lower than the levels in July, when it cost more than 160 yen, but still higher than what it was a year ago at

140 yen.

A weak yen can work as a boon for Japan's giant exporters, like Toyota Motor Corp., because it boosts the value of overseas earnings.

Toyota and other exporters have reported hefty earnings recently, raking in the benefits of the weak yen.

But the weak yen makes raw materials and other essentials such as food and oil more expensive when purchased abroad.

Analysts increasingly have said Prime Minister Sanae Takaiichi's policies have had minimal effect so far in turning around Japan's economy.

Still, she is likely to stay in power, at least for the next several months, as no election is scheduled and her popularity with voters remains relatively high.

China still dominates processing

The US & others turn to Brazil for rare earths, raising environmental concerns

SAO PAULO, Aug 20, (AP): In the global race to secure rare earths that are key for everything from mobile phones to green technologies, Brazil is emerging as an alternative to China's dominance, particularly for the United States and Australia, according to an analysis of mining permits by The Associated Press and Reporter Brasil.

That could boost the economy of Latin America's largest and most populous nation, which is second only to China in rare earth reserves.

Foreign capital is rushing in. Nearly half of the 2,727 overall rare earth exploration applications - or 42% - in Brazil were made by subsidiaries of foreign mining companies or firms with foreign ownership stakes. Eleven of the 20 companies with the largest number of applications are backed by foreign investment, mostly from Australia, the U.S. and Canada.

The analysis reviewed all National Mining Agency records through June. Rare earth exploration applications have surged, with more than 86% filed in the past three years, including 268 in the first half of 2026, according to the agency's public data.

But the mining, which in some cases could happen near reserves in the Amazon rainforest, also comes with major environmental risks. Indigenous communities are beginning to sound the alarm. It also raises questions about relations between the U.S. and Brazil, long trading partners, and Brazil and China, which have become closer in recent years.

"Brazil's rare earths are significant not just because of the sheer size of the deposits," said Robert Muggah, co-founder of the Igarape Institute, a Brazilian think tank, "but because they sit at the intersection of resource nationalism, energy transition demand, Western supply-chain diversification and competition with China's rare earth dominance."

Rare earths are essential in digital and defense technologies, used in electronics, magnets and batteries. They are also used in wind turbines and electric vehicle motors, critical to the transition away from fossil fuels like oil, gas and coal that cause global warming. The International Energy Agency estimated in 2022 that demand for rare earths could increase at least threefold by 2040.

The AP-Reporter Brasil analysis identified a wave of U.S. investment after China last year restricted rare earth exports in response to U.S. tariffs. That put tremendous pressure on U.S. companies, and many experts believe it brought President Donald Trump back to the negotiating table with Beijing.

The new U.S. investment has included the purchase of Brazil's only commercial rare earth producer, Serra Verde, by a firm in which the U.S. government has a stake. The analysis also drew on corporate ownership records compiled through Cruzagrafos, a platform developed by the Brazilian Association of Investigative Journalism.

At least 25% of the applications are to mine in areas that overlap with or are located within 10 kilometers (6 miles) of 283 protected areas and Indigenous territories, according to the Energy Transition Observatory, a platform developed by Reporter Brasil that cross-references geolocation data from mining projects and protected lands. Experts say mining projects within this buffer zone can cause environmental damage.

Depending on what is mined, toxic chemicals can be released and radioactive waste generated. Other potential impacts include deforestation, air pollution, noise and polluted water seeping into rivers and lakes, which can poison fish populations and sully drinking water supplies.

The path from an exploration permit to commercial production can take five to 10 years, requiring companies to submit technical studies and exploration plans to the National Mining Agency and envi-



A mine operated by Serra Verde Mining digs for rare earth elements including neodymium, praseodymium, terbium and dysprosium, which are essential for the production of permanent magnets, in Minacu, Goias state, Brazil, July 28, 2025. (AP Photo/Eraldo Peres, File)

ronmental regulators. Projects affecting Indigenous territories must also undergo consultation with the communities.

But rising demand has spurred efforts to speed approvals. Brazil's Ministry of Mines and Energy, under President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, has discussed streamlining environmental licensing for strategic mining projects. Sen. Flávio Bolsonaro, a leading candidate challenging Lula in October's election, has also proposed faster permitting for mining.

"Mining always leaves a footprint," said Gilvan Magalhães, president of the residents' association of Familia Magalhaes, a small Afro-Brazilian community in Goias state in central Brazil. Their territory with some 30 families overlaps with mining claims by the Canadian firm Aclara Resources, which last year secured \$5 million in project development financing from the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation.

Aclara in a statement said its project initially overlapped with the community's territory, but "no mining activities will take place there." Still, residents fear operations that could start as early as 2028 could affect local springs and wildlife.

Australia, the U.S. and Canada offer investment mechanisms that reduce risk in a sector where few prospects become profitable mines, said Julio Nery, director of mining affairs at the Brazilian Mining Institute.

Of every 1,000 potential rare earth prospects, only about 100 justify drilling and exploration. "And out of those 100, you'll end up with only two good projects. The success rate is not very high," Nery said.

Australian companies have taken a leading role in Brazil, accounting for 695 mining applications. Nearly a third were filed by Borborema Recursos Minerais, a subsidiary of the Sydney-based Brazilian Rare Earths Pty Ltd.

"We recognize that the critical minerals environment at the moment is quite concentrated," Sophie Davies, Australia's ambassador to Brazil, told the AP in an interview without specifically referencing China. "The challenge is where and how the markets are traded and how minerals are produced."

U.S. companies ranked second with 347 applications.

Alpha Minerals Brazil, controlled by Texas-based Rare Earth Americas Inc., accounted for 181. Originally incorporated in the Cayman Islands, the company moved to the U.S. in 2025 and says it is "on a mission to become the premier new source of rare earth supply for America."

Other major filers include Mineracao Apollo, partly controlled by Nevada-based Atlas Lithium, and Aclara, which recently opened a pilot processing plant in Louisiana, where it plans to turn rare earth materials into metals and alloys.

In February, the only company producing rare earths in Brazil, Serra Verde, secured a \$565 million financing package from the U.S. International Development

Finance Corporation. In April, USA Rare Earth announced an agreement to acquire Serra Verde for about \$2.8 billion, three months after the U.S. Department of Commerce announced plans to provide up to \$1.6 billion in support to USA Rare Earth. The department receives over 16 million shares in the deal, finalized in June.

Serra Verde is the only producer outside Asia with capacity to supply all four magnetic rare earth elements - neodymium, praseodymium, dysprosium and terbium - essential to automotive, medical, renewable energy, electronics, robotics, defense and aerospace industries.

"The Western rare earth sector stands at a critical inflection point, as governments and strategic industries urgently seek reliable sources of critical rare earths - particularly scarce heavy rare earths," Thras Moraitis, CEO of Serra Verde Group, said in a statement during the acquisition.

Leonardo Durans, a director at Brazil's Trade Ministry overseeing rare earth policy, said the country will not take sides in the U.S.-China dispute.

The AP-Reporter Brasil analysis showed that Chinese companies had filed no rare earth mining applications in Brazil as of June, but they have shown interest.

Mineracao Taboca, Brazil's largest tin producer, was acquired last year by state-owned China Nonferrous Metal Mining Group, which operates a cassiterite mine in the Amazon rainforest and has announced plans to study rare earth potential in the area.

Also last year, Shenghe Resources Holding signed a memorandum of understanding with Brazilian companies WEG Mineracao and Fenrir do Brasil to pursue rare earth opportunities. Fenrir has a mining project in Minas Gerais, a state in the southeast, focused on the exploration of elements including rare earths.

China's rare earth reserves still are thought to be double what Brazil might have. China has an estimated 44 million metric tons, according to the U.S. Geological Survey, while Brazil has an estimated 21 million metric tons, according to its Geological Service.

"The challenge today is that China dominates processing and refining," said Brazilian lawmaker Zé Silva, author of pending legislation that would establish a federal policy on critical minerals and rare earths, set investment priorities and create a national council to monitor significant foreign influence in the sector.

"Under our proposal, companies are welcome to invest, but they must transfer technology to Brazil, including processing capacity."

On Monday, Brazil's president said the Senate would move forward with the proposed law, to keep mining-related jobs in the country and defend national interests.

"We will not allow anyone from outside to come here and exploit our mineral resources, because we want their processing and transformation to happen here," Lula said.

Balboa, Cristobal ports at center of US-China tensions

CK Hutchison seeks over \$1.5 billion from Panama over seized canal ports

HONG KONG, Aug 20, (AP): Hong Kong conglomerate CK Hutchison said Thursday it was seeking more than \$1.5 billion in damages from Panama after the country seized two canal ports caught in the crosshairs of U.S.-China tensions.

CK Hutchison said in the statement that it had begun new arbitration proceedings against Panama and alleged that the Central American country had breached an investment protection treaty through "sovereign acts that targeted a decades-old ports concession" in a "state attack campaign" on the company's assets in the Central American country.

Panama's government in February seized the Balboa and Cristobal ports, located on each end of the Panama Canal, after its Supreme Court ruled that a concession held by CK Hutchison's subsidiary to run the two ports was unconstitutional.

The two ports at each end of the Panama Canal became part of U.S.-China tensions since Donald Trump's return to the White House last year after he alleged China of "running" the canal.

The Panama Canal is managed and owned by Panama. But CK Hutchison's subsidiary Panama Ports Company had run the two ports on the canal from 1997 and had renewed its concession for 25 years in 2021.

Beijing and Hong Kong had hit back at Panama over its takeover of the ports.

CK Hutchison, controlled by the family of Hong Kong's richest man Li Ka-shing, last year announced an initial \$23 billion deal to sell its global ports business, including the two Panama ports, to a consortium involving U.S. investment firm BlackRock. But the deal had made

little progress under geopolitical tensions and legal challenges among China, the U.S. and Panama.

In March, Panama Ports Company had separately sought at least \$2 billion in compensation from Panama over its takeover of the ports which it said was unlawful under international arbitration proceedings. CK Hutchison said the actions were making progress.

CK Hutchison added that Thursday's new proceedings were focused on its treaty rights, which were distinct from Panama Ports Company's contract rights in the earlier arbitration proceedings.

In April, the subsidiary also launched arbitration proceedings against Danish shipping and logistics group Maersk after it took over some of its port operations in Panama. Maersk said at the time that it did not believe it was liable for the claims.

Chinese court sentences founder of troubled property developer Evergrande to life in prison

HONG KONG, Aug 20, (AP): A Chinese court sentenced Chinese property tycoon Hui Ka Yan to life in prison for financial crimes linked to the collapse of his Evergrande real estate group, once the world's most heavily indebted developer.

