



CHINA VISIT USHERS LAUNCHING OF SEVERAL PROJECTS IN KUWAIT

Crown Prince unveils massive development

Directives stress importance of avoiding bureaucracy

By Ahmed Al-Jarallah
Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 5: After wisely breaking the political stalemate and aggravation between the two authorities, the political leadership put Kuwait on the path of comprehensive development; taking into account the nature of the current stage along with its economic, social and political dimensions, as well as changes in the international arena, to achieve prosperity for the homeland and well-being of citizens.

In September, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah will visit China for the first time, heading a high-level delegation. He will meet with Chinese President Xi Jinping, senior Chinese

officials, and representatives of major companies.

In this context, reliable sources confirmed the upcoming visit ushers the launching of several projects; foremost of which is the Silk Road, Silk City and others included in the development plan that is part the New Kuwait 2035 vision laid down several years ago.

Sources said: "The political leadership's conviction on the need to break out of the economic and development stagnation has been transformed into an order to make its way toward implementation. The leadership has set the next four years to transform the country into a center and a major workshop to complete all projects that were delayed due to made up obstacles, or conflicts between successive governments and national assemblies."

Sources disclosed "higher directives have been issued to prepare proposals and laws to assist this launch; not only the Silk Road and City projects, northern economic zone and development of islands. Rather, the development map targets infrastructure throughout Kuwait."

Sources added "giant Chinese, South Korean, European and American companies will be utilized in this regard, some of which have worked in neighboring countries where they completed major projects. Contracts will be signed directly with them, not through local agents as was the case in the past, in order to avoid raising and exaggerating prices. This is in addition to following up a flawless and elaborate achievement under the supervision of His Highness the Crown Prince."

Sources revealed "the legislative structure for Build-Operate-Transfer (BOT) projects will be developed later in relation to investment and the terms for each project. One of the plans is for the above-mentioned companies to build labor cities and recruit workers directly without going through the tedious documentary cycle. In this manner, human trafficking is prevented. Once the project is completed, the laborers will be sent back to their countries."

While the sources emphasized that the leadership is keen on implementation and achievement, they also unveiled a plan "for agreements that guarantee none of these projects will be obstructed." They also confirmed the issuance of instructions "to issue laws to achieve national development and quickly implement orders in this regard, as well as emphasizing the importance of distancing from the current bureaucratic administrative routine and long documentary cycle."

On the reasons behind the delayed implementation of these plans, sources said: "In the past, Kuwait went through a series of political tension that affected the internal situation; in addition to the stagnation of external relations, especially with its neighbors."

"Nevertheless, His Highness the Crown Prince, who was assigned by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, to be in charge of administration, did not stray from following up the steps that must be taken. Work began immediately after the local storm subsided. The leadership was not oblivious to the accomplishments of neighboring countries, including the modernization of their infrastructure, as well as the achievements that preceded Kuwait."

"However, it was necessary to prepare the ground for kickstarting the work. From this standpoint, the visit to China, which is expected to take place in September, will pave way for the launching of sustainable development in the country."

■ Kuwait will be a center and major workshop in the next four years, according to sources

■ Northern Economic Zone, the islands and infrastructure in Kuwait are on the development map

■ Seek assistance from giant Chinese, South Korean, European and American companies without the local agent

■ Leadership's conviction to end development stagnation has transformed into orders that are on their way toward implementation

■ Directives on implementing auxiliary laws that support the launching of projects and developing the necessary legislative structure for BOT projects

■ Direct recruitment of laborers without going through the tedious documentary cycle and return to their countries upon completion of their work

Think tank loses funding

Two Palestinians killed

JERUSALEM, Aug 5, (AP): Israeli security forces killed an 18-year-old Palestinian during a military raid into the northern West Bank on Friday, Palestinian health officials said, while another Palestinian was killed when Israeli settlers stormed a village and sparked fighting with residents.

The deaths marked the latest bloodshed in a monthslong surge of violence that has gripped the occupied West Bank.

The Palestinian Health Ministry said that Mahmoud Abu Saan, 18, was shot in the head by Israeli forces in the city of Tulkarem. The raid drew protests from residents, the local branch of Palestinian Islamic Jihad militant group reported, with Israeli forces shooting tear gas, stun grenades and live fire and Palestinians hurling stones and explosives at the soldiers.

The Israeli army said it shot at those who attacked them. It said it arrested five Palestinians in other West Bank villages, confiscating explosives and also dispersing protests.

Later Friday, the Palestinian Health Ministry said that armed Israeli settlers had entered the village of Burqa, east of the city of Ramallah, and shot and killed 19-year-old Qusai Matan. The Palestinian Red Crescent said Matan, who was shot in the neck, died shortly after reaching the hospital.

The Israeli army said it was looking into the reports.

Palestinian Authority official Ghassan Daghlas, who monitors settlements, said that dozens of Israeli settlers burst into the village, setting fire to two cars and opening fire at Palestinian protesters who poured into the street to throw stones. Another two Palestinians were shot and wounded by the settlers, he said.

The office of Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh demanded that the perpetrators "not be allowed to escape punishment."

Violence has spiraled in the northern West Bank with the rise of shooting attacks by Palestinian groups against Israelis and daily arrest raids by the Israeli military, and growing attacks by extremist Jewish settlers.

Meanwhile, Israeli police said Saturday that they arrested two Israeli settlers after they stormed a Palestinian village in the West Bank in a rampage that left one Palestinian dead.

Armed settlers entered Burqa, a herding village east of the city of Ramallah, late Friday, shooting and killing 19-year-old Qusai Matan, Palestinian health officials said.

Israeli media reported that one of the arrested settlers used to work as an aide, who remained unnamed, for a lawmaker of the far-right Israeli "Jewish Power" party which is in Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's coalition of ultranationalist and ultraorthodox parties in the Israeli parliament. It includes Itamar Ben-Gvir, a pro-settlement firebrand known for hardline positions against Palestinians. The party couldn't be reached for comment.

Police said they arrested two settlers after detaining five for questioning. The other settler who was arrested was hospitalized after sustaining injuries Friday night. Authorities did not elaborate on the charges.

The army said that Israeli settlers arrived in the area to herd sheep, leading to clashes between Israelis and Palestinians from the village. Both sides hurled rocks at each other, the army said, and Israelis fired at Palestinians, leaving Matai dead and four Palestinians and several Israelis injured by rocks.

The village was closed down and more Israeli troops were stationed in the area surrounding it.

Palestinian officials said the settlers also burned two cars in the village. They also called for the perpetrators to be punished.

The rampage drew criticism from the U.K. embassy in Israel, which wrote on social media that it was "appalled" by the settler attacks and called for accountability and justice for those involved.

Yair Lapid, an opposition leader in the Israeli parliament, said that violent settler attacks in the West Bank endanger other settlers, describing most as "law-abiding civilians." He added that the attacks are emboldened by members of Netanyahu's coalition.

"The backing they receive from the most extreme coalition in the country's history is a political attack," he wrote on the platform X, formerly known as Twitter.

Violence has spiraled in the northern West Bank with the rise of shooting attacks by Palestinian groups against Israelis and daily arrest raids by the Israeli military, and growing attacks by extremist Jewish settlers.

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His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah

US, GCC partnership in maritime security key

US may put troops on commercial ships to halt Iran Hormuz seizures

DUBAI, Aug 5, (Agencies): The U.S. military is considering putting armed personnel on commercial ships traveling through the Strait of Hormuz, in what would be an unheard of action aimed at stopping Iran from seizing and harassing civilian vessels, American officials told The Associated Press on Thursday.

Since 2019, Iran has seized a series of ships in the strait, the narrow mouth of the Arabian Gulf, as part of its efforts to pressure the West over negotiations regarding its collapsed nuclear deal with world powers. Putting U.S. troops on commercial ships could further deter Iran from seizing vessels - or escalate tensions further.

The contemplated move also would represent an extraordinary commitment in the Middle East by U.S. forces as the Pentagon tries to focus on Russia and China. America didn't even take the step during the so-called "Tanker War," which culminated with the U.S. Navy and Iran fighting a one-day naval battle in 1988 that was the Navy's largest since World War II.

While officials offered few details of the plan, it comes as thousands of Marines and sailors on both the amphibious assault ship USS Bataan and the USS Carter Hall, a landing ship, are on their way to the Arabian Gulf. Those Marines and sailors could provide the backbone for any armed guard mission in the strait, through which 20% of the world's crude oil passes.

Iran's mission to the United Nations did not respond to a request for comment from AP about the U.S. proposal. Hours later, however, Iran's state-run IRNA news agency acknowledged the proposal, citing this AP report.

Five U.S. officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the proposal, acknowledged its broad details. The officials stressed no final decision had been made and that discussions continue between U.S. military officials and America's Gulf Arab allies in the region.

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A U.S. MH-60 Seahawk helicopter flies over Iranian Revolutionary Guard patrol boats in the Strait of Hormuz on Dec. 21, 2018. The U.S. military is considering putting armed personnel on commercial ships traveling through the Strait of Hormuz, in what would be an unheard of action aimed at stopping Iran from seizing and harassing civilian vessels, four American officials told The Associated Press on Thursday, Aug. 3, 2023. (AP)

NewsWatch

RIYADH: The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia will be hosting national security advisors of several friendly countries for a meeting in Jeddah tomorrow, Saturday, August 5, 2023, to discuss the Ukrainian crisis.

The hosting of this meeting falls in the framework of the humanitarian initiatives and efforts of Saudi Crown Prince and Prime Minister Mohammad bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, the Saudi Press Agency (SPA) reported on Friday.

Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman has been in contact with Russian and Ukrainian leadership since the early days of the crisis, to express the Kingdom's readiness to use its good offices and contribute to reaching a peaceful solution to the Ukrainian crisis.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia supports all efforts and initiatives aiming to reduce the impacts of the crisis and its humanitarian repercussions, according to the SPA report. (KUNA)

CAIRO: A leading human rights group called Friday on the United States and the United Nations to impose further sanctions on those in Sudan "responsible for the atrocities" in the troubled Darfur region, where evidence of scorched-earth attacks is mounting.

The northeast African country plunged into chaos in April when monthslong tensions between the military, led by Abdel Fattah Burhan, and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces, commanded by Mohammed Hamdan Dagaló, exploded into open fighting in the capital of Khartoum, and elsewhere. In Darfur, the scene of genocidal war in the early 2000s, the conflict has morphed into ethnic violence, with the RSF and allied Arab militias targeting African communities in the western region, U.N. officials say.