The decision marks a milestone in Evergrande's saga after it defaulted on more than \$300 billion in liabilities when Chinese authorities cracked down on excessive borrowing in the real estate industry in 2020. That triggered a crunch among many developers and brought on a downturn in the property market that has weighed on the broader economy ever since.

The Shenzhen Intermediate People's Court said Thursday it convicted 67-year-old Hui, who founded Evergrande, of engaging in large-scale financial fraud in inflating the group's assets and concealing its liabilities.

In a statement, the court said Hui, also known as Xu Jiayin, abused his position in orchestrating fraud and misappropriating company assets.

Evergrande group was fined 8.82 billion yuan (\$1.31 billion) and Evergrande Real Estate Group was fined 7 billion yuan (\$1.04 billion), the court said.

"The amount involved is exceptionally large, the circumstances are particularly egregious, and extraordinarily heavy economic losses have been caused," the statement said. "The harm to society is extremely serious. Therefore, severe punishment should be given in accordance with the law."

Hui's sons, Xu Tenghe and Xu Zhijian, were also sentenced alongside senior Evergrande executives and others linked to the group on charges including illegally taking public deposits, fundraising fraud and the illegal use of funds, China's official Xinhua News Agency said. A total of more than 50 individuals got prison terms of between 22 months and 18 years, it said without providing a breakdown of sentencing details.

A photo of Hui's courtroom appearance released

by the Shenzhen court on Thursday showed an aged Hui, who used to be a high-profile figure but had long been out of public view, wearing a navy blue shirt standing between two uniformed officers behind a sign that read "defendant" in Chinese.

Hui pleaded guilty in April to various charges including illegal absorption of public deposits, fraud and bribery after he was detained in China.

China Evergrande was founded in 1996 as China's housing boom was taking off. It defaulted on its debts in 2021 and was ordered to liquidate its assets. The broader downturn in China's massive property sector that ensued has pulled home prices down 20% or more since 2021.

Authorities in Hong Kong and mainland China earlier said their investigations found Evergrande had manipulated its financial data using tactics such as prematurely booking revenue from property sales before completion and delivery of the apartments to buyers. Revenues were overstated by roughly \$80 billion over 2019 and 2020, they said.

Hui was fined 47 million yuan (\$6.5 million) in 2024 and banned from China's securities markets for life by the China Securities Regulatory Commission over inflating company financial results, among other issues.

Once reported to be China's richest man, Hui used to own the football club Guangzhou Evergrande. At one point, he and his companies were involved in investing in and building theme parks and electric vehicles.

His story was one of rags-to-riches. Born in 1958 into a rural family in central China's Henan province, he worked in the steel industry in the 1980s before establishing Evergrande, which then prospered during China's housing market boom. He was one of many businessmen who have also gained political influence by joining a major advisory organization, the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference.



Race against ruin

Papyrus Conservation Summer Seminar student Mimi Zycherman examines a papyrus fragment at the University of Michigan Thursday, Aug. 6, 2026, in Ann Arbor, Mich. (AP)

Papyrus, patience and the preservation of time

ANN ARBOR, Mich., Aug 20, (AP): Shijin Jiang pulled the precision binocular headband magnifier over her eyes and hunched down within a few inches of the ancient text resting on a light board.

Using a pair of hand tools, Shijin carefully inspected the sheet made from the papyrus plant, proceeding with the utmost care. After all, it most likely hadn't been handled in a century - nor read for thousands of years.

The Papyrus Conservation Summer Seminar at the University of Michigan is the only one of its kind in the Americas, according to the university. And it's one of the few in the world designed to convey the best practices for conserving papyrus manuscripts, ancient texts written on rolls or sheets made from the papyrus plant.

"If you touch this papyrus, you can feel the history," said Shijin, a native of China who was among nine scholars from across the globe, including Ireland, Italy and the U.S., who took the 10-day course.

Michigan's Papyrology Collection covers texts and documents from 1000 B.C.E. to 1000 C.E. No institution on this side of the world has more of them, the Ann Arbor school said, giving the researchers access to a vast collection of ancient papyri. There are portions of the Homer epics, "The Odyssey" and "The Iliad," writings by the philosopher Epicurus and the oldest-known copy of the Epistles of Paul.

"Carrying on this tradition is an incredible responsibility, but it also is incredibly fun and rewarding, because there's nothing I love more than getting people together from all over the world, sharing ideas, learning from each other," said Marieka Kaye, who manages library preservation services for physical collections at the University of Michigan Library.



Papyrus Conservation Summer Seminar instructor Marieka Kaye inspects student Mauro Castiello's papyrus fragment and provides him with feedback on his preservation work at the University of Michigan Thursday, Aug. 6, 2026, in Ann Arbor, Mich. (AP)

Kaye said she tried to make "things comfortable and not scary, because a lot of people just feel terrified working on these ancient things."

The seminar introduced the papyrologists and conservators to techniques in the treatment, storage and care of the ancient texts, as well as documentation practices. Papyrus and its ink can crumble, smear or break, so Kaye encouraged the students to carefully remove dirt, sand, salt and debris; use controlled moisture to soften folds and realign fibers; and dry the papyrus slowly under light weight to prevent curling.

The first seminar was held in 2012, and they have been held every two years since, except for the 2020 pandemic year. About 50 students total have taken part.

"If we don't train the next generations of conservators, this is a craft that is going to be lost," said Giuliano Sidro, curator of Michigan's Papyrology Collection.

Michigan has so many papyrus manuscripts on hand that its researchers haven't gone through them all. Some of the items were acquired, while others were excavated, during

university expeditions to the ancient site of Karanis, Egypt, from 1924-35. Francis Willey Kelsey, a Latin professor who died in 1927, was the driving force behind the establishment of the Papyrology Collection. He believed Michigan students studying the ancient world needed access not only to books, but to the tangible remains of antiquity. Today, the Kelsey Museum of Archaeology is a fixture on the Michigan campus. Its collection represents one of the finest compilations of daily-life objects from Greco-Roman Egypt located outside of Cairo.

"This is a place where you make

discoveries, potentially every day, if you just go into the vault, pick out a box and open something up, and you start reading," Sidro said.

Of course, to make sense of it, one needs to be able to decipher Arabic, ancient Greek or Latin, and even Egyptian, one of the earliest known written languages that is now extinct. A few of the seminar participants were able to read the papyri, including Arzak Mohamed, who reads Arabic, and Mauro Castiello, a papyrology doctoral student in Milan, who can translate ancient Greek and Latin.

Kaye said she always tries to in-

clude a student from Egypt among the seminar participants.

Mohamed, a postdoctoral fellow at Macquarie University in Sydney, had heard about the papyrus seminar for years and always wanted to attend. The 42-year-old mother of three is from Fayoum, Egypt, not far from Karanis.

"Now, I can transfer this information from Michigan to Egypt and even in Australia," she said. "I will be like the chain, connecting between the three countries."

"By saving this information, we can transfer the knowledge to the next generation," she added.



Papyrus Conservation Summer Seminar instructor Marieka Kaye, left, has a discussion with student Shijin (Giada) Jiang, right, at the University of Michigan Thursday, Aug. 6, 2026, in Ann Arbor, Mich. (AP)



Dan Smyers, left, and Shay Mooney of Dan + Shay pose for a portrait on Thursday, July 30, 2026, in New York. (AP)

Dan + Shay bring emotional candor to 'Young'

NEW YORK, Aug 20, (AP): The lead single from Grammy Award-winning duo Dan + Shay's forthcoming album "Young" is a hard pivot from the wedding songs that make up so much of the country pair's discography.

(EDITOR'S NOTE - This story includes discussion of suicide. If you or someone you know needs help, the national suicide and crisis lifeline in the U.S. is available by calling or texting 988. There is also an online chat at 988lifeline.org)

"Say So," with its big-hearted and hopeful chorus, is about suicide prevention. It was written in tribute to Dan Smyers and Shay Mooney's late mentor Ben Vaughn, head of Warner Chappell Music Publishing, who died by suicide a year before.

"If you're going through hell, you're not alone," Mooney sings. "If you need somebody, say so."

"For one of the first times in our career, I was like, 'I'm not like sure if we should tackle this,'" Smyers told The Associated Press.

But in the studio, it became an inevitability - even though they were uncertain. "We were just sharing stories

about our friend. And it just fell out of us. A verse and a chorus in, and I think we were all just like, 'I don't know, man. Is this too heavy to tackle?'" Smyers continued.

Creating the demo together, alongside co-writers David Hodges and Jimmy Robbins, became therapeutic.

"We owed it to our friend Ben," he said. "We owe it to the community, who he meant so much to. And I feel like we owed it to ourselves to at least see that one through to the finish line."

What they didn't realize is that the day they started work on the song was also what would've been Vaughn's 50th birthday. "It was more than a coincidence," he said. "That was the sign that this song could help somebody."

"Say So" may be the heaviest song off "Young," but it is also a thematic center for the record - 10 autobiographical tracks of crossover country that reflect their lives, now, with new emotional vulnerability - what Mooney labels "a very life-giving thing."

The album opens with its title track, the stripped-back acoustic arpeggio "Young," what Smyers describes as "a message from your future self to your present and past

self, about the passage of time and appreciating the moment."

But there's an additional, gendered resonance. "Men - I just think, maybe I'm generalizing - don't do as good of a job of sharing their feelings and emotions. And I'm saying that because that's me," he said.

"You're tough. You bottle it up. But when I finally broke down that wall, it changed my life. And I think that song just talks about aging as a man."

That's yet another difficult subject, which might also explain why, before creating the 10 songs that make up "Young," Dan + Shay wrote and scrapped an entire album's worth of material. The tracks that made up the final collection took time, open and honest conversation, and a hearty dose of self-reflection.

It's why there may be more religiosity to this album than in the previous works - from the single "Her, The Kids and Jesus" to the album's two mentions of a King James Bible.

"Her, the kids and Jesus," that's kind of a snapshot at what my life looks like right now," Mooney said.

Film

Ullom’s film captures a generation stuck in transition

Gen Z gets existential horror in ‘It Ends’

LOS ANGELES, Aug 20, (AP): Every generation deserves its own postgrad malaise movie. Not every attempt is going to be “The Graduate” or “Frances Ha,” but even when they’re mediocre, they’re also often a pure expression from a young filmmaker about what their contemporaries are feeling at that exact moment.

Though the details may change - the clothes, the hairstyles, the gadgets, the soundtrack - the vibe kind of stays the same even in a high concept horror like “It Ends,” in which four friends find themselves on an endless road to nowhere. It’s kind of reassuring, unlike, say, the encroaching doom of adulthood.

“It Ends” was written and directed by Alexander Ullom, who graduated from college during the pandemic and is open about how he struggled with dissociative depression. You don’t need to know this to watch the film, but it makes sense once you’ve met James (Phinehas Yoon). He’s the rational and inquisitive one whose seen-it-all-already jadedness about his future is its own kind of poison.

Somehow, however, he hasn’t alienated his high school friends. They still like him enough to help him move into his new apartment (which is, by all accounts, super depressing). We meet them as they all cram into a white Jeep Cherokee to find some food. Tyler (Mitchell Cole) is driving, and Fisher (Noah Toth) is leading a spirited discussion about which animals they’d pick to defend



This image released by Neon shows Phinehas Yoon, from left, Akira Jackson, and Noah Toth in a scene from “It Ends.” (AP)

them (10,000 rats, 50 hawks, one man with a gun, or five gorillas etc., etc.). It was, apparently, a popular meme for a time. Day (Akira Jackson) is navigating with her phone’s maps app and wondering whether she could choose gorillas trained to use guns as a loophole.

Tyler is the outlier in this group, the one who didn’t go to college. He went into the military and has been working for some time in HVAC. He’s even talking about wanting to get married sooner rather than later. And he’s the only one with a discernable Southern accent (they’re apparently in Florida).

The others are all just out of college and really feeling it. Day is

ambling around on job search sites, trying to put her graphic design degree to work. James has an entry level engineering job and his future all mapped out (although the way he describes his inevitable life in a Midwestern city in which he’s married with kids and making six figures sounds like a death sentence). He’d rather, he says, be in a medically induced coma hooked up to “oxy serotonin” cocktails. Personally, I prefer Noah Baumbach’s line from “Kicking and Screaming” about wishing they were just retiring after a lifetime of hard work to the drugged out coma thought, but I long ago aged out of the postgrad demo.

Is it believable that these four

would have stayed friends in high school and beyond? Not really, especially Tyler. But there needs to be a few different types to handle their new predicament of seemingly being stuck forever on a country road in this Jeep. Some hope in vain for a way out. Some are content to pass the time as happily and aimlessly as they can (learn dances, tell jokes, scream sometimes). James just wants to understand. And then there’s the question of the zombie-like people in the woods who attack when they stop for more than 90 seconds, which is good for a few jump scares. The metaphors might not be especially subtle, but the film does have a kind of hypnotic appeal.

With its minimalist approach, “It Ends” almost feels like a pandemic-era production. It’s a neat concept that wears a little thin after a while, but it’s a movie that shows promise not only in Ullom’s ability to create a sustained, ominous mood, but in his eye for casting a group of talented and essentially unknown actors.

Ullom’s bio says that he “makes films for anyone going through stuff.” And Gen Z, like all the generations before them and all the generations after, are certainly in the thick of “going through stuff.” Maybe “It Ends” is just what they need.

“It Ends,” a Neon release in New York and Los Angeles on Friday and nationwide Aug. 28, is rated R by the Motion Picture Association for “pervasive language.” Running time: 89 minutes. Two and a half stars out of four.

Food

Fangshan’s chefs recreate dishes with traditional methods

China’s imperial cuisine lives on today



A waiter prepares to serve dishes for customers at Fangshan Restaurant in Beijing on July 23, 2026. (AP)



Chef Fan Liangliang demonstrates making a dish at Fangshan Restaurant inside Beihai Park in Beijing on July 23, 2026. (AP)



Chef Zhou Tong prepares the minced pork pancake at Fangshan Restaurant inside Beihai Park in Beijing on July 23, 2026. (AP)



Chef Zhou Tong makes the minced pork pancake at Fangshan Restaurant inside Beihai Park in Beijing on July 23, 2026. (AP)

BEIJING, Aug 20, (AP): It is said that Empress Dowager Cixi once dreamed of a pastry during the final decades of imperial China.

The same treat was served to her at breakfast the following morning. Delighted, she summoned her chef and rewarded him with a silver ingot.

“It was originally called ‘minced meat pancake,’ but because it had fulfilled her dream, it later became known as ‘dream pastry,’” said Zhou Tong, a chef at Fangshan Restaurant in Beijing.

Fangshan specializes in imperial cuisine, preserving dishes like the one associated with Cixi and other culinary traditions from China’s imperial court. The restaurant was founded in 1925 by former chefs from the Qing Dynasty at Beihai Park, a garden where royals from several dynasties rested, handled government affairs and performed ritual sacrifices.

“The name Fangshan literally means ‘imitating the imperial cuisine,’” said assistant general manager Di Xin.

A handful of other Beijing restaurants also serve versions of imperial cuisine, while the Palace Museum preserves Qing-dynasty objects tied

to court dining, including pastry molds.

Imperial cuisine encompasses the meals emperors ate daily and the feasts their courts held throughout the year.

Each had its own rituals. Drinking milk tea, for instance, was an important first step at Qing-dynasty banquets, said Teng Deyong, a researcher at China’s Palace Museum.

During the banquet, the emperor bestowed wine or food on princes and officials. Recipients performed rites and paid their respects to him before they ate or drank.

Aside from banquets, sacrificial rituals were held. They followed a separate system and could involve meat offerings.

“At the Palace of Earthly Tranquility, there was the eating of sacrificial pork, which we know was one of the most important rituals of the Qing imperial court,” Teng said.

In that ritual, fatty pork was boiled without salt. After the ceremony, it was distributed among guests, and receiving the sacrificial meat was considered a great honor.

Unseasoned food also appears in earlier Chinese ritual traditions. Wandi Wang, a professor of Chinese at Lehigh University in Pennsylvania,

said the “Book of Rites,” a classical work on rites and ceremonies, describes a meat broth known as “grand stew” that was served without seasoning during sacrificial ceremonies.

“The absence of added flavoring was itself meaningful: the unseasoned dish evoked an earlier and simpler way of cooking and thus expressed a ritual ideal of honoring antiquity and remembering cultural origins,” Wang said.

Pastries were key to imperial cuisine, and the court had an institution specialized in making them.

Sweets made at Fangshan by Zhou include Cixi’s dream pastry and a small steamed corn bun. Their recipes are rooted in the imperial court.

“When customers visit, our servers often tell them the stories behind these dishes,” Zhou said. “People enjoy them even more because they carry such meaningful history.”

He learned his pastry-making technique from a master who had also learned from a mentor. It’s a craft that has been passed from one generation to the next.

Traditional imperial methods mean cooking must be done by hand - no blenders or food processors are

allowed. Ingredients like beans are pulverized using sieves and certain flours are handled in custom-made copper pots.

“A machine may be more convenient, but the texture is completely different,” Zhou said. “You lose the delicate graininess and sandy mouthfeel that handcrafted pastries are supposed to have.”

Among Fangshan’s bestselling delicacies are the pea flour cake and the red bean roll. During the busy season, customers order more than 200 of the cakes per day.

When he joined Fangshan as a kitchen apprentice, now-executive chef Fan Liangliang had to relearn everything he was taught at culinary school. Rather than employing techniques that allowed him to work quickly, he embraced slower processes he had never heard of.

One of them is “Nizihuo,” which Fan said involves mincing ingredients such as fish, shrimp or chicken into a smooth paste. It is then reshaped into decorative forms such as frogs, birds and flowers.

“This is one of the hallmarks of imperial cuisine,” Fan said. “Every dish had to be innovative, visually beautiful, nutritious and worthy of presentation on the imperial dining table.”

No return to royal duties

Harry, Meghan & children set to return to UK this fall



Prince Harry, and Meghan, the Duke and Duchess of Sussex, walk along the boardwalk after meeting volunteer first responders from Bondi Surf Bathers’ Life Saving Club, during a visit to Bondi Beach, Australia, Friday, April 17, 2026. (AP)

LONDON, Aug 20, (AP): Prince Harry and his wife, Meghan, have decided to return to the United Kingdom for an extended stay starting this fall, but they won’t resume their roles as working members of the royal family, The Associated Press learned Wednesday.

The couple’s children, Prince Archie, 7, and Princess Lilibet, 5, have already enrolled at British schools and will start classes in September, according to a person close to the Sussexes who was not authorized to speak publicly. The family plans to live at a private, non-royal residence outside of London, but plans to maintain their home in Montecito, California, and their vacation property in Portugal.

The Daily Telegraph first reported the story. When asked to discuss the reports by the AP at a roundtable event with U.S. veterans in Washington Wednesday night, Harry replied, “Nothing to say.”

Harry and Meghan gave up their royal duties and moved to California more than six years ago to earn their living through lucrative contracts with Netflix and Spotify. Although relations with the rest of the royal family have soured since then, Harry has recently expressed an interest in reconciliation so he could spend more time with his father, King Charles III, who is being treated for an undisclosed form of cancer.

Charles was informed of the couple’s plans on Sunday. Harry and Meghan visited the U.K. last month.

Buckingham Palace has a policy of not commenting on speculation about non-working members of the royal family. A representative for Harry and Meghan declined to comment.

According to a source close to the Sussexes, Meghan will continue heading her As Ever company from the U.K., while Harry can spend more time working with his U.K.-based charities.

Harry and Meghan have had a stormy relationship with the royal family ever since they decamped to a mansion in the exclusive Southern California enclave of Montecito.

In a series of interviews and Harry’s memoir “Spare,” the couple said they left Britain to escape the restrictions of royal life and criticized palace officials for being insensitive to Meghan’s mental health while alleging that at least one member of the royal family had expressed racist views when she was pregnant with their first child. Meghan describes herself as biracial.

Those tensions were exacerbated by Harry’s long-running legal battle with Britain’s tabloid newspapers, which he alleges illegally hacked his phones and invaded his privacy when he was younger. The prince has lost a series of lawsuits against the media, including one against the publisher of the Daily Mail, which concluded last month.

Stars & Stripes publisher retires

WASHINGTON, Aug 20, (AP): The longtime publisher of Stars and Stripes has announced his retirement, ending a decades-long career with the military newspaper as Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth’s Pentagon moves to exert editorial control and eliminate what it asserts are “woke distractions.”

Max D. Lederer Jr. announced his retirement, effective at the end of September, in a memo to staff on Tuesday, as well as in an interview with Stars and Stripes. In the memo, seen by The Associated Press, Lederer, the second full-time civilian in the position, wrote that it had “become clear that my philosophy of leadership, and my understanding of the value and mission of Stars and Stripes, differ in fundamental ways from the direction the leadership of the Department of Defense has for the organization.”

The announcement comes less than four months after the Pentagon fired Jacqueline Smith, ombudsman for the newspaper, whose job was to safeguard editorial independence. The news outlet is partly funded by the Defense Department, but has a legacy of independence from military and government leadership. “No one should be surprised that they’re kicking out the one person charged by Congress with protecting Stars and Stripes’ editorial independence,” Smith wrote in a column.

Stars and Stripes has recently been at the forefront of some of the reporting on conditions for sailors on the

USS Abraham Lincoln and concerns for their mental health during the aircraft carrier’s long deployment - concerns that President Donald Trump has downplayed.