In a press release, Human Rights Watch said Washington should impose targeted sanctions to "ensure that the U.N. Security Council finally acts to protect civilians and to hold those responsible for the atrocities to account." The U.S. took over the rotation presidency of the U.N. Security Council on Aug. 1. (AP)

TEHRAN: A wildfire on the outskirts of Iran's capital triggered an explosion Friday of mines that had been planted around a high-security prison that houses political prisoners, but there were no injuries, state media reported.

The official IRNA news agency said the incident happened around noon at the Evin prison on the northern outskirts of Tehran, but that it caused no damage

or casualties and that firefighters extinguished the blaze.

The report blamed the fire on the country's current heatwave. Temperatures in Tehran around noon Friday were about 38 C (100 F).

Iranian media in the past have mentioned the mines, which apparently are anti-personnel mines planted to deter escape attempts.

In October a blaze in the prison led to death and injuries of several inmates. In online videos that circulated at the time, gunshots and explosions could be heard in the area of the prison.

ISLAMABAD: The political future of Pakistan's former Prime Minister Imran Khan was thrown into doubt Saturday when police arrested him at home after a court handed him a three-year jail sentence for asset concealment.

The prison sentence could see Khan barred from politics as the law says people with a criminal conviction cannot hold or run for public office. His Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party, or PTI, condemned the ruling and said it will challenge the decision in a superior court.

While a superior court can suspend the conviction, it's the country's election body that can ultimately disqualify Khan from politics.

Efforts to put Khan behind bars have been stepped up ahead of elections expected later this year. His popularity and large support base, combined with his ability to mobilize massive crowds, pose a threat to the ruling coalition and could potentially polarize the electorate. (AP)

NEW DELHI: India's top court on Friday temporarily halted the criminal defamation conviction of opposition leader Rahul Gandhi for mocking the prime minister's surname. His party said it would now seek to have Gandhi reinstated as a member of parliament.

A fierce critic of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his main challenger in the 2024 polls, Gandhi was ousted from Parliament after his conviction by a magistrate's court in March.

The Supreme Court stayed the conviction, which means it is temporarily halted while the court goes into Gandhi's appeal in detail before issuing a final ruling.

Gandhi's disqualification as a lawmaker also now remains in abeyance, said Live Law, an online portal for Indian legal news. Congress party leader K.C. Venugopal said the party would approach the Parliament speaker to restore his seat. (AP)

Prayer Timings

Fajr	03:42	Asr	15:30
Sunrise ..	05:10	Maghrib ..	18:37
Zohr	11:54	Isha	20:02

Local

Expected weather for the next 24 hours:

By Day: Very hot and relatively humid over coastal areas with light to moderate northwesterly wind with speeds of 08-32 km/h.

By Night: Hot to rather hot and relatively humid over coastal areas with light variable wind to light to moderate northwesterly wind with speeds of 08-32 km/h.

Weather

Kuwait Airport	49	33
Abdaly	49	32
Jahra	49	34
Salmiyah	46	37
Ahmadi	47	37
Nuwaisib	49	34
Wafra	48	34

BIOMETRIC/FINGERPRINT APPOINTMENT: <https://meta.e.gov.kw/En/>

Flaws in legislation cause of e-fraud spread: Dr Zaman

'Gambling sites in Kuwait competing to attract citizens, residents'

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 5: A total of seven Western and Arab websites are competing to attract citizens and residents of Kuwait to enter the world of betting and electronic gambling. Despite its risks, it is very popular with gambling lovers, away from the control of the concerned authorities, reports Al-Qabas daily.

Information was received about the presence of brokers' offices in Hawally area to receive the cash from the proceeds of electronic gambling. Contacts were established with people who run these sites, and act as delegates for those in charge of them.



Dr. Safaa Zaman

The seven gambling sites monitored by the daily are working to promote themselves among those looking for electronic pleasure in gambling, and achieving financial profits. They lure such people by giving them financial rewards for the initial deposit of up to USD 500, which doubles as the volume of financial deposits in one game increases.

These sites broadcast from several countries, most notably India and Greece. Some of these centers set a minimum gambling limit of USD 10 and a higher limit of USD 3,000, provided that bets are made on each reward for a financial deposit 35 times per month.

All sites allow electronic financial payment through six services either through banks or electronic financial cards and even digital currencies. They call on gamblers in Kuwait to verify the licenses of any site through the existence of the license from accredited bodies, such as the Malta Games Authority, the UK Gambling Commission, and "Curacao", with the aim of preserving the gamblers' money.

Betting and gambling sites targeting Kuwait provide games from software providers in the world of gambling such as "Micro-gaming", "PlayTech", "Evolution Gaming", which provide various services to players, starting with high graphics. The most popular electronic gambling games targeting individuals in the country are slots, table games such as poker, blackjack, in addition to online roulette, which is considered one of the most popular gambling games due to its ease of play.

Individuals also play games locally using their mobile phones or through live broadcasts in secret rooms within the sites. Real money is earned and transferred to the person's bank account, electronic financial card, or in the form of digital currencies or money transfer services. It depends on the financial transfer on an electronic bank, in addition to a British platform.

Head of the Kuwait Society for Information Security Dr. Safaa Zaman affirmed that the gambling websites are illegal in Kuwait and are not subject to the concerned state authorities.

She explained that participation in these sites takes place by paying financial electronic links, or by transferring from Anydesk application and other various methods.

The "gambling" process is a fraud in itself, and many of its victims are defrauded in several ways.

The Kuwait Society for Information Se-

curity has multiple roles in this regard, the most important of which is the educational role. It also works by searching and investigating accounts and websites and sending them to the Anti-Cybercrime Department, and reporting every account that calls for vice.

The matter requires organization and cooperation between the various state institutions, and the establishment of a special department that searches for those vice sites and accounts, which have been invading the youth, in addition to pursuing the vice brokers who are in Kuwait, and there are unfortunately many of them.

Dr. Zaman criticized the flaws in legislation, which is the main reason for persisting electronic fraud and spreading of vice through websites, indicating that awareness is very important, and there must be cooperation between the various state institutions.

She warned that some of those in charge of these suspicious sites contact children and adolescents through games, and succeed in winning and attracting them through these games, adding that the advertising that appears to young people in games lures them with profits and money, in addition to gambling rooms that appear in the form of electronic games.

Meanwhile, an Indian website reported that there are ten gambling websites in Kuwait, out of which only two are down while the remaining eight are operating freely and safely.

Indian website

When the daily tested the sites that were reported by the Indian website - www.outlookindia.com with the aim of seeing whether they were working or faced by a "block", it realized that two of the ten sites were monitored as being closed in Kuwait.

While the names of the available sites were reserved, pending action against them from the concerned authorities, the website claimed that it had compiled what it considered the "best casinos" on the Internet in Kuwait that offer gambling experiences with all "safety".

It highlighted that it offers wide options for electronic payment such as credit cards, electronic wallets and electronic transfers.

The site explained that it had carefully compiled this list of online casinos in Kuwait. They had been selected based on its "reputation", licensing, diversity of gambling games, user experiences and customer support. One of those casinos operates under a license issued by the Caribbean state of Curacao, which means that Kuwaiti residents can play gambling games on it, as well as make sports bets in a "safe" manner.

There are gambling websites that operate with licenses issued by several countries. Most of these websites operate with advanced and safe security and technological measures. Some of them provide specialized teams to support customers in case they encounter difficulties.

It stated that, "Some of these websites were able to pass all security barriers successfully in Kuwait, and use advanced encryption techniques to protect personal information and advanced security reserves."

The website indicated that some of the gambling websites have services for interacting with customers in a live manner and in several languages 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Students grades improve: report

Over 9,000 enroll in 2 universities

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 5: Kuwait University and Abdullah Al-Salem University announced the admission of 9,057 male and female students for the 2023/2024 academic year, with 600 male and female students accepted into Abdullah Al-Salem University and 8,457 into Kuwait University, out of the total of 13,230 who applied to enroll through the admission system. Also, 4,173 applicants were not accepted to join the two universities, reports Al-Qabas daily.

Informed sources attributed the increase in applications to enroll in Kuwait University to the increase in high school graduation rates, the inflation of student grades, and the increase in the number of outstanding students.

They explained that statistics indicate about 3,200 male and female students obtained an average of 97 percent or higher than graduates of public education only.

Those admitted to Kuwait University have increased by about 1,160 from the available seats at the university, as it previously approved about 7,298 seats for admission, but it accepted 8,457.

Most of the rejected students at Kuwait University are outstanding students, either at the level of high school averages or the equivalent rate (calculating the secondary average in addition to the results of academic ability tests). These students specified their desires for the most popular colleges, such as medical colleges, and therefore they were not accepted.

Most of the minimum equivalent rates for admission to colleges that witness high competition increased. The minimum equivalent rate for admission to medicine was 95.9 percent, dentistry 95.81 percent, and pharmacy 94.02 percent.



Dr. Al-Dhafiri

The minimum equivalent rates for admissions were low in other colleges, as it was 65.83 percent in the College of Engineering and Petroleum, 61.18 percent in College of Sciences, and 57.3 percent in the College of Administrative Sciences.

The rejected ones will have no choice but to wait until the next academic year and reapply to Kuwait University, especially if their desire is to enroll in a medical college.

Unlike what was previously known, they lost their opportunity in foreign scholarships, as the Ministry of Higher Education decided to open the door of admission to foreign scholar-

ship vacancies after the announcement of admission to Kuwait University. The opportunity was ripe for outstanding students who were not accepted at the university to apply for foreign scholarships as a second option for them. However, the ministry opened admission to vacancies this year days before the end of university registration, and announced its results before the end of registration. This nullified any opportunities for the rejected outstanding students to join the majors they aspired to through scholarship vacancies.

The sources affirmed an urgent need to expedite the approval of national tests for university admission, noting that there have been efforts to approve these tests since April 2019 when the Education Development Center announced at the time the formation of a committee to prepare these tests, but they have not been implemented yet.

They said the unified tests system should be a mechanism for real measurement of students' levels.

In response to a question about the reasons for refusing some students from Kuwait University despite their high level achievement, the Acting Dean of Admission and Registration Dr. Rawa Al-Jarallah said most of these students did not complete all their desires in the process of registering an application for admission to the university, so their chances of acceptance decreased because their equivalent rates were lower from the lower averages they accepted the majors they had specified as their desires.

Al-Jarallah indicated that they have an opportunity to re-apply to join the university either in the second semester, the next academic year, or apply for internal scholarships.

In a press conference organized by the university to announce the admission, the Acting Director of Kuwait University Dr. Fayez Al-Dhafiri expressed the university's pride in the joining of a new batch of the country's people who had the best means and the finest methods of education in all academic levels until they were able to join the university in its various scientific and literary faculties and majors, as they are the future of the country and the mainstay of its progress and prosperity.