The Pentagon did not immediately respond to a request for comment on Lederer’s retirement, which comes seven months after the department



Max D. Lederer Jr. announced in a social media post that it would essentially overhaul the newspaper to align with its current messaging.

Hegseth’s spokesman, Sean Parnell, wrote on X in January that the Pentagon “is returning Stars and Stripes to its original mission: reporting for our warfighters.” He said the department will “refocus its content away from woke distractions.”

“Stars and Stripes will be custom tailored to our warfighters,” Parnell wrote. “It will focus on warfighting, weapons systems, fitness, lethality, survivability and ALL THINGS MILITARY. No more repurposed DC gossip columns; no more Associated Press reprints.”

More broadly, the developments at Stars and Stripes come against a backdrop of increased efforts by Hegseth to control media coverage of the department.

Ex-Meta director says Instagram ignored kids & prioritized profits

OAKLAND, California, Aug 20, (AP): A former engineering director at Meta who has testified before Congress about child safety on Instagram told jurors Wednesday at a landmark trial that the company took a “don’t ask, don’t tell” approach on kids under 13 on its platforms.

During his second day of testimony, Arturo Béjar said Meta consistently prioritized profits over safety in designing its products, focusing on how often and for how long people used them, even if it was detrimental to their mental well-being.

“If you step away from the product, they are not going to make any money,” he said.

The trial that began Tuesday in federal court in Oakland, California, pits Meta against the states of California, Colorado, Kentucky and New Jersey and is expected to last about six weeks. The four states were among 29 that sued the tech giant in 2023 over child safety and privacy - the other 25 will go to trial later. The company also faces lawsuits in state courts, including one underway in Tennessee.

The lawsuit accuses Meta of contributing to the youth mental health crisis by knowingly and deliberately designing features that addict children to its platforms and hide these harms from the public. It also argues that Meta routinely collects data on children under 13 without their parents’ consent, in violation of federal law.

Meta says users must be at least 13 years old to create an account, in line with the law, called the Children’s Online Privacy Protection Act, or COPPA.

“The attitude in particular on Instagram was ‘Don’t ask, don’t tell,’” Béjar said in response to a question about his perception of the company’s attitude towards users under 13.

Congo to receive 70,000 doses of Ervebo vaccine

DRC Ebola outbreak remains public health emergency of int’l concern: WHO

GENEVA, Aug 20, (Agencies): The World Health Organization (WHO) Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said that the Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) remains a “public health emergency of international concern”.

In a post on his (X) account Tedros called on all governments and partners to strengthen cooperation and work together to step up efforts to contain the outbreak and mobilize the resources needed to protect communities in the coming months.

He said that the Emergency Committee is expected to issue updated recommendations in the coming days to the DRC government and other countries at risk of the disease.

During his participation in the second meeting of the Emergency Committee earlier today, Tedros warned that the outbreak was spreading rapidly and that the risk of further national and international transmission remained high.

“This is now the second-largest Ebola outbreak ever recorded and it is moving faster than any previous Ebola outbreak” he cautioned, describing its pace as “unprecedented speed”.

He stated that nearly 5,000 people have been infected and more than 2,300 have died across six provinces and 55 health zones warning that

“the epidemic is far from being under control.”

“What concerns me most is where people are dying at home in their communities outside treatment centres, and outside known contact lists” Tedros said. “Every death like that points to a chain of transmission we have not yet found.”

He stressed that the risk extends beyond the DRC’s borders noting that Uganda had stopped transmission following an initial spillover while a traveller carried the virus to France last month.

Ghebreyesus said announced that for the first time two vaccines specifically designed against Bundibugyo virus, a type of Ebola virus, have entered human clinical trials. A separate vaccine has demonstrated cross-protection in animal studies and is being advanced toward a Phase 3 trial.

The UN Official also said the WHO-sponsored PARTNERS treatment trial has enrolled 100 patients.

He added that the response still requires faster data sharing enhanced surveillance sustained financing improved access and security and stronger cross-border coordination.

The WHO declared the Bundibugyo virus disease outbreak in the DRC a public health emergency of international concern three months ago.

Meanwhile, Congo will receive



A health worker sprays a colleague with disinfectant after taking part in a burial service for 3-year-old Mave Mercienne, who died of Ebola, in Bunia, Ituri province, eastern Congo on Aug 18. (AP)

70,000 doses of the Ervebo vaccine, which has been effective in past Ebola outbreaks, the World Health Organization and partners said Thursday, announcing a step seen as a major boost to efforts to contain what officials have described as the fastest Ebola outbreak in history.

The Ervebo vaccine is licensed for use against Ebola virus, one of the viruses that cause Ebola disease, but not for Bundibugyo virus, which is responsible for the current outbreak.

WHO said in a statement that while it’s not known whether Ervebo may protect against the Bundibugyo virus, “early laboratory and animal data suggest it may provide some protection.”

The allocation includes 20,000 doses for a Phase 3 clinical trial to understand the impact of the vaccine on the Bundibugyo virus, the agency said. The remaining 50,000 doses will be used for front-line and health workers as recommended by WHO experts.

The outbreak raging on in eastern Congo has so far killed 2,476 people out of the 5,208 confirmed cases.

It has infected and killed more people at a greater speed than any other Ebola outbreak in history, and is spreading about three times faster than that of 2014-2016 across West Africa, which was the deadliest Ebola outbreak on record with more than 11,000 deaths.

The lack of approved vaccines or treatments for the rare Bundibugyo virus has been a major issue for responders. Also, most new cases are being reported outside of the people being monitored, showing it has spread quickly and left surveillance teams racing to catch up.

The outbreak has infected and killed more people at a greater speed than any other outbreak in history. The World Health Organization estimates it will likely surpass the outbreak of 2014 to 2016 across West Africa, which was the deadliest Ebola outbreak on record with more than 11,000 deaths.

Starting from the first detected case, the current outbreak has spread about three times faster than the deadliest on record.

The outbreak “has spread rapidly and the risk of further national and international spread remains high,” WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said Tuesday at

a meeting convened by the agency.

“We must be frank: the epidemic is far from being under control,” he said.

Thérèse Anyiya, a nurse working in Ituri’s capital Bunia, said she is exhausted by the work demands and poor working conditions. Some health workers have gone on strike after not being paid.

“If the managers don’t take things seriously, we too will end up withdrawing. The way this epidemic is being managed is exhausting,” Anyiya told The Associated Press.

A key challenge has been the lack of approved vaccines or treatments for the rare Bundibugyo virus, which is responsible for the current outbreak. Most new cases are being reported outside of the people being monitored, showing it has spread quickly and left surveillance teams racing to catch up.

Ituri, the province that has been hit the worst by the outbreak, has become a primary location for violence that has limited the response as health workers are targeted.

Residents on Monday attacked a health team in the territory of Aru after a suspected case was reported there. A mob set fire to an ambulance and damaged two other vehicles, according to Michael Wani, president of the Union of Cultural Associations for the Development of Ituri.



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

Rescue mission called off for NASA’s Swift telescope

The mission to save NASA’s sinking Swift Observatory was called off Wednesday, dooming the telescope to a fiery reentry later this year.

NASA and Katalyst Space Technologies announced the news more than a month after the startup’s Link spacecraft rocketed away to the telescope’s rescue.

Katalyst said Link will not attempt to capture Swift and boost it to a higher orbit because of problems with controlling the spacecraft. NASA said this means the telescope will plunge through the atmosphere after more than 20 years of tracking some of the biggest

explosions in the universe like gamma ray bursts and exploding stars. Its demise is not expected before October.

NASA paid \$30 million to Katalyst in an attempt to raise the telescope to a safer, longer-lasting orbit. Intense solar activity caused it to lose altitude faster than expected. The rescue spacecraft went into an uncontrollable spin a few weeks after its liftoff in early July. While flight controllers managed to slow Link’s tumble, issues continued to plague its pointing and positioning in orbit. (AP)

Bones communicate with rest of the body to support overall health

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



By Priya Bhardwaj

Washington University in St. Louis

Each year, doctors treat more than 6 million bone fractures in the United States. And while it takes only a few seconds for a bone to break, the processes that keep your bones strong and allow them to heal are taking place continuously throughout your life.

Beneath their hard surface, your bones are alive with activity, continuously being broken down, rebuilt and reshaped. Far from being static structures that simply support the body, bones are dynamic, living tissues that respond to physical activity, hormones and the body’s changing needs.

I am a research scientist who studies bone biology and mineral metabolism. To me, one of the most striking things about bone is how dynamic it is, despite its static appearance. Research over the past 15 to 20 years has demonstrated that this is even more true than scientists had previously realized.

For decades, scientists have known that bone provides support, stores minerals and continuously remodels itself. This remodeling is the process bone uses to renew itself, maintaining its strength while allowing the skeleton to adapt over time.

Different kinds of bone cells work together to maintain bone structure. Cells called osteoclasts remove old or damaged bone, while osteoblasts build new bone in its place. Osteocytes, which are cells embedded within bone, help sense mechanical strain and coordinate how bone responds. Together, these cells help the skeleton stay strong.

But over the past two decades, new research has emerged that is changing how scientists and physicians think about skeletal health. More than just a structural framework, bone also functions as a highly active tissue that helps regulate the body’s mineral balance, supports blood cell production and communicates with multiple organ systems.

Growing evidence also suggests that in order to perform these functions, bones produce signaling molecules that influence energy metabolism and balance the minerals the body needs.

The balance between bone formation and bone breakdown changes throughout life.

During childhood and adolescence, the body builds bone faster than it removes it, allowing bones to grow larger and denser. By early adulthood, most people reach their peak bone mass. After that, bone breakdown gradually begins to outpace bone formation, particularly with aging and hormonal changes. Over time, this shift can increase the risk of osteoporosis and fractures.

Bone is also highly responsive to how it is used. The skeleton is constantly “listening” to the demands placed upon it and adjusting accordingly. Everyday activities such as walking, running or lifting weights place stress on the skeleton. In response, bone adapts by becoming stronger. This is why weight-bearing and resistance exercises are so important for maintaining bone health.

On the other hand, prolonged inactivity due to illness, immobilization or a sedentary lifestyle can lead to bone loss. Astronauts also experience bone loss during spaceflight, but for a different reason: In microgravity, bones are lifting far less weight, even when astronauts remain physically active.

Hormones help regulate the process of bone formation and breakdown as well. Calcium and phosphate levels are tightly controlled by the body because they are essential for nerve signaling, muscle contraction and many other biological functions.

Bone serves as a major reservoir for these minerals. During menopause, a woman’s hormones shift and her body produces less estrogen, causing her bone density to decrease.

The kidneys and glands, such as the parathyroid glands, produce hormones such as parathyroid hormone and vitamin D that act as signals to tell bone when to release calcium and phosphate into the bloodstream and when to store them. This helps your body maintain stable mineral levels.

In addition to all of those functions, many bones contain bone marrow, the main site of blood cell production. Bone marrow produces red blood cells, which carry oxygen throughout the body; white blood cells, which help fight infection; and platelets, which are essential for blood clotting.

The marrow also responds to signals such as infection, inflammation and blood loss by adjusting blood cell production, making the skeleton closely connected to both the circulatory and immune systems.

Researchers have also found that bone not only receives signals from other organs, but it sends signals as well. Bone-derived molecules, including the protein osteocalcin, have been linked to energy metabolism and broader physiological signaling.

While scientists are still uncovering the full extent of these connections, growing evidence suggests that the skeleton is integrated with the rest of the body rather than functioning as an isolated structure. (AP)

US to send military hospital ship to Peru as El Nino threat looms

LIMA, Peru, Aug 20, (Agencies): The United States will send a military hospital ship to Peru’s Pacific coast next year to help Peru cope with the effects of the El Nino climate phenomenon as part of a broader collaboration with the South American country, US Ambassador to Peru Bernie Navarro announced Wednesday.

The announcement comes after Navarro met with Peruvian Foreign Minister Carlos Espá in Miami to discuss cooperation, and at a moment when the US has sent increased humanitarian aid for earthquakes in Colombia and Venezuela. The US is also ramping up its joint military operations in the region.

Espá indicated that a road map had been developed, which includes assistance in the form of equipment, expertise, and overflights to prevent, mitigate and respond to the phenomenon. The amount of U.S. aid was not disclosed. Espá also met with US business leaders interested in investing in mining and infrastructure projects.

Navarro said in Spanish that the meeting’s objective was to understand Peru’s needs and how to provide support with a rapid response.



The US Navy hospital ship USNS Comfort docks at the Cristobal port in Colon, Panama, June 29, 2025. (AP)

He noted that aid following the recent earthquake in Colombia would have been faster with better coordination.

Navarro indicated that the hospital ship USNS Comfort, which was already in Peru in 2018 and 2019, will arrive in the northern Pacific coast of Peru in February 2027, when El Nino

is expected to peak.

The El Nino climate phenomenon is a warming of the Pacific Ocean near the equator that affects global weather patterns. According to meteorologists, it could soon equal or surpass the 1997 phenomenon, which caused damage from heat waves, heavy rains, floods and forest fires.



The wreckage of an old steam boat, known as the Slovenian, is visible due to the low level of the Sava river near the town of Sremska Mitrovica, northwest of the capital Belgrade, Serbia on Aug 18. (AP)

Historic boat emerges in Serbia as Europe rivers run dry from drought and heat

SREMSKA MITROVICA, Serbia, Aug 20, (AP): The wreck of a steam tugboat dating from the early 1900s is the latest relic to emerge from shrinking waters in Serbia as Europe’s rivers run dry, with the continent engulfed in prolonged, extreme heat and drought.

The rusting hull - once a famed vessel known as the Slovenian - surfaced earlier this month from the Sava River near the Serbian town of Sremska Mitrovica, 70 kilometers (45 miles) northwest of the capital of Belgrade.

While parts have appeared above the surface before, the locals say the wreck has never been so exposed.

“It’s been several years since it was last seen, so there is quite an interest,” said historian Andrija Popovic, who is the head of the town museum.

“It’s truly something you don’t see every day,” he added about the boat, which has been dubbed “Sava’s Titanic” by Serbian media.

Warships, mammoth bones and parts of ancient constructions all have emerged from the slumping waters of the Danube, the Rhine and other rivers in the scorching drought that has also disrupted trade, power and water supplies.

A record-low Danube River has severely impacted nuclear power plants in Hungary and Romania and halted traffic along Europe’s second-largest waterway. A monthslong drought has ravaged crops from the Netherlands to Bosnia and caused water shortages that extend as

high as the Alps.

According to Popovic, the Slovenian was made in 1913 in a shipyard in Budapest, Hungary, then part of the Austro-Hungarian empire.

It measured roughly 54 meters (177 feet) in length and was initially named Vag, which is Hungarian for Slovakia’s longest river, Vah. With a steam engine, the boat pulled heavy cargo between Budapest and other towns along the Danube.

During World War I, the boat largely paused its routes, Popovic added. As the war ended and the Austro-Hungarian empire was dismantled, the boat’s ownership switched to the newly formed Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenians - which would later become Yugoslavia - as part of war reparations, he said.

“This is when it was renamed the Slovenian,” Popovic said, adding that it’s a mystery “why this name was chosen.”

Then, during World War II, the Slovenian - and its new country - came under Nazi German occupation. After Yugoslav anti-fascist forces liberated Belgrade in 1944, they used the boat to transfer the wounded and equipment while pushing German troops further west, Popovic said.

The boat was carrying wounded fighters when it hit a German mine in late April 1945, Popovic said. “It sank and has stayed in the same place since that day.”

SPORTS



Red Bull driver Max Verstappen of the Netherlands attends a news conference ahead of the Dutch Formula One Grand Prix in Zandvoort, Netherlands. (AP)

Team is like second family

Verstappen signs Red Bull extension through 2030

ZANDVOORT, Netherlands, Aug. 20, (AP) — Four-time Formula 1 champion Max Verstappen has extended his contract with Red Bull to 2030, he and the team announced Thursday.

The announcement ahead of Verstappen's home Dutch Grand Prix this weekend ends speculation he could seek a blockbuster move to another team. It comes despite Red Bull struggling to match the pace of leading team Mercedes this season.

"I have always said it: the team is like a second family for me and I feel very at home. I came to the team hoping to be able to win races. What we went on to achieve together has been simply lovely and we have shared many incredible moments and won four world championships," he said in a statement.

"To continue this journey with the same team that I have been with my whole career is really special and something I have always wanted to do."

Verstappen, already considered one of F1's all-time greats at the age of 28, has yet to win a race this season. The 71-time race winner hasn't had a winless season since his rookie year in 2015.

Verstappen's previous contract ran through 2028 but reportedly included performance-related clauses which could have potentially allowed him to leave earlier and which fueled speculation he might seek to move.

He had also questioned whether he'd stay in F1 at all, saying he'd like more time with his family as his frustration grew with the 2026 F1 cars' reliance on electrical battery power.

Red Bull backed Verstappen's career from childhood and brought him into F1 at the age of 17 in 2015 at its second team, then called Toro Rosso. That made him the youngest driver in series history, a record he still holds.

Still, there had been signs of tension in recent years amid the departures of a series of key staff including longtime leader Christian Horner last year and car design great Adrian Newey.

In his comments Thursday, Verstappen praised a "great" year with Laurent Mekies in charge after Horner was fired, and said he sensed a "clear vision" for the future of the team.

Verstappen also raised safety concerns this season after two separate faults with the Red Bull car's rear wing hurled him into high-speed crashes.

Verstappen had been linked with a move to McLaren after reports of a meeting in June between his representatives and McLaren management. McLaren chief executive Zak Brown said at the team the team didn't have an opening for him and would stick with Lando Norris and Oscar Piastri.

One driver who had been considered a potential replacement for Verstappen at Red Bull, Carlos Sainz Jr., signed a new contract on Wednesday with Williams.

Newcastle's Saudi owners to invest in new training ground



General view of the St James' Park stadium ahead of the English Premier League soccer match between Newcastle United and Wolves in Newcastle, England. (AP)

LONDON, Aug. 20, (AP) — Newcastle is investing \$260 million in a training complex that will be ready to use from the 2029-30 season, a signal that its Saudi owners are still committed to the club after a raft of high-profile player sales over the past year.

There has been growing skepticism over the commitment of the Public Investment Fund — Saudi Arabia's sovereign wealth fund that bought Newcastle in 2021 — following the exit of Alexander Isak last offseason

and Bruno Guimaraes, Anthony Gordon and Sandro Tonali this summer, with the club fighting to comply with English soccer's stricter financial rules.

Newcastle also didn't qualify for the lucrative Champions League — a competition which brought in estimated prize money of 50 million pounds (\$70 million) to the club last season — after finishing 12th in the 20-team Premier League in an underwhelming campaign under now-departed coach Eddie Howe.

Lynx edges Valkyries as Miles scores 20 before ankle injury

Mystics beat Tempo behind Iriaften, Austin

SAN FRANCISCO, Aug. 20, (AP) — Olivia Miles had 20 points, seven assists and five rebounds before leaving midway through the fourth quarter with a left ankle injury, and the Minnesota Lynx ran away early from the Golden State Valkyries before holding on for a 77-66 win in a matchup of the WNBA's top teams.

Kayla McBride also scored 20 for the Lynx and did Stephen Curry's signature "night night" gesture after a late 3-pointer at Chase Center, home to Curry's Warriors. Napheesa Collier added 18 points and eight rebounds for the league-best Lynx.

Miles, Minnesota's standout rookie who shot 8 of 10 from the field, turned her ankle when she stepped on Collier's foot. She limped off the court and went to the locker room briefly before returning to the bench area.

Veronica Burton had 14 points and seven assists for the cold-shooting Valkyries (25-10), who have yet to beat Minnesota in seven meetings. The top-seeded Lynx swept the expansion Valkyries in the first round of the 2025 playoffs.

Janelle Salaun's 3-pointer with 9:41 left pulled the Valkyries within 54-44, and she made one free throw the next time down before a layup with 8:18 remaining that cut the lead to 54-47. But Golden State didn't get enough defensive stops in crunch time.

The Valkyries' Kaila Charles left in the fourth after she took a hit to the eye.

The Lynx (30-7) have won five straight and 15 of 16, improving to 11-1 on the road against the Western Conference.

Golden State started 5 of 27 in front of a raucous, sellout crowd. WNBA Commissioner Cathy Engel-



Minnesota Lynx guard Kayla McBride (21) drives to the basket against Golden State Valkyries guard Veronica Burton (22) during the second half of a WNBA basketball game in San Francisco. (AP)

bert announced Tuesday that the arena and Valkyries will host the 2027 All-Star Game.

The Valkyries (25-10) had their six-game winning streak snapped with just their second loss in 17 games. They clinched a playoff berth with Monday's 78-70 win over Dallas.

Golden State shot 4 for 17 in the first quarter, missing five of its six 3-point attempts, then began 1 of 12 to start the second as Minnesota jumped to a 35-18 lead and opened the second quarter with a 7-0 burst on the way to a 41-26 halftime advantage.

The Valkyries typically find their offensive rhythm from their defense, but never got in sync on either end. They shot 2 of 14 from deep in the

first half and 7 for 37 overall — 1 for 7 by leading scorer Gabby Williams, who was held to 10 points on 4-for-15 shooting.

Mystics 93, Tempo 82

In Washington, Kiki Iriaften had 21 points and 13 rebounds, Shakira Austin added 11 points and 10 rebounds, and the Washington Mystics beat the short-handed Toronto Tempo for their eighth straight home victory.