In response to a question about the increase in the number of admissions, Al-Dhafiri indicated that the increase was the result of the cooperation of the colleges and the support of the Council of Public Universities and the Acting Minister of Education, which provided an opportunity to increase the number of admissions to the university.

'NPT cornerstone of world security'

Kuwait reiterates declaration at Vienna meeting



Ambassador Talal Al-Fassam during his speech at the conference.

Minister chairs security meeting

'Apply law on everyone, deal firmly with violators of laws'

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 5: Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled, the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior, emphasized the urgency of increasing efforts and strengthening security measures to deal firmly with any threats to the country's security, reports Al-Anba daily.

The statement was issued by the Public Relations and Security Media Department of the Ministry of Interior following a security meeting presided over by Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled.

The meeting included assistant undersecretaries and was graced by the presence of Lieutenant General Anwar Al-Barjas, the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior.

During the meeting, Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled stressed the importance of upholding the law without exception, exerting more effort and vigilance, and confronting challenges and risks to bolster national security and address prevailing issues.

Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled conveyed the greetings and appreciation of the country's supreme leadership to the security establishment leaders for their unwavering dedication in safeguarding the homeland and its

citizens. He also commended the significant efforts made by all sectors of the Ministry of Interior.

Furthermore, Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled attended the graduation ceremony of five university "non-commissioned officer" students who were promoted to the rank of lieutenant.

Addressing the graduates during the ceremony, Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled stressed the importance of shouldering their responsibilities and translating the knowledge and skills they acquired during their studies into practical applications to advance security work.

He congratulated the female graduates on their new ranks and emphasized their commitment to their oath, trusting that they would serve the country and its citizens with integrity and a sense of duty, keeping in mind their accountability to God.

The appointment decision was read by Brigadier General Fahd Al-Gharib, the acting director of the Officers Training Institute, while the head of the Examinations Affairs Department, Brigadier Bader Al-Mutaqa, read the relevant section.

Other Voices

Sometimes ignorance is bliss!

By Ahmad alsarraf

Ozempic is an injection that is taken once a week, and its purpose is to improve blood sugar levels in adults with type 2 diabetes, and to reduce their risk of cardiovascular events and stroke, and it is approved by the US Food and Drug Administration for this purpose only, but some have discovered that it is possible to lose weight by using it, with its side effects of nausea, diarrhea, stomach pain, vomiting, and constipation.

Because of my despair of trying to lose my weight, which exceeded 89 kilograms, by a few kilograms, I decided before seeking the help, perhaps it would help me reach my goal, after it was difficult for me to enter the bathroom. In order for the drug to remain effective, it needs to be kept at a temperature between 2 and 8 degrees Celsius. And the matter becomes a cause for inconvenience for those who travel a lot, because they have to adhere to the requirements of preservation and transportation, in addition to the need to take the injection on its weekly appointment.

After more than two months of using Ozempic, I did not notice any progress in losing my weight, which resisted my attempts to lose it, and insisted on remaining in place, except that the instructions said that some people had to be patient, and this is what I did.

I arrived in Spain at the beginning of last June, carrying under my armpits the needles, wishing that I would empty them myself, while making sure to reduce the amount of meals I eat, and

exercise, away from the pressures of work in Kuwait, which will bring better results!

My expectations were correct, as I became more willing to walk daily for distances of more than ten kilometers. My appetite for food also became less, and this is how the drug works, i.e. it issues orders to the brain that make a person lose his desire to eat, or make him satiate quickly, or this is what I thought I was feeling. I also became more aware of the side effects of the drug, such as abdominal pain, mild headache, and almost continuous constipation.

With the fourth month, I lost six kilograms of my weight, and that was the size of a miracle, because losing this amount usually requires a strong diet, and this is what I avoided all the time, because I was tired of being deprived of eating what I love like chocolate bars or rice!

CNN broke the news that the excessive use of drugs, such as Ozempic or Wegovy, has dangerous side effects, especially with regard to the possibility of osteoporosis in older people. Constipation and a lot of stomach ache, and I didn't want any more health problems.

And at almost the same moment I discovered, by chance, that I was not using the syringes correctly, and that what I was getting from insulin was not more than a tenth of one percent, or rather nothing, as I was sticking the needle under the skin and withdrawing it in less than a second, without pressing, for about four months, the device button for a few seconds to empty the entire amount into the body.

And that what I lost in terms of weight was due to exercise first, and reducing meals second, and the illusion of taking weight loss medicine!

Sometimes ignorance is beneficial.

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Kuwait friend: Mikati

FM decries statement by Lebanese minister

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 5: Foreign Minister Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber added that minister Amin Salam's statement coincided with the third anniversary of the painful anniversary of the Beirut port bombing that inflicted a large number of casualties, destruction of vital government facilities namely the silos, construction of which had been funded by Kuwait in 1969 through a loan by Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development.

Sheikh Salem stated further, "the State of Kuwait boasts a historic record of supporting sisterly and brotherly peoples and states, however it emphatically rejects any intervention in its decision making and domestic affairs."

Accordingly, he urged the Lebanese minister to withdraw the statement out of keenness on maintaining bilateral relations.

Meanwhile, the Kuwaiti Embassy in Lebanon on Saturday urged Kuwaiti citizens in Lebanon to steer clear of "disturbance areas", calling on them to keep low profile.

The embassy, in a press release, advised Kuwaitis to stay away from "sites of security disturbances" in some areas in Lebanon and to follow relevant guidelines issued by concerned local authorities.

It, further, asked them not to hesitate to call it in case of emergency.

In another development, Lebanon's caretaker Prime Minister Najib Mikati said Saturday that Kuwait has been assisting brothers in Lebanon throughout decades.

This came in a statement made by Mikati following a remark by Lebanese Minister of Trade and Economy Amin Salam on rebuilding wheat silos at Beirut's port and his call for Kuwait and His Highness the Amir for help.

Mikati affirmed the deep-rooted relations between Lebanon and Kuwait, and their peoples.

Moreover, the premier reiterated that Lebanon respects the principle of not interfering into domestic affairs of all countries.

He indicated that Kuwait takes decisions in line with constitutional, legal and institutional standards that show a deep-rooted political civilization in Kuwaiti society.

Mikati commissioned Saturday Minister of Foreign Affairs and Emigrants Abdullah Bou Habib to communicate with Arab brothers to reassure them about the safety of their nationals in Lebanon.

In a statement issued by Mekati's media office, the premier followed up with Bou Habib and Minister of Interior and Municipalities Bassam Mavlawi on the developments related to the "warning statements" issued by the embassies of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Germany for their nationals in Lebanon.

In added that available information reached after discussing with the military and security leaders revealed that the "overall security situation in general does not call for concern or panic".

It noted that the political and security contacts on addressing the events of Ain al-Hilweh camp of Palestinian refugees made progress.



Sheikh Salem

diwaniya ديوانية

A DIGEST OF PUBLIC OPINION

'Vital to transform key oil companies into joint stock entities'

"IN A recent report, the renowned Meed magazine issued a challenge to Dr. Saad Al-Barrak, the newly appointed Minister of Oil," columnist **Nasser Al-Abdali** wrote for **Al-Qabas** daily.

"The report highlighted the pressing need to separate politics from the technical aspects of the oil sector, which has been grappling with complete paralysis in recent years.

"Failure to address this issue could result in a loss of nearly 300 billion dollars in potential reinvestment over the next two decades.

"Moreover, the report called for increasing the oil sector's production capacity to 3.2 million barrels per day by the end of the fiscal year 2024-2025.

"Over the years, political conflicts have plagued this crucial sector, hindering its progress and development. These conflicts have manifested in the form of support for specific parties or oil leaders, leading to an all-encompassing atmosphere of conflict. Some individuals with vested interests have exploited the sector for personal gain, often neglecting technical expertise and competence in their decision-making.

"To overcome the current dilemma, it is imperative to transform major oil companies like the Kuwait National Petroleum and Petrochemicals into joint stock entities, with citizens holding the majority of shares. This move aims to diminish administrative burdens and mitigate conflicts between different parties.

"The remaining shares would be distributed among government sectors dedicated to citizen welfare, such as social security, minors' affairs, and the Kuwait Investment Authority.

"By restructuring these companies, the oil sector can be revitalized and launched anew, with a focus on optimizing technical capabilities. However, the Kuwait Oil Company would remain a government entity, as it serves a public utility role as defined by the constitution, albeit with necessary structural enhancements.

"This approach seeks to foster efficiency, transparency, and productivity within the sector while safeguarding the nation's interests."

Also:

"How many responsibilities related to the interests of people and their lives fall under the management of a government apparatus established by the state? This apparatus has precise administrative systems, buildings, employees, salaries, and general expenses dedicated to serving the public, finalizing transactions, managing state facilities and projects, implementing development plans, and providing essential services like education and healthcare," columnist **Dr Abdullah Saud Al-Otaibi** wrote for **Al-Jarida** daily.



Al-Abdali

"Unfortunately, sometimes individuals lacking technical competence, leadership skills, clear vision, and strategic understanding are assigned to manage this apparatus.

"They remain in these positions for several years, leading to confusion, loss, and neglect of the apparatus, the rights of its workers, and the interests of the state.

"This situation raises questions about the injustice inflicted upon Kuwait, the apparatus, its workers, and the people. Why are these individuals allowed to stay in their positions despite their inadequacy being evident? Why are they not held accountable for their lack of leadership competence while enjoying the privileges that come with their positions?

"If an annual evaluation system were implemented for leaders, exposing their performance, it would reveal the national disaster caused by unqualified individuals in these positions. The consequences include problems in infrastructure, healthcare, education, employment, and delays in implementing development plans and housing projects, along with financial waste and negligence.

"To advance the state and achieve its vision for the new era, it is crucial to adopt a competitive and neutral system for selecting leaders based on competence, experience, eligibility, leadership qualities, resource management skills, problem-solving abilities, and a passion for achievement.

"Many capable Kuwaiti youth are eager to serve their country, but they have been marginalized due to the current leadership selection system, which prioritizes political deals and compromises over the public interest of Kuwait.

"Implementing a more merit-based system will help harness the country's potential and address the challenges it faces, leading to progress and development that can match other Gulf countries. It will also ensure the proper utilization of financial resources and preserve the nation's abundance for the benefit of all citizens."

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"On the 33rd anniversary of the brutal Iraqi invasion, I advise some politicians in Iraq not to raise the Kuwaiti-Iraqi border issue, as this was settled according to United Nations (UN) Security Council Resolution number 833," columnist **Dahim Al-Qahtani** wrote for **Al-Qabas** daily.

"They should not repeat the mistake of former Iraqi president Saddam Hussein who was much stronger than them, yet gradually lost his rule when he decided to ignore the border with Kuwait.

"The State of Kuwait stood sincerely with post-Saddam Hussein Iraq, and did not skimp on any political, financial or logistical support. Iraq will not find a country as supportive as Kuwait.