Austin secured her 16th double-double of the season and Iriaften notched her 15th as Washington outrebounded Toronto 43-27. Iriaften shot 8 of 12 from the field.

Michaela Onyenwere scored 14 points and made four 3-pointers for Washington (21-14). Sonia Citron had 13 points and six assists. The Mystics scored 38 points in

the paint, nearly missing their 12th straight game with 40-plus.

With the Tempo's top three scorers — Marina Mabrey, Brittney Sykes and Nyara Sabally — sitting out the second game of a back-to-back, Kiki Rice led Toronto (10-25) with 19 points. Aneeshah Morrow had 13 points and eight rebounds as the expansion Tempo lost their 12th straight.

Washington began the second quarter with a 12-0 run to go ahead 37-24 as the Tempo missed their first five shots. The Mystics outscored Toronto 22-9 in the second for a 47-33 lead at the break.

Onyenwere made 3-pointers on back-to-back possessions to extend Washington's lead to 60-42 midway through the third.

'I feel fulfilled after years of competing at the highest level'

Ogwumike calls time on 15-year career

LOS ANGELES, Aug. 20, (AP) — Nneka Ogumike has been a vital part of the WNBA's growth on and off the court the past 15 seasons, from her decorated playing career to her tenure as president of the players' union.

The 36-year-old eight-time All-WNBA forward announced Wednesday in an interview with Boardroom Talks that she'll retire at the end of the season.

"I feel very fulfilled with the 15 years that I've been able to play and compete at such a high level," the Los Angeles Sparks star said. "Even though I didn't know what kind of player that I could be in this league, I never thought that I would play this long. Never thought that would be the type of player that I'd play this long."

The No. 1 pick in the 2012 draft out of Stanford, Ogumike earned Rookie of the Year honors that season with Los Angeles. She was voted league MVP in 2016 when she helped lead the Sparks to the WNBA championship, hitting the title-winning shot in Game 5 with 3.1 seconds left.

"Nneka will retire at the end of this season leaving the WNBA much better than she found it — a testament not only to the player she has been, but to the person and leader she is," WNBA Commissioner Cathy Engelbert said in a statement. "I have been fortunate to work closely with Nneka over the years and have been inspired by her passion and unwavering commitment to the players."

"It has been a privilege to watch her remarkable journey, and while there is still more basketball to be played this season, we congratulate her on an extraordinary career and look forward to celebrating her in the months ahead."



In this file photo, Los Angeles Sparks forward Nneka Ogumike shoots a free-throw against the Toronto Tempo during a WNBA basketball game in Los Angeles. (AP)

Ogumike isn't ending her basketball career entirely. She still plans on playing in Project B, the new basketball venture that will begin this winter and play all its games outside of the U.S. She was the first player signed with the organization that former Sparks teammate Alana Beard co-founded.

"Nneka has always led with a rare combination of strength, purpose and grace," Beard said in a statement. "For 15 seasons, we've watched her give everything to this game, not only as an elite competitor but as a leader who has helped shape the league and lift up the people around her."

Ogumike this year made the All-Star Game for an 11th time and is averaging nearly 17 points a game.

"It is a little bit my body: I still feel very good," Ogumike said. "But I also feel the comfort of slowing down a little bit. I just feel content. I feel very content with where I've left my career."

Ogumike expressed pride in playing at the same time as the likes of Maya Moore and Tina Thompson, as well as Angel Reese and A'ja Wilson. Along the way, she was named one of the 25 players in the first 25 years of the WNBA and was a seven-time All-Defensive Team selection.

"I just feel like I have poured as much as I could into this game, and the last bit is this year of playing," Ogumike said. "I'm proud of what I've done."

Ogumike in the interview also expressed contentment with the state of women's basketball. WNBA executive director Terri Carmichael Jackson credited Ogumike for extraordinary leadership as president of the union, which earlier this year negotiated a transformative collective bargaining agreement.

"She has served this union with a level of commitment, courage, integrity and purpose that is truly unparalleled," Carmichael Jackson said in a text message. "Nneka understood that leadership was not simply about having a seat at the table: It was about using that seat to move the game and the business of the game forward for every player — today and for generations to come."

Ogumike was reelected for her fourth term as president in June. It's unclear who will succeed her after she retires.

Both teams have some sharpshooters

It wouldn't surprise if Springboks-All Blacks series is decided by goalkicker

JOHANNESBURG, Aug. 20, (AP) — Chances are high the South Africa-New Zealand rugby test series starting on Saturday will be decided by a goalkicker.

Fortunately for both teams, they have some sharpshooters. The Springboks can roll out Handre Pollard, Sacha Feinberg-Mngomezulu and Mannie Libbok. The All Blacks can put up Ruben Love, Damian McKenzie and Beauden Barrett. All have made vital goalkicks.

But in the history of series between the teams dating to 1921, the winning goalkicker hasn't always been the obvious one. Here's some standouts.

Morkel was one of two in the Springboks tour party who had test experience from before World War I. Morkel starred on the 1912-13 tour of Europe at fullback and returned for the first-ever series against New Zealand a little slower at age 32 but still a threat. New Zealand won the first test 13-5 at Carisbrook and South Africa had to win the second at Eden Park. They were 5-5 when Morkel hit a great drop goal, then worth four points, in the 68th minute. He'd taken a clearance kick, ran a few yards and let fly. South Africa won 9-5 and it was the last points of the series. The third test in Wellington, dubbed 'The Rugby Championship of the World,' was played in driving rain and mud and finished 0-0. Morkel was acclaimed for saving the Boks with immaculate line kicks. The series was drawn.

Geffin was taken prisoner by the Germans in World War II and, in camp, learned under 1924 Bok Bill Payn how to goalkick in bare feet. The tighthead prop debuted in the 1949 series. In the first test in Cape Town, Jack van der Schyff missed three shots and Geffin took over. His world record five penalties beat New Zealand 15-11 from 11-0 down. South Africa won the second test at Ellis Park and the series was clinched in the third test in Durban by 9-3 with three more Geffin penalties. Swept 4-0, New Zealand didn't have a kicker of the quality of Geffin, who contributed 32 of South Africa's 47 points and was forever known as 'The Boot.' One of his boots is in the New Zealand



In this file photo, South Africa's Sacha Feinberg-Mngomezulu kicks a ball to score a conversion during the rugby union Nations Series match between Ireland and South Africa in Dublin. (AP)

Rugby Museum.

Also nicknamed 'The Boot,' Clarke was originally considered cumbersome and injury prone. But the burly fullback with the prodigious right boot was fit

in time for the visit by the 1956 Springboks. With the series at 1-1, New Zealand demanded changes and Clarke debuted in the third test in Christchurch. His third-minute penalty immediately put the Boks on notice. He slotted three shots, New Zealand won 17-10 and the Evening Post newspaper wrote: "Clarke made as remarkably successful a debut as any fullback in history can ever have done." Two more 40-meter plus penalties in the Eden Park decider helped New Zealand win a series from the Boks for the first time. Clarke played in South Africa's 75th jubilee matches in 1964 and moved there in 1977.

The 1970 series was to be decided in the fourth and final test at Ellis Park. South Africa led 2-1. They took first use of the wind and McCallum, as he was all series, was radar-like as a place-kicker. The Boks reached halftime 14-3 ahead moments after a 65-meter penalty by McCallum. He hadn't expected to nail it. Captain Dawie de Villiers told him to kick for goal only so the forwards could have a breather. McCallum's 14 points underpinned a 20-17 win that handed New Zealand its first series loss anywhere in 10 years. "The man who beat us was the fullback Ian McCallum," New Zealand great Colin Meads said. "I take my hat off to him. I can understand now how the Springboks felt about Don Clarke in 1956."

The slightly built Hewson's porous defense made his All Black status constantly criticized. He was booed in his home test debut but three months later he was still the fullback when the controversial 1981 series with the visiting Springboks reached its climax in the 'flour bomb test.' Eden Park was surrounded by barbed wire and riot police, and another anti-apartheid protester flying a Cessna was dropping flour bombs on the pitch. Hewson's frailties let the Springboks rally with three tries by Ray Mordt. The series appeared set to finish in a draw with the score 22-22 at 80 minutes. But referee Clive Norling kept penalizing the Springboks. The decisive penalty came in the 89th and Hewson hit the goalkick that won the match and series. "It just had to go over," he said.

Painful 25-year absence

Once homeless and in liquidation, Coventry back in Premier League

LONDON, Aug 20, (AP): Opening a Premier League season away to the defending champions and title favorites would be something to fear for most promoted teams.

For Coventry, it's purely something to celebrate.

Over the past 15 years, the club from central England has had to deal with being placed into liquidation amid a long fight with hated owners, plunging into the fourth tier of the English game, and also losing its home - thereby necessitating a groundshare with three different teams located within 40 miles (64 kilometers).

Now Coventry is back in the top division after a 25-year absence.

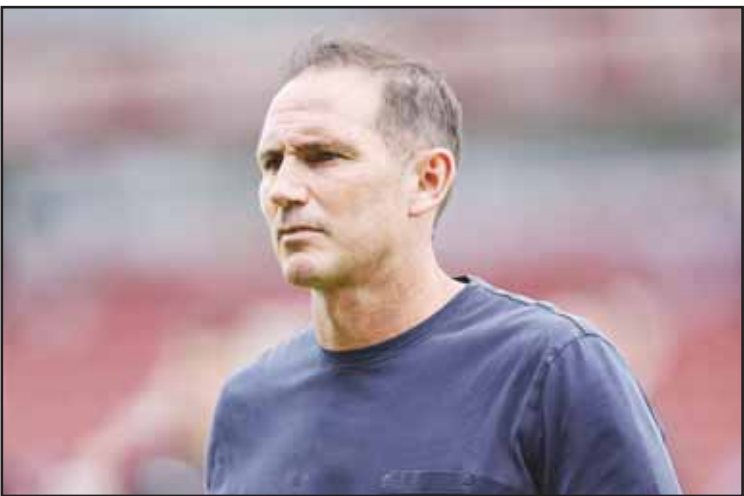
The message to Arsenal on Friday: Bring it on.

"It was a great year for us and the celebrations were great - it went beyond football in this city,"

Coventry manager Frank Lampard said of the team's promotion to the Premier League. "It went to a place where the city and football club went through tough times so it heightened the feeling of what was achieved. I'm very excited to be here and get a club that's been out of the Premier League for 25 years and get them back in. It is exciting at this moment but we want to challenge and do well."

Arsenal vs. Coventry will be the first of 380 games in a season that is starting later than usual because of the elongated World Cup and is hard to predict because of the raft of managerial changes in the off-season - not least the departure of Pep Guardiola after 10 era-defining years at Manchester City.

There appears to be one constant: the new-found stability and belief at Arsenal, which flexed its muscles



Coventry City head coach Frank Lampard. (AP)

on Sunday by swatting aside City in the Community Shield.

It therefore promises to be a tough start for Coventry - if a joyful one at the same time.

The standout fixture might be

Newcastle hosting Liverpool on Sunday. They are among the nine teams starting the Premier League season with a new coach.

Newcastle's progress will be interesting, given the Saudi-controlled team has lost three key players in Anthony Gordon, Bruno Guimaraes and Sandro Tonali in the offseason - a year after selling Alexander Isak to Liverpool. Isak is expected to get a hot reception at St. James' Park.

It's also the start of a new era at Etihad Stadium when Man City hosts Bournemouth later Sunday. It's Enzo Maresca's first league match in charge of City as Guardiola's replacement, while City will have to get used to life without Rodri after the Spain star's move to Barcelona.

Premier League clubs' spending on new players is approaching \$3 billion already in the summer transfer window so watch out for

debutants by the most expensive of the recruits. Morgan Rogers (\$156 million) in Chelsea's match at Fulham on Monday, Elliot Anderson (\$155 million) for City against Bournemouth, and Tonali (\$133 million) for Tottenham at Brentford.

An under-the-radar signing might be Greece winger Christos Tzolis, who joined Arsenal from Club Brugge. He has looked sharp in pre-season, including picking up two assists in the Community Shield.

Certain to be missing for Arsenal's opening match of its title defense is France center back William Saliba, who is a long-term absentee because of a back injury.

Liverpool will not only be starting a season without Mohamed Salah for the first time in a decade, but is still missing striker Hugo Ekitike as he recovers from Achilles tendon damage.

Nashville keeps rolling

Messi has goal and assist as Inter Miami plays Union to 2-2 draw

HARRISON, N.J., Aug 20, (AP): Defender Maxwell Woledzi scored two minutes into second-half stoppage time and MLS-leading Nashville SC pulled out a 1-0 victory over the New York Red Bulls.

Rookie Brian Schwake turned away one shot to earn the clean sheet for Nashville (14-2-4). The 24-year-old has nine shutouts in his first 20 starts.

Nashville added three more points to its lead in the Supporters' Shield race off a set piece when Woledzi used his head to score for the second time in his first season in the league.

Cristian Espinoza set up the winner with his 10th assist after subbing in to the match in the 62nd minute.

Ethan Horvath had a save in each half for New York (7-9-4).

Nashville improves to 7-1-1 in its last nine matches and beat the Red Bulls on the road for the first time after entering with a 0-2-2 record through their first four trips.

Lionel Messi had a goal and assist as Inter Miami and the Philadelphia Union played to a 2-2 draw.

Messi's cross was headed by Luis Suarez into the path of forward Daniel Pinter for the first Inter Miami goal in the 21st minute.

Messi cut inside to his preferred left foot from 12 yards out in the 26th and curled a shot into the corner of the net for his first goal since returning to action following the death of his father.

Messi has 13 goals and nine assists in 17 MLS games this season. He has six goals and four assists in six matches in all competitions against the Union.

Indiana Vassilev scored on a volley in the first half to give the Union the lead, then 18-year-old defender Neil Pierre headed home his third goal in five games this



Inter Miami's Leo Messi (10) and Philadelphia Union's Neil Pierre vie for the ball during the second half of an MLS soccer match in Chester, Pa. (AP)

season in the 58th minute to tie the score. Cavan Sullivan, the Union's 16-year-old midfielder, was credited with his seventh assist of the season on Vassilev's goal.

Union forward Milan Iloski appeared to put the Union ahead in the 62nd minute, but the goal was reviewed and waved off with Pierre offside in the buildup.

Robert Lewandowski scored on a penalty kick, Puso Dithejane added a goal, and the Chicago Fire beat Orlando City 2-1 in a game delayed about 90 minutes by inclement weather.

The Fire (11-8-2) have won three in a row. Chris Brady had three saves for Chicago.

Prince Owusu scored an early goal and rookie Noah Streit scored his first goal to give CF Montreal the lead late in a 2-1 victory over the Columbus Crew.

Montreal (5-10-5) grabbed an early 1-0 lead when Owusu took a pass from Hennadii Synchuk in the 5th minute and scored his 12th goal

of the season. It was the forward's 34th goal in 90 career matches. Owusu joins Marco Di Vaio and Ignacio Piatti as the only players to score 25 goals over a two-year stretch in club history.

Daniel Sallói and Niklas Dorsch scored short-handed goals in the final 12 minutes of regulation to rally Toronto FC to a 3-3 draw with Charlotte FC.

Toronto (4-7-9) trailed 3-1 when Sallói used assists from Theo Corbeanu and Markus Cimermancic in the 77th minute to score his fifth goal this season.

Calvin Harris scored his third goal of the season in the second half to help Sporting Kansas City play St. Louis City to a 1-1 draw.

Kansas City (4-13-3) had lost three straight games and five of its last six.

Tristan Muyumba scored a goal for the third straight game and Atlanta United beat Minnesota United 2-1.

Atlanta (5-12-3) has won back-

to-back games following a seven-match winless run.

Minnesota (6-7-7) is winless in nine straight games.

Facundo Torres and Guilherme Biro each scored a goal, Damian Las had five saves in his MLS debut, and Austin FC beat the Sounders 2-1 on to extend Seattle's losing streak to eight games.

Seattle's skid, which dates to a 3-2 home win over San Jose on May 13, is the longest in single-season franchise history and the most-prolonged losing streak in MLS since Nashville also lost eight straight in 2024.

Nico Hansen finished with one save and had his third consecutive shutout to help the Colorado Rapids beat Los Angeles FC 1-0.

The Rapids (9-10-1) have won three consecutive games, all by shutout, and four of five since the World Cup break.

LAFC (10-7-4) is winless in three straight for the first time this season.

Salem Mufarreh takes charge of Salmiya U-15 handball team

By Khaled Al-Enezi
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 20: Salmiya Club have appointed Kuwaiti coach Salem Mufarreh as head coach of their U-15 handball team for the 2026-27 season, reaffirming the club's commitment to developing its youth ranks and building a strong pipeline of future players.

Handball director Mubarak Najm signed the agreement on behalf of Salmiya, with Mufarreh taking charge ahead of the new campaign. The club hopes the young coach can build a competitive side capable of challenging for honors across the season.

Mufarreh, one of Kuwait's emerging youth coaches, will focus on developing the players' technical and physical skills while creating a disciplined and cohesive squad capable of competing at a high level.

The coach said he was confident in the potential of the players and stressed the importance of hard work and cooperation among the coaching staff, players and club administration during the preparation period.



Salem Mufarreh with Mubarak Najm

Mufarreh thanked Salmiya's management and handball department for their confidence and pledged to work tirelessly to develop the squad, improve the players' abilities and guide the team toward strong performances and podium finishes in the upcoming competitions.

Best of the Rest

PSG moves opening French league game: Paris Saint-Germain's opening game of its title defense in the French league against Rennes has been relocated at short notice because of damage to the champion's pitch following a heat-wave this summer.

Sunday's match will now take place in Rennes, French soccer's competitions committee announced late Wednesday.

PSG said its pitch at Parc des Princes had deteriorated so much "that the current conditions did not allow the match to be held under satisfactory circumstances, particularly with regard to the safety and physical well-being of the players."

The change of venue has been decided "in agreement" with Rennes, PSG said, and thanked its opponent for "making the match possible."

"Paris Saint-Germain fully understands the inconvenience caused by this change for its supporters and all those who had planned to attend this match at the Parc des Princes," PSG added, saying "the club regrets this exceptional situation."

PSG said it had "identified a solution for replacing the pitch at the Parc des Princes for the upcoming matches," starting with its next home game in Ligue 1 against Monaco on Sept. 4. (AP)

Belgium winger Diego Moreira joins AC Milan: Belgium winger Diego Moreira joined AC Milan in a reported 50-million-euro (\$58.5-million) move from Strasbourg, which is under increased financial scrutiny by UEFA.

The 22-year-old Moreira signed a five-year contract, Milan said in a statement late Monday.

Moreira was a member of Belgium's World Cup squad and played in one game, as a second-half substitute in a 3-2 come-from-behind win over Senegal in the round of 32.

He was a youth international for both Belgium and Portugal, then got FIFA approval in May 2025 to choose Belgium as his senior eligibility.

Moreira's exit brings Strasbourg's sales this week to about 100 million euros (\$117 million). (AP)

Como looks to surprise again

Brotherly touch and English flavor could see Inter dominate Serie A

MILAN, Aug 20, (AP): Cristian Chivu's brand of brotherly love could be just what Serie A champion Inter Milan needs to dominate Italian soccer again this season.

More than a few eyebrows were raised when the inexperienced Chivu was hired last year to replace Simone Inzaghi as Inter coach. The Nerazzurri were fresh off a 5-0 thrashing by Paris Saint-Germain in the most lopsided Champions League final in history.

"Everyone was thinking that Inter was, let's say dying, after what happened," Inter midfielder Hakan Çalhanoğlu said in a recent interview with beIN Sports Australia.

Chivu had only ever overseen 13 matches in Serie A but his fresh approach as a coach and new ideas reinvigorated Inter as he steered the Nerazzurri to the Italian league and cup double.

Moreover, the 45-year-old Chivu's closeness to the players has pulled the team even more together.

"With Chivu it is something different, he cares more about the person, not about the football," Çalhanoğlu added. "For him it's more important how you are, how you feel, and he's open to everything. He gives you the confidence to feel good."



In this file photo, Inter Milan players celebrate with the Italian Serie A soccer championship trophy at the end of their final-round match against Hellas Verona in Milan, Italy. (AP)

"Of course, he has tactical things ... but (outside) of the football he's like a brother or a friend, you can talk to him about whatever you want, he's always close to you. ... That helped me a lot."

Inter has been boosted by a distinctive English flavor this off-season. It has already signed England defenders Djed Spence and John Stones and looks set to also land their Three Lions teammate Curtis Jones.

The Serie A champion kicks off the defense of its title at home to newly-promoted Monza on Saturday.

Here's a look at Inter's potential challengers:

Napoli finished runner-up last season and would arguably have pushed Inter harder had it not been plagued by injuries all campaign.

But it is having to deal with its sixth coach in little more than three years after Antonio Conte

quit at the end of the season.

And it's a familiar face in charge. Former Juventus and AC Milan coach Massimiliano Allegri was given the reins, despite having been fired by Milan following "an unequivocal failure" of a season.

Ruben Amorim - whose reputation as one of the top emerging coaches in Europe took a hit at Manchester United - has taken over from Allegri at Milan, which ended up finishing fifth last season after struggling toward the end of the campaign.

Milan has added some much-needed firepower as it smashed its transfer record to sign Portugal forward Gonçalo Ramos from Paris Saint-Germain for more than 70 million euros (\$80 million).