"For all this, some politicians in Iraq must give up the mentality of origin and branch, and not use the border issue with Kuwait to harvest electoral votes at home, as the national interest of Iraq is much greater than winning elections.

"There is no new demarcation of the Kuwaiti-Iraqi border, as the land and sea borders were fully demarcated as per the international and technical committees, with the participation of representatives of Kuwait and Iraq, through UN Security Council Resolution number 833 of 1993, which obtained unanimous vote.

"After completing the land border markings, it is required to remove the Iraqi houses adjacent to the border in Umm Qasr. It is also required to continue placing the marine border markings starting from column number 106, which is long overdue.

"Kuwait and Iraq have a very bright future, and will not be affected by some discordant voices that do not reflect the desire of the Iraqi people to cooperate with Kuwait according to the principles of neighborliness and pan-Arabism. They do not reflect the rationality of successive Iraqi governments that repeatedly demonstrated their commitment to the UN resolutions."

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"Corruption has been spreading in Kuwait for years, as officials have been exploiting their position and power to steal public money. Some practice exceptions in carrying out transactions and procedures, while others launder money and are involved in various types of corruption," columnist **Abdullah Al-Abduljader** wrote for **Al-Anba** daily.

"International organizations and funds concerned with fighting corruption have been monitoring developments in Kuwait. It became clear that Kuwaitis mention nepotism in getting a job more than other Gulf citizens. They ranked third in this field among Middle East citizens, not to mention the illegal distribution of State-owned agricultural plots.

"Likewise, some academic officials were found to have forged postgraduate (high studies) degrees. Some companies have been involved in corruption by manipulating their balance sheets, while many Kuwaitis forge their job status in the private sector to obtain funds from the State, exploiting a government policy aimed at encouraging people to get out of the bloated public sector.

"Corruption includes the act of those claiming to have an illness or any other reason to obtain government compensation. This is another dimension of fraud. The State spent \$3.5 billion in the first nine months of 2018 for the overseas treatment of its citizens abroad. It was found later that many of these patients claimed to be sick just to go on an overseas tour.

"A large number of them ended up in American hospitals, where fees totaling \$677 million were not paid, prompting the US State Department and Congress to issue statements demanding that Kuwait pay its bills. This is in addition to the exploitation of allocations for people with special needs, such that some people claim to have a disability to benefit from financial aid."

— Compiled by Mai Elsoukary



Around six people were arrested for drugs, liquor trading.

Drug-pushers, bootleggers nabbed

The Directorate-General of the Criminal Investigation has arrested 6 people from Sabahiya, Salmiya and Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh, in possession of a large quantity of "heroin" and "shabu" and 100 bottles of homemade wine, reports **Al-Rai**

daily. The Security Media Department stated that the continuous efforts of the criminal security sector, represented by the General Department of Criminal Investigation, resulted in the arrest

of 4 Asians and 2 Arabs, who were caught trafficking in narcotic and intoxicating substances.

She added that the six promoters were referred to the competent authority to take the necessary measures against them.

More retirees to benefit from law

New categories added to Afya health insurance lists

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 5: A law has been passed to amend article 2 of law No. 114/2014 on "Afya" health insurance for retirees in order to add four new categories that will benefit from the law, reports **Al-Anba** daily.

The law states the following:

- Article 1 -

The text of article 2 of law No. 114/2014 referred to shall be replaced with the following text:

The provisions of this law apply to:

1 - Retired citizens registered with the Public Institution for Social Security.

2 - Married Kuwaitis subject to the public aid law.

3 - Kuwaiti widows subject to the public aid law or Kuwaiti widows who receive their share from their deceased husbands in accordance with the Social Security Law and have reached 50 years of age.

4 - Kuwaiti divorcees who are subject to the public aid law and are less than 50 years of age.

Other segments may be added by a decision issued by the minister.

- Article 2 -

The Prime Minister and the Ministers - each within his jurisdiction - shall implement this law, and it shall come into force three months from the date of its publication in the official gazette.

The explanatory memorandum stated the following:-

Because the state has a duty to ensure and provide public health, sensing the need of some segments of society to meet the burdens of health expenses and increase them, and since there are groups in society that find it difficult for them to bear the exorbitant costs of treatment, the law added a number of groups to the health insurance coverage stipulated in article 2 of law No. 114/2014 referred to, which are:-

1. Married Kuwaiti women subject to the public aid law, which was stipulated in decree No. 23/2013 for the linking and en-

'Govt sector can re-hire expats'

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 5: Informed sources revealed that government agencies have received approvals from the Civil Service Commission to seek the services of non-Kuwaiti employees, after they were suspended during the past years, with the exception of some specializations where citizens were not available to fill these vacant posts, reports **Al-Qabas** daily.

The sources indicated the services of some non-Kuwaitis in government agencies, which were sent to the Civil Service Commission since last year, or during the past months, were finally approved, some of which are in specializations where national cadres are not available.

The sources pointed out that the CSC was rejecting any requests to seek the services of non-Kuwaitis, in the event that there were Kuwaitis with the same specialty registered for employment in the central employment system, as the CSC considered the request of seeking the services of non-Kuwaiti received from the government agency as a declaration of need for an employee in that entity.

Thus, the system nominates a Kuwaiti employee to work in the entity, with the same specialty.

tilement to public assistance. The decree defined in article 1 thereof: "Married Kuwaiti woman: A married Kuwaiti woman who has reached 55 years of age unless it is proven that there is source of her own income."

This segment was granted public aid, and it is the same category that the legislator decided to include in the health insurance services established in accordance with this law.

2 - Kuwaiti widows subject to the public aid law or Kuwaiti widows who receive their share from their deceased husbands in accordance with the Social Insurance Law and have reached the age of 50 years. This age was set to coincide with the age of retirement for women, and to encourage the government to reduce the age of Kuwaiti housewives who receive a monthly allowance from 55 years to 50 years.

Some Kuwaiti women who are subject to the public aid law in the event of the death of their husbands, and are receiving their share of the husband's retirement pension, are excluded from the umbrella of the public aid law. In

order to ensure they do not lose the health insurance umbrella that is given to their peers, it has been stipulated that they be included in this law.

3 - Kuwaiti divorced women subject to the public aid law, and whose age is not less than 50 years.

In conclusion, the authority of the Minister of Health to add any other segments was retained by his decision, because expanding the addition of new segments will contribute to reducing the burden and pressure on the departments of the Ministry of Health's hospitals, reducing waiting lists of patients, and reducing the financial burden on their shoulders, while giving beneficiaries a wider choice in choosing the most appropriate healthcare setting for them.

In order to ensure that the ministry carries out all the preparatory work and administrative arrangements necessary for the implementation of this law in order to achieve the desired legislative goal, it has been stipulated that a period of three months be granted for the implementation of this law, starting after its publication in the official gazette.

No decision taken yet to air 'Barbie' movie - Info

28 Asians caught selling 'stolen' diesel

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 5: After the controversy about banning the movie 'Barbie' in the country that led to the postponement of its screening until the end of this month, the Ministry of Information decided to review the current version of the movie to determine if it conforms with Kuwaiti values and laws, reports **Al-Qabas** daily quoting sources.

Sources clarified that the ministry has so far not taken a decision on whether to reject or approve the film. Sources said if the original or modified version of the film is approved, the content will be subject to review and censorship; then notes will be taken - if any - to request for further modification.

Sources added many international movie production companies usually reject amendments or deletions in their films, so those in charge of censorship tend to ban the showing of such films.

Sources reiterated the ministry will never allow the showing of any movie that violates the values and laws of the country.

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Illegal diesel selling: The Ministry of Interior has announced the arrest of 28 individuals of Asian nationality for what the authorities called "illicit sale of state-subsidized diesel at prices significantly below those found at authorized gas stations," reports **Al-Qabas** daily.

According to the ministry's state-

Kuwaiti dies in chase by cops

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 5: A Kuwaiti died in a road traffic accident in Wafra when his car overturned killing him on the spot, reports **Al-Rai** daily.

According to security sources the victim was reportedly driving recklessly in the Umm Qadeer area and after receiving a report the Operations Department of the Ministry of Interior dispatched a police patrol to the area.

Witnesses said as soon as the motorist saw the police patrol approaching, he stepped on the gas pedal in a vain attempt to escape, lost control of his vehicle and died when the car overturned.

The investigator and the personnel from the Criminal Evidences Department moved to the site and referred the corpse to Forensics.

The patrol commander was arrested and referred for interrogation to find out the circumstances that led to the death of the victim.

KAC denies disembarking passengers

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 5: The Kuwait Airways Corporation has denied disembarking passengers from one of its planes just to accommodate the family of one of its senior officials, reports **Al-Jarida** daily.

A press release issued by the KAC has blatantly denied, Friday, the validity of what is being circulated on social media, about "disembarking passengers from the plane, and accommodating the family of an official in the company."

The KAC has called on such

media outlets to first verify the news from official sources before publishing misleading reports.

In an explanatory note the KAC said what is being published in this regard was verified, and discovered that "some passengers were transferred to another plane due to a change in the type of plane, and there is no transgression in our procedures."

The note emphasized the keenness of the KAC for customer comfort and providing them with the best services.

ment, the arrest was made possible through the diligent efforts of the Criminal Investigation Department for Governorates Affairs in Jahra and Ahmadi, under the criminal security sector.

The operation leading to the arrests was carried out in the Mina Abdullah and Saad Al-Abdullah areas, resulting in the seizure of evidence.

All suspects have been handed over to the appropriate authorities for further legal proceedings, and necessary actions will be taken against companies found to be benefiting from the illegal sale of subsidized diesel provided by the state.

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Two dead in accident: The Public Relations and Media Department at Kuwait Firefighting Force (KFF) revealed that the Central Operations Department received information about a traffic accident along King Fahad Road at dawn Friday, reports **Al-Qabas** daily.

A firefighting team from Nuwaiseeb Fire Station was immediately dispatched to the accident site where a four-wheel drive vehicle and a cement mixer truck collided. The accident resulted in the death of two people.

Investigations are ongoing to determine the circumstances that led to the accident.

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Beware fake PACI links: The Public Authority for Civil Information (CSCI) has warned the public about the spread of fake PACI links requesting for personal and financial data; urging everyone to refrain from clicking these links or responding to such requests, reports **Al-Rai** daily.

PACI stressed that it does not and will never ask for the personal or financial information of anyone.

On the other hand, PACI affirmed that it will soon reactivate the civil identification card delivery service; indicating this will be done through its official website.



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Obstacles in recruiting female domestics from India & Nepal

Recruitment offices need more facilities: Al-Dakhnan

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 5: The Department of Domestic Labor in the Public Authority for Manpower (PAM) has prevented recruitment agencies from completing the procedures for new contracts for new female domestic workers from India and Nepal if there are no job order contracts signed with specialized offices in those well-known countries, reports Al-Qabas daily.

The owners of offices said, "In light of the continued suspension of the recruitment of domestic workers from the Philippines as well as the authority's call to stop recruitment from Nepal and India for offices that do not have work contracts with offices there, the problem of recruitment of domestic workers will definitely be exacerbated."

They stressed that their procedures with the Nepalese and Indian workers are legal and legitimate, as they approve the new Indian contracts from the Indian embassy, but the problem lies in Nepal, as there are no organized agreements between Nepal and Kuwait in this regard.

In addition, Head of the Union of Domestic Labor Offices Khaled Al-Dakhnan said, "The procedures taken by the authority are legally sound, but the recruitment offices need more facilities that support their steps in providing domestic workers for citizens and residents."

Al-Dakhnan highlighted the

KU bans all forms of smoking in varsity premises PUC welcomes applications for internships

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 5, (Agencies): The General Secretariat of the Private Universities Council (PUC) opened on Tuesday the enrollment of high school graduates for the internship program 2023-2024.

Application for the program is available online as of Wednesday, August 2, until Sunday, August 13, the secretariat said in a statement posted to its website.

It invited potential applicants from holders of the high school certificate, the scientific and literary divisions, to

need to expedite the signing of labor agreements with different countries, facilitate the approval of contracts, avoid suspending them in offices over others, and achieve the public interest."

Meanwhile, an expert in domestic labor affairs Bassam Al-Shammari revealed that, "The presence of female workers from Nepal and Benin supports the domestic labor market even if there are no organized agreements between Kuwait and these two countries. There are official procedures carried out by offices in Kuwait, and there are visas issued and approved from the Ministry of Interior.

visit its website (<http://www.PUC.edu.kw>) for more information on the specializations that might best suit them.

Meanwhile, Acting Director and official spokesperson of Kuwait University Dr Fayez Al-Dhafiri has issued a circular banning all forms of smoking in the university buildings, colleges and work centers in order to protect the health of everyone, reports Al-Anba daily.

Al-Dhafiri warned that whoever violates this directive will be held liable based on the circulars and decisions on combating smoking and specifying public places where smoking is prohibited, the Environmental Protection Law and its amendments, and the executive regulations on smoking in closed and semi-closed public places including universities, academies, and educational and training institutes. He

added the university urges its affiliates to take the same step.

'Settle power bills': Deputy Director of the Public Authority for Sports Bashar Abdullah recently issued a circular to sports clubs and federations on the need to settle their unpaid Ministry of Electricity and Water bills; stressing this is important and urgent, reports Al-Rai daily.

The circular stated that the authority is keen on paying State dues in response to the letter of the ministry to the authority (number 11205 dated June 15, 2023). The letter includes a statement of unpaid bills.

The authority then instructed sports institutions to settle the unpaid bills, not just in the ministry but also other entities; and to provide the authority with a proof of payment.

work and increase the size of the gap in the market."

It is worth highlighting that the number of female workers arriving in the first quarter and their nationalities are as follows:-

- The total number of female workers is 19,698 including:
 - 9,700 domestic workers from India
 - 6,896 domestic workers from Sri Lanka
 - 2,716 domestic workers from Nepal
 - 386 domestic workers from Benin



KUNA photo

Quranic reciter Mishary Al-Afasy.

'A message of inspiration'

Kuwaiti Quranic reciter Al-Afasy awarded ECOSOC membership

By Abdulaziz Al-Megren

GENEVA, Aug 5, (KUNA): Kuwaiti Quranic reciter Mishary Al-Afasy on Thursday joined the Creators Union of Arab (CUA), thus obtaining the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) membership.

Al-Afasy, who is the Imam of Kuwait's Grand Mosque, was honored, in recognition of his pioneering path globally as one of the most outstanding dignitaries.

Under this membership, the holders can enter the UN HQ to attend meetings, and submit opinions and recommendations in line with specific measures and standards.

Speaking to KUNA over the phone, Al-Afasy expressed his pleasure and pride for being selected to work, as a Kuwaiti person who loves humanitarian action, with the UN non-government organiza-

tions and voluntary agencies.

Al-Afasy, who got the union's medal, said this honoring shows his commitment to serving his country and the whole world to achieve required sustainable development, and enhance society efforts and skills that are in harmony with Kuwait's policy based on supporting peace and positive change.

Meanwhile, head of the CUA and Arab media union Ahmed Nour said in a press statement that this honoring is a message of inspiration for future generations that encourages them to achieve achievements and excellence in their fields.

He explained that Al-Afasy's contributions have positively affected the lives of millions across the world through his Quran recitation, television and radio programmes, chants, activities and charitable tours.

Water consumption exceeds production

Electricity indicator exceeds maximum expected load during summer – report

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 5: For the second day in a row, the load index continued to break the barrier of the maximum load expected by the Ministry of Electricity and Water for the current summer, which is set at 16,830 megawatts, by calculating an increase in consumption of 4% compared to last summer, during which the maximum load recorded was 16,180 megawatts, reports Al-Qabas daily.

Wednesday, the load index recorded 16,850 megawatts, compared to the load on Tuesday, which amounted to 16,940 megawatts, as temperatures Wednesday, recording 50 degrees Celsius, compared to 51 degrees on Tuesday.

According to the data of the Ministry of Electricity and Water, water consumption exceeded production Wednesday by 29 million gallons, as production was estimated at 477.8 million imperial gallons, compared to consumption of 506.8 million gallons, and the difference was made up through the strategic reserve, which was estimated yesterday at 3767.3 million imperial gallons.

The ministry announced that two main feeders had gone out of the main substation south of Surra AW, which led to power outages in limited parts of Zahra, before emergency teams could deal with the fault and restore power again.

According to the ministry's figures, the value of the available safe capacity is 17,660 megawatts, while the maximum capacity available in the network during the current summer is 18,250 megawatts.

Informed sources in the MEW were reassured about the ministry's ability to meet the country's energy needs during the current period, which is witnessing a growth in consumption due to high temperatures.

While the sources urged the ministry's clients to rationalize consumption and avoid waste, through the use of energy-saving devices, whether in lighting or air conditioning.

The sources warned of the importance of adjusting air conditioners at 26 degrees when traveling or in unused places, as well as conducting periodic maintenance of air conditioners.

Two Palestinians

Continued from Page 1

Israel captured the West Bank in the 1967 Mideast war, along with the Gaza Strip and east Jerusalem. Palestinians seek those territories for their hoped-for independent state.

Also:

JERUSALEM: An American billionaire and major donor to a Jerusalem think tank backing the Israeli government's divisive judicial overhaul said on Friday that he would stop giving to the conservative group.

The decision by **Arthur Dantchik**, a 65-year-old libertarian multimillionaire from **New York**, to cut funding to the Kohelet Policy Forum reflects the scope of the unrelenting protest movement against Prime Minister **Benjamin Netanyahu's** plans to weaken the Supreme Court.

"I believe what is most critical at this time is for Israel to focus on healing and national unity," Dantchik said in a statement shared with The Associated Press announcing his move to halt funding. "Throughout my life, I have supported a diverse array of organizations that promote individual liberties and economic freedoms for all people."

The protests have raged in Israel for seven months, exposing deep-seated social tensions and thrusting the country into a crisis over the future of its democracy.

The Kohelet Policy Forum, founded in 2012 by American-Israeli computer scientist **Moshe Koppel**, has emerged as one of the main architects of Netanyahu's judicial overhaul package.

Kohelet declined to comment specifically on Dantchik, saying only that the donations it receives "are broad-based and increasing steadily."

Israeli media has reported Kohelet has been involved in negotiations over the overhaul plans. The changes would give the government more control over the selection of judges and make it harder for the Supreme Court to strike down laws. At one point earlier this year, a member of Netanyahu's right-wing Likud party said the think tank even provided the government with the same overhaul proposal that it presented to Israel's parliament.

The Israeli parliament, or Knesset, passed first major measure in the judicial overhaul last month, unleashing widespread unrest among critics who fear it will blunt one of Israel's few checks on government overreach and erode its democratic institutions. Supporters of the plan, including Kohelet, claim it will boost democracy by giving the elected government more power than unelected judges.

Dantchik's announcement Friday also drew attention to the powerful influence American money and ideas have on Israeli

politics. In 2021, the Haaretz daily first identified Dantchik as one of Kohelet's two principal financial supporters in an investigation that revealed a maze of opaque third-party groups in the **United States** through which Dantchik and others channeled their donations.

Kohelet is not required to disclose its donations, and the exact amount that Dantchik has provided over the years is not publicly known.

US may

Continued from Page 1

The renewed hostilities come as Iran now enriches uranium closer than ever to weapons-grade levels after the collapse of its 2015 nuclear deal. International inspectors also believe it has enough enriched uranium for "several" nuclear bombs if it chose to build them. Iran maintains its program is for peaceful purposes, and U.S. intelligence agencies assess Tehran is not pursuing an atomic bomb.

The U.S. also has pursued ships across the world believed to be carrying sanctioned Iranian oil. Oil industry worries over another seizure by Iran likely has left a ship allegedly carrying Iranian oil stranded off Texas as no company has yet to unload it.

Also:

RIYADH: The strategic partnership between the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and the **United States** is of paramount significance to enhancing regional maritime security, and securing sea navigation and smooth international trade flow, said the GCC Secretary General Thursday.

Jasem Al-Budaiwi made the remark while receiving Brad Cooper, the commander of U.S. Naval Forces Central Command (NAVCENT), U.S. 5th Fleet and Combined Maritime Forces, in the council's H.Q. in **Riyadh**, the Secretariat said in a statement.

The gathering discussed a number of issues related to maritime security in the Arabian Gulf region, promotion of Gulf-US cooperation, and coordination with international and regional partners in this regard, it added.

Al-Budaiwi was quoted as stressing that maritime security is one of the most important issues within the framework of the strategic partnership with the United States, pointing to the specialized working group formed for this purpose in 2015, according to the statement.

He indicated that the successive Gulf-US summits, including the one held in **Saudi Arabia's Jeddah** in July 2022 and the joint meeting of GCC and US foreign ministers in June 2023, had emphasized the importance of supporting navigation rights and freedom, and collective efforts to address threats posed to the security of ships through the region's waterways.

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Pan-Arab talks bring together businessmen, bankers

Lebanon able to have 'robust' economic growth: Top Kuwait banker

BEIRUT, Aug 5, (KUNA): Lebanon is able to have "robust" economic growth if it adopts drastic financial and economic reforms, Kuwait's top banker said on Thursday.