Como, which had never qualified for any continental competition in its 119-year history, was playing in the fourth division of Italian soccer just seven years ago.

What former Arsenal and Barcelona player Cesc Fàbregas has achieved in his two years in charge is nothing short of remarkable.

And it was no fluke. Como had the meanest defense in the league but still managed to play an exciting and attacking brand of football.

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AFC Challenge Cup trophy

Sports

Group stage set for October 17-24

Al-Arabi, Al-Qadsia handed challenging groups in AFC Challenge Cup

By Hassan Mosa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 20: The AFC Challenge Cup draw in Kuala Lumpur has placed Kuwait's Al-Arabi in Group B alongside Lebanon's Al-Najma, Tajikistan's Istiklol and Syria's Homs Al-Fida, while Al-Qadsia will compete in Group C with India's Goa, Bangladesh's Fortis and Tajikistan's Regar-TadAZ.

The group stage will be played from October 17 to 24, with the quarter-finals scheduled over two legs from March 3 to 18, 2027. The semi-finals will take place from

April 7 to 15, before the final on May 8, 2027.

Al-Qadsia, who will host its Group C matches, will open its campaign against Fortis before facing Regar-TadAZ in the second round and Goa in final group fixture.

Al-Arabi will begin against Homs Al-Fida, then meet hosts Istiklol in the second round before concluding the group stage against Al-Najma.

In Group A of the West Zone, hosts Paro of Bhutan will face Turkmenistan's Ahal, Lebanon's Al-Ansar and Syria's Al-Ittihad.

The three group winners in the West Zone will advance

to the quarter-finals, along with the best second-placed team.

In the East Zone, Indonesia's Borneo Samarinda will host Group D, where it will face Wan Tagig of the Philippines, Tainan City of Chinese Taipei, and either Yangon United of Myanmar or Ezra of Laos.

Group E features either Indonesia's Persib Bandung or Manila Digger of the Philippines, hosts Shan United of Myanmar, New Taipei City Hang Yuan of Chinese Taipei, and either Kasuka of Brunei or Carkitu Dili of Timor-Leste. Two teams from the group will qualify for the quarter-finals.

Al-Qadsia returns to Asian competition after spending the past two seasons in the Gulf Champions League. The club will be aiming to add another continental title to their honors, having won the AFC Cup in 2014.

Al-Arabi, meanwhile, featured in the previous edition of the Challenge Cup but was eliminated in the group stage. They drew 1-1 with Kyrgyzstan's Muras United in their final Group C match last November at Tulin Omurzakov Stadium in Bishkek.

The result left both teams on five points, but Muras United advanced on goal difference, with Al-Arabi unable to secure the victory they needed to progress.

Kuwait to be represented by Kazma

Gulf Club Champions League expands to 12 clubs for '26-27

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 20: The Arab Gulf Cup Football Federation has approved the 12 clubs set to compete in the third edition of the Gulf Club Champions League, with the tournament scheduled to run from October 13, 2026, to April 30, 2027.

Kuwait will be represented by Kazma, while Saudi Arabia will have Al-Ettifaq and Neom. The UAE will be represented by Al-Nasr and Ajman, Qatar by Al-Duhail and Qatar SC, and Iraq by Erbil and Al-Zawraa. Oman's representative is Al-Shabab, Bahrain will be represented by Al-Riffa, and Yemen by Shab Hadramout.

The third edition will be the largest in the competition's history after the number of participating clubs was increased from eight to 12. The expansion is aimed at broadening participation among member associations and enhancing the tournament's competitive level and regional profile.

The first two editions featured one club from each participating country.

The clubs were selected in accordance with the competition regulations, taking into account domestic league results and the AFC national



Kazma players are preparing to start proceedings.

association club rankings for the 2026-27 season. Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Qatar and Iraq were each awarded two places, while Oman, Bahrain, Kuwait and Yemen received one place each.

The federation has scheduled the draw for September 9.

Iraq's Duhok won the inaugural edition, while Qatar's Al-Rayyan claimed the second title.

Injured Al-Mutawa to miss Qadsia's Kuwait Club test

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 20: Qadsia captain Bader Al-Mutawa is set to miss the club's first two Zain Premier League matches after suffering a hamstring injury during the team's training camp in Türkiye.

Al-Mutawa will sit out Qadsia's



Qadsia captain Bader Al-Mutawa

opening-round encounter with Al-Fahaheel next Tuesday and is also expected to miss the second-round meeting with Kuwait Club on August 31.

The veteran forward picked up the injury during Qadsia's friendly against Bahraini side Al-Khalidiya earlier this week.

He will undergo medical tests under the supervision of Kuwait Football Association Medical Committee Chairman Dr. Abdulmajeed Al-Banai, who will oversee his treatment and rehabilitation program.

His participation in Qadsia's third-round fixture against Al-Nasr on September 4 has yet to be determined.

The Zain Premier League will then pause after the third round, with the fourth round scheduled after Kuwait's participation in the 27th Gulf Cup in Saudi Arabia from September 23 to October 6.

Best of the Rest

Fudd set for season-ending surgery: Dallas Wings guard Azzi Fudd is set for season-ending surgery on a sore knee that has sidelined this year's No. 1 overall pick for the past five games.

The team said Wednesday that Fudd will have arthroscopic surgery on her right knee next week in Connecticut, where she starred for UConn before becoming the Huskies' second consecutive top overall pick by Dallas. Reigning WNBA Rookie of the Year Paige Bueckers was the No. 1 choice last year.

Fudd was eased into the lineup as a rookie, coming off the bench for the first six games. She scored 24 points in that sixth game and immediately became a full-time starter. Fudd had a season-high 26 points in a win over Seattle in June.

Fudd, who averaged 13.1 points in 30 games, went through warmups before a home game against Golden State on Aug. 7 and was held out of the game "out of an abundance of caution," according to the team. The soreness persisted. (AP)

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Cavs acquiring Watson and trading Strus: Peyton Watson is heading from Denver to Cleveland as part of a four-team trade that will also have the Cavaliers sending Max Strus to the Los Angeles Clippers.

A person familiar with the trade said Wednesday night that Watson, a restricted free agent who spent his first four NBA seasons with the Nuggets, will sign a four-year contract with the Cavaliers worth \$88 million that includes a player option and trade kicker.

The person spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because the trade had not been announced.

Cleveland will send to Denver an unprotected 2031 first-round pick and a 2032 second-round selection from the Sacramento Kings that it got after making a trade in June's NBA draft. The Nuggets will also acquire Julian Reese from Washington.

The Cavaliers are getting a 2027 second-round pick from the Clippers, but that will be sent to the Wizards. (AP)

Kuwait opens Asian Junior Handball Championship with convincing win

India faces South Korea, Iran meets Saudi Arabia



Kuwait attacker makes a goal attempt against Syria.

By Khaled Al-Enezi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

AMMAN, Aug 20: Kuwait began its campaign at the 11th Asian Junior Handball Championship in impressive fashion, cruising to a 29-19 victory over Syria in its opening preliminary-round match in Jordan.

The Blues controlled the game and delivered a particularly strong second-half display, executing their offensive and defensive strategies effectively to underline their readiness for a serious challenge in the tournament.

Kuwait will look to build on the winning start when it faces Qatar today at

2 p.m. in its second preliminary-round fixture. Another victory would put the team in a strong position to advance to the knockout stages.

Elsewhere, India faces South Korea, Iran meets Saudi Arabia, and hosts Jordan takes on Bahrain. All participating teams will have a rest day on Saturday before action resumes.

The top four teams, those reaching the semifinals, will earn qualification for the next World Championship, adding further importance to the race for the final four places.

Kuwait entered the tournament following an intensive preparation program that included a European camp in Slovenia and Croatia, where the squad played several friendlies. The team then held a final training camp in Kuwait, featuring two warm-up matches against Bahrain.

World Cup 'betrayal'

Fans launch global petition urging Infantino to resign

GENEVA, Aug 20, (AP): A collection of soccer fan groups from around the world launched a petition Thursday calling for Gianni Infantino to resign as FIFA president after he tried to sell future World Cup profits to private investors.

The petition with the hashtag InfantinoOut also calls for "FIFA to be rebuilt so that the current debacle can never happen again."

"The shameful attempt by one individual - the FIFA President himself - to sell off the World Cup to private investors exposed a betrayal football will never forget," the petition said about Infantino's plan for a commercial spinoff, which he dropped amid a furious backlash.

The fan groups include Football Supporters Europe, Football Supporters Africa and, in North America, the Independent Supporters



FIFA President Gianni Infantino

Council, plus about 40 national fan groups worldwide.

Infantino has resisted calls to leave office despite European soccer body

UEFA saying it has no confidence in him. He has also been criticized by the leadership of North America's CONCACAF and the Asian Football Confederation.

"Gianni Infantino has demonstrated a profound failure of leadership, incompatible with democratic governance," the fan petition states. "The concentration of power around the FIFA Presidency, combined with opaque decision-making, personality cult clientelism, and zero accountability has destroyed any remaining trust in the world governing body."

"For the credibility of FIFA - and for the future of the game - he must resign," the petition adds.

It also cites Infantino's past support for projects that angered fans, including the failed European Super League project and pushing to hold World Cups every two years.

German Cup faces disruption as fans plan major VAR protests

BERLIN, Aug 20, (AP): The first round of the German Cup faces disruption this weekend with several supporter groups planning major protests against the use of video technology during games.

The new German soccer season begins Friday with Bundesliga teams Eintracht Frankfurt and Stuttgart facing lower-league opposition among other games, with the first round continuing through the weekend and Monday.

There will be no video assistance for referees in the first round for

technical and financial reasons with 64 teams involved, but VAR will be introduced from the second round for the first time this season.

News agency DPA on Thursday published a statement it said was circulating among the fanbases of teams involved, declaring their intent to protest.

"We see football as it should be in the first round of the cup getting underway now - without VAR and thus authentic, immediate, and full of emotion. We want to return to this state permanently and therefore call

for the abolition of the video assistant referee (VAR) in German football," the statement said.

"While football thrives on intensity and rhythm, the flow of the game suffers significantly from protracted interruptions. We are also painfully aware that it has destroyed the game's most emotional moments," it continued. "Even fans who were initially open to and positive about the innovation now acknowledge, after nine years, that VAR has fundamentally altered the character of the game."

Fans have interrupted games before in Germany using tennis balls or pyrotechnics. Last season's German Cup final was played under a cloud of smoke from fans' fireworks.

This season in Germany, the referee's video assistant's powers are to be expanded. They may intervene if a player is sent off with a second yellow card that is unjustified, and they may correct the referee if the wrong player is cautioned or sent off. Unlike at the World Cup, however, VAR will not intervene if corner kicks are awarded incorrectly.