To regain investors' confidence and draw upon its untutilized potential, Lebanon needs to adopt a multi-faceted approach involving political stability, structural reforms, effective economic policies and institutional governance principles, said Secretary-General of Kuwait Banking Association Hamad Al-Hasawi in his virtual participation in an Arab forum held in Beirut.

He listed Lebanon's requirements as carrying out drastic financial and economic reforms in the banking system, ensuring transparency and economic institutional governance, promoting rule of law, protecting investors' rights and improving infrastructure and public services.

"If Lebanon strictly puts economic reforms in place, then its economy will be able to achieve robust economic growth, create new jobs and improve the Lebanese people's standards of living in a sustainable way," Al-Hasawi added.

Lebanon on Thursday hosted a gathering bringing together businessmen and bank officials from across the wider Arab region, allowing the two sectors a viable opportunity to explore greater cooperation.

The First Arab Forum for Banks and Businessmen, a collaborative endeavor between the Union of Arab Banks (UAB) and the World Union

of Arab Bankers, sheds light on the need for better "investment performance," caretaker Trade and Economy Minister Amin Salam told the gathering.

More cooperation between the public and private sectors has now become "crucial" in providing a business environment that is more conducive to lure greater foreign investments, in addition to bolstering the national economy, he underlined.

On UAB's role and objectives, its financial resources committee chief Sheikh Mohammad Al-Sabah said the body serves as a "bridge" that links the business and banking sectors together, while it also contributes towards funding development projects.

He went on to highlight the talks as an "important chance" for Lebanon to restore "stability and balance" to its banking sector at a time where Beirut is grappling with economic turmoil, he said.



Launching Creativity Awards in Music, Short Films and Child Culture.

KUNA photos

Discovering and nurturing creative talents

Oman's Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth launches several awards

MUSCAT, Aug 5, (KUNA): The Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Youth has introduced several awards this year, including the 2023 Arts Award, which encompasses three categories: advertising films, animation films, and soundtracks. This award is open to Omanis and residents aged 18 years and above, with the primary objective of discovering and nurturing creative talents in these artistic domains. It aims to showcase the participants' artistic flair, support university and college students in their creative endeavors, encourage young musicians, and foster collaboration among musicians, producers, and directors to produce innovative works of art in the music industry.

The Arts Award celebrates talents across various artistic disciplines, such as music, popular culture, chanting, theatre, cinema, visual arts, digital arts, and photography. The Promotional Films Award, on the other hand, seeks to produce a promotional film showcasing the natural beauty of Oman, with a duration of 3 to 5 minutes, focusing on a chosen tourist destination in any governorate selected by the contestants. As for the Soundtrack Award, participants will be provided with the film material upon registration to create compelling soundtracks for the specified film.

Additionally, the Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Youth, through the General Directorate of Youth, has launched the inaugural "Tawasul" Award for short films, encompassing various genres like fiction, documentary, 3D, and electronic productions. This award aims to support talented Omani youth who have experience or a passion for photography and filmmaking, promoting the values of balanced dialogue and accepting diverse viewpoints in social media platforms and other youth dialogue spaces. It encourages effective communication, ethical dialogue, and opposes any form of bullying or abuse, fostering personal and societal growth.

Furthermore, the award emphasizes future skills and jobs related to artificial intelligence, self-employment culture among youth, and the intersection of current youth skills with future work opportunities.

NCCAL keen on preserving Kuwait's 'cultural identity'

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 5, (KUNA): On August 2nd, the National Council for Culture, Arts and Literature (NCCAL) in Kuwait declared its ongoing commitment to preserving the country's cultural identity and upholding the significance of its national heritage without compromising any national principles.

In response to concerns raised about the book titled "Time of Anger," which was included in the World of Knowledge series, the council acted under the directives

of Abdul Rahman Al-Mutairi, the Minister of Information and Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs. As a result, a fact-finding committee was established, consisting of representatives from the Fatwa and Legislation sector, the Writers Association, and the legal affairs sector in the Ministry of Information.

The NCCAL emphasized its dedication to maintaining amicable relations with brotherly and friendly nations, making sure not to cause any offense in any manner.

Moreover, the Ministry launched the "Child Culture Award" this year, which includes two competitions: "Oman Tells" and "Speak to See You." The former invites Omani and Arab children's writers and authors to create stories for children and adolescents related to cultural heritage and promoting Omani identity.

The latter competition focuses on gifted children showcasing their speaking skills through a 2-4 minute video clip in classical Arabic or the local dialect. The aim is to enhance social communication capabilities, self-expression, and public speaking skills among Omani and Arab children aged 7-12, nurturing their potential to create meaningful content and fostering communication and participation within their families.

On a different note, the "Logos Hope Ship," the world's largest floating library, visited Oman for the third time, docking at Sultan Qaboos Port in the Wilayat of Muttrah. It provided an opportunity for book lovers to explore a vast collection of over 5,000 books suitable for people of all ages and backgrounds, covering various topics such as sciences, arts, medicine, languages, and more.

The Oman Memory Center stands as an exemplary non-profit scientific and cultural institution in the Sultanate of Oman. Its establishment began in 2004, officially recognized in 2013, and reg-

istered with the Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Youth. The center's main pillars include research, collection, recording, and documentation, data preservation and indexing, heritage investigation, studies, and publishing, as well as digital, media, and communication services.

The center has successfully implemented several projects, including the "Omani Memory" project, which is a comprehensive digital encyclopedia documenting various aspects of Omani culture, history, and heritage. It has also initiated projects like "Oman in the Memory of the World" and "Tarjuman Oman" to preserve and promote Omani heritage and knowledge internationally through translations and scholarly endeavors.

The center has actively engaged in international conferences, seminars, and research presentations related to manuscript preservation, digitization, and availability. Additionally, it offers an online store to sell its publications and has produced numerous documentaries on topics related to Oman's cultural and historical significance.

Overall, the Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Youth, as well as the Oman Memory Center, have played pivotal roles in fostering artistic talents, preserving cultural heritage, and promoting the rich Omani identity both locally and globally.

Preservation of Kuwait's reputation in charity work

MoSA signs co-op protocol with CITRA

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 5: In confirmation of the news titled "Social Affairs and the Communications Authority will soon sign a cooperation protocol to block violating fund-raising sites" published on July 17, the Ministry of Social Affairs signed a cooperation protocol with the Communications and Information Technology Regulatory Authority, reports Aljarida daily.

The cooperation protocol aims to tighten control in a broader and more comprehensive manner on all donation announcements, internal and external text or electronic messages that are published in this regard and reach citizens and residents but are in violation of the controls and requirements regulating charity work in the country.

In a statement issued after the signing, the Acting Undersecretary of the Ministry of Social Affairs Abdulaziz Sari said, "The signing of the protocol was preceded by extensive efforts exerted by the officials of the ministry and the authority. It followed a series of meetings that were held to overcome any obstacles that preceded the signing.

The protocol aims to extend our control over any fundraising operations in a way that guarantees preservation of Kuwait's reputation in charity work, which is recognized for

its integrity and goodwill regionally and internationally.

It coincided with the large number of anonymous accounts on communication sites that are not affiliated with any well-known charity organization but publish advertisements for collecting donations in violation of law No. 59/1959 regarding fund-raising for public purposes. It stipulates that individuals or groups are prohibited from collecting donations from the public by any means, even for the purpose of spending them on a charitable cause, without obtaining a license in advance from the Ministry of Social Affairs. It was necessary for the ministry to move quickly, in coordination with the relevant government agencies, to address such accounts that solicit the sympathy of donors on behalf of fictitious parties."

Sari denied the existence of any measures by the ministry aimed at obstructing charitable work as long as it is carried out in accordance with legal frameworks.

He highlighted that the charity and humanitarian projects and campaigns launched by the ministry on a regular basis are strong evidence against any such accusations, as evidenced by the fact that the proceeds of the last Ramadan donations project amounted to KD 55.8 million, which is an increase of KD 2.8 million over the "Ramadan 2022 Project".

OPEC+ renews pledge to oil market stability

Kuwait oil rises as Saudi, Russia extend oil cuts

VIENNA, Aug 5, (KUNA): The 49th meeting of the Joint Ministerial Monitoring Committee (JMMC) of OPEC+ took place via videoconference Friday with renewed commitment to oil market stability, and commending Saudi Arabia's decision on extending voluntary oil supply reduction for another month and Russia voluntary decision to reduce oil exports.

The JMMC reviewed the crude oil production data for the months of May and June 2023 and noted the overall conformity for participating OPEC and non-OPEC countries of the Declaration of Cooperation (DoC).

The committee urged all participating countries to achieve full conformity and adhere to the compensation mechanism. The committee reaffirmed the commitment of its member countries to the DoC which extends to the end of 2024 as agreed in the 35th OPEC and non-OPEC Ministerial Meeting (ONOMM) on 4th of June 2023.

It also noted to adjust of the frequency of the monthly meetings to become every two months for the JMMC and the authority of the JMMC to hold additional meetings, or to request an OPEC and non-OPEC Ministerial Meeting as agreed on in the 33rd OPEC and non-OPEC Ministerial Meeting (ONOMM) on 5th of October 2022.

The committee will continue to closely assess market conditions noting the willingness of the DoC countries to address market developments and stand ready to take additional measures at any time, building on the strong cohesion of OPEC and participating non-OPEC oil-producing countries.

The committee also expressed its full recognition and support for the efforts of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia aimed at supporting the stability of the oil market and reiterated its appreciation for the Kingdom's additional voluntary cut of 1 million barrels per day and for extending it for the month of September.

The committee also acknowledged the Russian Federation for its additional voluntary reduction of exports by 300 kb

for the month of September.

The next meeting of the JMMC (50th) is scheduled for 04 October 2023.

Price of Kuwait crude oil rose USD 3.10 to USD 89.37 per barrel on Friday compared with USD 86.27 pb on Thursday, Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) said on Saturday.

Forward transactions of the Brent crude oil rose USD 1.10 to USD 86.24 pb and West Texas Intermediate crude climbed USD 1.27 to USD 82.82 pb.

Russia announced on Thursday it will cut oil exports by 300,000 barrels per day in September in a bid to ensure balance at global oil markets.

Oil supply

"Within the efforts to ensure the oil market remains balanced Russia will continue to voluntarily reduce its oil supply in the month of September, now by 300,000 barrels per day, by cutting its exports by that quantity to global markets," Russian Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Novak was quoted by Russian Tass news agency as saying.

He added that this move comes in the context of a voluntary decision to cut oil exports next September.

Saudi Arabia announced on Thursday it will extend the voluntary cut of one million barrels per day for another month to include September, which can be extended or deepened.

"Saudi Arabia will extend the voluntary cut of one million barrels per day, which has gone into implementation in July, for another month to include the month of September that can be extended or deepened," the Ministry of Energy said in a press release carried by the kingdom's official news agency.

This cut is in addition to the voluntary cut previously announced by the Kingdom in April 2023, which extends until the end of December 2024, it added.

This additional voluntary aims to reinforce the precautionary efforts made by OPEC Plus countries with a view to supporting the stability and balance of oil markets, it said.

Russia announced on Thursday that it would cut oil exports by 300,000 barrels per day in September in a bid to ensure balance at global oil markets.

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US mortgage rates tick higher

The average long-term U.S. mortgage rate rose again this week, bad news for Americans seeking to upgrade or buy their first home.

The average rate on the 30-year home mortgage rate ticked up to 6.90% this week from 6.81% a week ago. A year ago, the benchmark home loan rate stood at 4.99%, mortgage buyer Freddie Mac reported Thursday.

The average rate on 15-year fixed-rate mortgages, popular with those refinancing their homes, climbed to 6.25% from 6.11% last week. A year ago, it was 4.26%.

High rates can add hundreds of dollars a month in costs for borrowers, limiting how much they can afford in a market already overpriced for many Americans.

High inflation has driven the Federal Reserve to raise its benchmark interest rate 11 times since March 2022. Its fed funds rate has hit the highest level in 22 years. (AP)

Egypt raises interest rates as it battles spiraling inflation

Egypt's Central Bank is hiking interest rates as the cash-strapped North African country continues to battle surging inflation and a depreciating currency.

In an online statement late Thursday, the bank's monetary policy committee said the most basic lending rate, the overnight deposit rate, was increased from 18.25% to 19.75%.

Egyptians, particularly working class households, are struggling to keep up with rising prices, which have soared

since Russia invaded Ukraine last year. The annual inflation rate reached 36.8% in June, up from 33.7% recorded in May, according to data released by the state-run Central Agency for Mobilization and Statistics.

The prices of basic items such as grains, meat, poultry, fish and fruit have risen drastically in recent months.

"Given the balance of risks surrounding the inflation outlook, the MPC judges that a policy rate hike ... is warranted in order to contain the inflation-

ary pressures," Thursday's statement said.

Over the past year, Egypt's central bank has sought to offset rising inflation by hiking its main interest rates. The last hike was in March.

Egypt is the world's largest wheat importer, with most of its imports traditionally coming from Ukraine and Russia. Since conflict in eastern Europe broke out in February 2022, the Egyptian pound has lost over 50% of its value against the dollar. (AP)

Market Movements

05-08-2023

	Change	Closing pts		Change	Closing pts		
UAE	- DFM	+0.79	4,083.18	PAKISTAN	- KSE 100	-0.04	48,588.99
JAPAN	- Nikkei	+0.10	32,192.75	PHILIPPINES	- PSEI	-1.91	6,450.84
				SAUDI	- Tadawul	-0.89	11,375.78
				EGYPT	- EGX 30	-0.02	17,451.44

Business

Unemployment dips to 3.5%

US employers add a still-solid 187,000 jobs in July

WASHINGTON, Aug 5, (AP) — The job market has cooled over the summer. But it's still strong enough to defy predictions that higher interest rates would tip the United States into recession.

U.S. employers added 187,000 jobs last month, fewer than expected. But the unemployment rate dipped to 3.5% in a sign that the job market remains resilient.

Hiring was up from 185,000 in June, a figure that the Labor Department revised down from an originally reported 209,000. Economists had expected to see 200,000 new jobs in July.

Still last month's hiring was solid, considering that the Federal Reserve has raised its benchmark interest 11 times since March 2022. And the Fed's inflation fighters will welcome news that more Americans entered the job market last month, easing pressure on employers to raise wages to attract and keep staff.

"This is a good strong report," said Julia Pollak, chief economist at the jobs website ZipRecruiter. "The worst fears that people had of a painful downturn, a loss of jobs, longer unemployment durations, all those things - those are not coming to pass."

Unemployment fell to a notch above a half century low as 152,000 Americans entered the job force. The number of unemployed fell by 116,000.

Despite the influx of workers, average hourly wages rose 0.4% from June and 4.4% from a year earlier - numbers that were hotter than expected and are likely to worry the Fed.

The Labor Department revised payroll figures down for both May and June, reducing the number of jobs created in those months by 49,000. With the revisions, June and July were "the two weakest monthly gains in two-and-a-half years," noted Paul Ashworth, chief North America economist at Capital Economics.

In July, health care companies added 63,000 jobs. But temporary help jobs - often seen as a sign of where the job market is headed - fell by 22,000. And factories cut 2,000 jobs.

Eugene Lupario, who owns the SVS Group staffing firm in Oakland, California, is seeing signs of a labor market slowdown - though certain businesses, such as restaurants and bars, are still hiring aggressively. "Interest rates have had an impact," he said. Banks and home lenders have been hit hard

by higher borrowing costs and aren't looking for much help. "They're not getting new loans. They're not getting refis," Lupario said. "Because rates are where they are, nobody's going out there and buying first or second homes right now."

And he said that some of the pandemic hiring frenzy has receded. "During COVID, a nurse, an RN, could ask for and get \$100 an hour," Lupario said. But hospitals are "not paying \$100 an hour anymore. They're paying pre-COVID rates at \$75 to \$85 an hour. Those same nurses that were making 100 bucks an hour are sitting on the sidelines maybe waiting for somebody to offer them \$100 an hour, not realizing that they're probably not going to get it."

The U.S. economy and job market have repeatedly confounded predictions of an impending recession. Increasingly, economists are expressing confidence that inflation fighters at the Federal Reserve can pull off a rare "soft landing" - raising interest rates just enough to rein in rising prices without tipping the world's largest economy into recession. Consumers are feeling sunnier too: The Confer-

ence Board, a business research group, said that its consumer confidence index last month hit the highest level in two years.

"These numbers," acting Labor Secretary Julie Su said after the jobs report came out, "are inconsistent with recession."

There's other evidence the job market, while still healthy, is losing momentum. The Labor Department reported Tuesday that job openings fell below 9.6 million in June, lowest in more than two years. But, again, the numbers remain unusually robust: Monthly job openings never topped 8 million before 2021. The number of people quitting their jobs - a sign of confidence they can find something better elsewhere - also fell in June but remains above pre-pandemic levels.

The Fed wants to see hiring cool off. Strong demand for workers pushes up wages and can force companies to raise prices to make up for the higher costs.

The U.S. labor market "is now cooling in a gradual and orderly fashion in line with the policy goals at the Federal Reserve, which points to a growing probability of a soft landing for the

economy," said Joe Brusuelas, chief economist for the tax and accounting firm RSM. "Demand for labor remains solid but is clearly cooling compared to the torrid pace in 2021 and 2022."

Many businesses continue to struggle to find workers.

In New Hampshire, the unemployment rate was 1.8% in June, tied with South Dakota for the nation's lowest. "The labor market is very tight in this area," said Jeff Winslow, general manager at DiPrizio Pine Sales, a sawmill in Middleton, New Hampshire, near the Maine border that employs 50 workers and could use a few more. "The competition is very difficult to keep up with."

Finding dependable help. Winslow said, is tough. So the mill pays a \$1 an hour bonus to workers who complete their scheduled shifts. He looks for workers on job websites. But gesturing at his roadside help-wanted sign, he said: "My last four or five good hires have come from this sign. People drive by and they see the sign and they see things going on, and it's a small community; so they know someone that works here or has worked here, and they stop by, and we tell them our

story."

He said he had just talked to a recent high school graduate about joining the firm, promising to provide training. His pitch: "Once you become a skilled employee, we have to pay you to retain you - or you'll go up the street to another mill."

Workers at the mill typically earn around \$50,000 a year. "Without a good solid workforce," he said, "you don't have anything, so you have to pay a competitive wage."

In Goffstown, New Hampshire, Fil-trex Northeast Systems, which makes products that prevent soil erosion, just can't find enough people locally. So it relies on foreign workers through the federal government's H-2B visa program. "If it wasn't for that type of program - with the job market how desperate as it is - I probably wouldn't be here. I'd probably be out of business or retired or something," said regional manager David Letourneau.

But even the visas can be a hassle. "We need them around April," Letourneau said. "We don't get them until June, July. One year we didn't get them until October ... I wish I had an answer on the labor market."

Wall Street falls again to close out its first losing week in four

Asian stocks mixed ahead of US jobs update

NEW YORK, Aug 5, (AP) — Stocks fell Friday to close out a rare losing week for Wall Street following mixed reports on the U.S. job market and two of the market's most influential stocks.

The S&P 500 sank 23.86, or 0.5%, to 4,478.03. It was the fourth straight drop for Wall Street's main measure of health after it set a 16-month high at the start of the week.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average also drifted between gains and losses through the day before ending with a loss. It dropped 150.27 points, or 0.4%, to 35,065.62, and the Nasdaq composite gave up 50.48, or 0.4%, to 13,909.24.

Treasury yields tumbled in the bond market after a highly anticipated U.S. jobs report said hiring was a touch weaker last month than economists expected, though wages for workers rose more than forecast.

The job market is in a precarious place, where investors want a reading that's neither too hot nor too cold. On one hand, investors want it to remain strong enough to keep the economy out of a long-predicted recession. On the other, they don't want wage growth in particular to be so strong that the Federal Reserve sees it putting upward pressure on inflation.

Friday's reading offered no slam dunks for either side, but analysts said it may suggest a job market that's moderating.

"Over the last year the labor market has shifted from one where everyone wins to one where there are plenty of areas of weakness," said Brian Jacobsen, chief economist at Annex Wealth Management. "Wage growth was stronger than expected, but coupled with a shorter workweek you get lower incomes. Fed officials will see what they want to see, but it's pretty clear that manufacturing is struggling and services is slowing."

If the job market keeps moderating, it could allow inflation to continue to cool from its peak reached last summer. That in turn would bolster Wall Street's hopes that the Federal Reserve won't hike interest rates any more.

High rates work to grind down inflation by slowing the overall economy and hurting prices for investments. The Fed has already pulled its federal funds rate to its highest level in more than two decades, up from virtually zero early last year.

Critics, though, say it's far from assured that inflation will easily drop back down to the Fed's target and that the economy will avoid a painful recession. That's why they say the 19.5% surge for the S&P 500 through this year's first seven months was too much, too fast. This week was just the third losing week for the S&P 500 in the last 12.

Big Tech stocks in particular led

Big Tech backs stock gains with solid results

NEW YORK, Aug 5, (AP) — Big technology companies provided the energy for most of broader market's sharp ascent in 2023 and their latest financial reports so far justify that confidence from investors.

Microsoft and Google's parent company Alphabet reported strong profit growth that beat analysts' forecasts. Chipmaker Intel surprised Wall Street with a profit during its most recent quarter. ServiceNow, which makes software that automates technology operations, reported a surge in profit.

Tech's propping up of the market had raised concerns that the gains could be on somewhat shaky ground if companies couldn't deliver actual results. A big part of the S&P 500 breaking free of a bear market in 2023, despite lingering concerns about a recession, was due mainly to a runup in various tech stocks.

"In a nutshell, Big Tech earnings have been a flex the muscles moment for the bulls," said Daniel Ives, a senior equity research analyst at Wedbush, in a research report.

He said artificial intelligence advancements will be a key reason for tech stocks to keep rising this year. The information technology and communications sectors are each up more than 40% this year already.

"We continue to strongly believe a new tech bull market has started this year," Ives wrote.

Microsoft is up more than 40% this year and its size gives it more influence on the broad S&P 500 index, which is up more than 20% in 2023. More importantly, many big tech companies have been giving Wall Street positive signals that there is more growth ahead

Wall Street's charge this year, with expectations for strong continued growth leading to tremendous gains in their stock prices. Two of them offered a mixed picture of their results after trading ended Thursday.

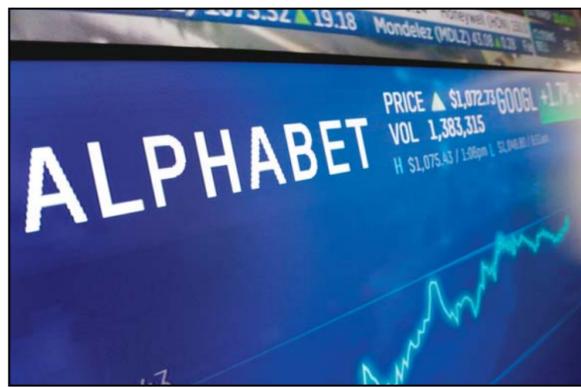
Amazon jumped 8.3% in its first trading after it reported a much bigger profit for the spring than expected. The company said growth for its important cloud-computing business stabilized during the quarter, and its revenue also topped analysts' forecasts.

Apple, though, slumped 4.8% despite reporting stronger profit than expected. Its revenue only just barely topped analysts' estimates, and its forecast for revenue in the current quarter didn't blow past expectations.

Its stock had already cruised 47% higher for the year through Thursday, with its total value topping \$3 trillion, meaning high expectations were built into its price.

Europe

In early trading, the FTSE 100 in London rose 0.4% to 7,556.55. The



In this Feb. 14, 2018 file photo, the logo for Alphabet appears on a screen at the Nasdaq MarketSite in New York. Big technology companies provided the energy for most of broader market's sharp ascent in 2023 and their latest financial reports so far justify that confidence from investors. Microsoft and Google's parent company Alphabet reported strong profit growth that beat analysts' forecasts. (AP)

with the development and integration of artificial intelligence and cloud computing in technology with broad uses.

Advertising spending has rebounded from its slump as inflation cools and fears about a potential recession ease.

Wall Street has taken notice. Analysts polled by FactSet expect rising profit growth for Alphabet and Meta Platforms, Facebook's parent. Microsoft is expected to follow its big profit increase in the second quarter with solid growth through the second half of the year.

"We are in a period of incredible innovation in search," Alphabet CEO Sundar Pichai said during the compa-

ny's most recent earnings conference call.

Artificial intelligence is viewed as the big driver for growth for many tech stocks, which could keep leading the market higher through the year.

Other measures for earnings growth within the tech sector have also been flashing green this year. The price-to-earnings ratio, which considers the cost of a stock relative to a company's earnings, has been growing throughout the year for the broader tech sector. A higher ratio means Wall Street expects higher growth rates and the measure for the broader sector hit its highest level in the last two decades as of June.

Asia

CAC 40 in Paris added 0.4% to 7,288.29 and the DAX in Frankfurt was 0.2% higher at 15,920.97.

The Bank of England warned Thursday it was too early to declare an end to rate hikes, because inflation risks, including higher wages, had "begun to crystallize." The bank said that inflation is forecast to drop to 4.9% by the end of the year, but that is more than double its 2% target.

Asian stocks markets were mixed Friday ahead of a U.S. jobs update that could influence interest rate plans after Britain's central bank raised its key lending rate.

Shanghai, Hong Kong and Seoul rose. Tokyo and Sydney declined. Oil prices advanced.

The Shanghai Composite Index rose 0.6% to 3,301.26 after China's central bank governor told real estate developers Thursday they would be allowed to raise more money by selling bonds. That further eases debt controls imposed in 2020 that sent the industry

into a tailspin. The Hang Seng in Hong Kong gained 1.2% to 19,649.78 while the Nikkei 225 in Tokyo lost 0.1% to 32,129.49.

The Kospi in Seoul advanced 0.1% to 2,607.90 while Sydney's S&P-ASX 200 shed less than 0.1% to 7,307.80.

India's Sensex opened 0.6% at 65,674.90. New Zealand and Bangkok gained while Singapore and Jakarta retreated.

Oil

In energy markets, benchmark U.S. crude gained 20 cents to \$81.75 per barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. The contract surged \$2.06 on Thursday to \$81.55. Brent crude, the price basis for international oils, added 14 cents to \$85.28 per barrel in London. It advanced \$1.94 the previous session to \$85.14.

Currencies

The dollar fell to 142.47 yen from Thursday's 142.71 yen. The euro gained to \$1.0950 from \$1.0942.

Expensive oil on the way; OPEC+ has learnt a lesson

By Kamel Al-Harami
Independent Oil Analyst

IT does not seem as though the oil prices will come down soon. It is more likely heading towards a level of \$90 per barrel before the end of the year. In addition, there are reports that Saudi Arabia may extend its voluntary cuts of one million barrels cut for another month, coinciding with the picking up of the seasonal demand for oil, which is reaching a historical level of 101 million barrels per day.

In the meantime, banks' interest rates are on the rise, making it more expensive for OPEC+ with its borrowed monies and financing. Also, it is getting more expensive for oil consuming countries, which are facing double increases at the same time. In this case, one element has to give in. However, OPEC+ is not in the mood for compromise, and intends to stick to its reduction policy for stabilizing the oil market, as it has its own economic challenges, in terms of deficits in budgets and the need to create new jobs in consideration of the population growth.

Oil prices jumped from their low of \$75 per barrel to the ongoing level of \$86 per barrel, which made OPEC+ happy and satisfied with any further increase, as it will certainly lead to a better outlook for their economy. The question is whether the oil organization can maintain such a comfortable level, and lead or control oil prices for a long period, as OPEC+ had learnt its lesson and can move forward in managing oil markets along with prices.

With Saudi Aramco taking the lead in cutting down one million barrels of net income for a short-term better return, the need for bettering the black gold should be highlighted, as to what becomes the advantage of such an organization without influencing oil markets and benefits to its members, and with the arrival of stronger and bigger producer like Russia to participate in sharing the responsibility and directions.

The continuation of OPEC+ in re-

ducing and cutting its oil production is extended now to one more month, with Saudi Arabia reducing one million barrels, Russia 300,000, and Algeria 20,000 barrels per day. This will certainly lead to further strengthening the petroleum organization to a new level of commitment. The group's output volunteer cuts amount 3.6 million, excluding its three members' ongoing voluntary cuts that total 1,420,000 barrels of Saudi, Russian, and Algerian oil, equating to more than four percent of global demand.

With the ongoing production cuts, it seems certain that the group will match any increase in oil production of countries outside its setup like USA, Canada, and Brazil, which are heading oil prices for a higher level, but certainly not any lower anymore.

Accordingly, the oil prices are bound to rise and remain strong, even making OPEC+ in charge more than any time, while not making or giving USA any chance for filling up its strategic reserve at low price. It will most likely have to pay more than \$10 per barrel additionally compared to its original plan. This will make the USA administration angry, if not foolish by not taking the right and wise decision at once, unlike China and India, which bought cheap Russian oils at less than \$60 per barrel and filled all their storage such that they do not have any ullage anymore.

With certainty, oil prices will continue their push for higher levels with OPEC+ in unity, as illustrated by Saudi Arabia and Russia continuing their production cut well into September.

Finally, OPEC+ learned its lesson and is heading towards stabilizing the oil prices, while balancing its book-keeping.



Al-Harami

Biden's 'Buy America' policy leading to jobs in Wisconsin

WASHINGTON, Aug 5, (AP) — Efforts by the Biden administration have been helping create new factory jobs as part of a push to bring high-speed internet to the whole country -- jobs that coincidentally help to back up President Joe Biden's messaging for the 2024 elections.

Vice President Kamala Harris announced on Thursday that up to 200 new manufacturing jobs would be coming to the swing state of Wisconsin. The workers at the Sammina factory in Kenosha County are to make parts for Nokia that help to connect customers to broadband internet.

Nokia's choice to move production to the U.S. came after an extended engagement with the Commerce Department over how to deliver on the "Buy America" rules in the government's \$42.5 billion investment to provide universal internet services.

"Whereas in the past, many of those jobs would have been created over-

seas, President Biden and I required that the materials and products used in these projects, from steel to electronics to fiber optic cable, must be made in America, by workers in America," Harris said in her speech at the factory.

The remarks were part of a broader effort by the administration to get voters to link job gains to specific actions taken by Biden, one of the foundations of his reelection effort amid continued public gloom about the economy because of the burst of high inflation that began during his presidency.

Much of the effort to deliver on those promises has occurred out of the public view, but Nokia and government officials agreed to discuss how this particular project came together.

"It was a labor of some length and passion," said Brian Hendricks, vice president of policy and public affairs for Nokia Americas. "We spent almost a year working with the administration."

BUSINESS

China reopens trade in Australian barley

China is lifting a stifling 3-year-old tariff on Australian barley starting Saturday - a sign of an improving bilateral trade relationship since Australia's government changed.

China effectively closed its door to Australian barley in May 2020 by imposing an 80.5% tariff after the previous Australian government angered Beijing by calling for an independent inquiry into the origins of, and

responses to, the COVID-19 pandemic.

On Friday, both governments confirmed the resumption of trade in the grain that was worth 916 million Australian dollars (\$602 million) in the year before China blocked imports.

Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese welcomed the breakthrough, which comes as he plans his first visit to Beijing

as government leader before the end of the year.

"This is a very positive decision," Albanese told reporters.

When Albanese's government was elected in May 2022, he demanded Beijing drop a series of official and unofficial trade barriers against Australian exports - including barley, wine, coal, beef, wood and seafood - that were costing producers \$15 billion a year. (AP)

Pakistan urged to complete its part of gas pipeline

Iran's foreign minister on Thursday urged Pakistan to complete its part of a much-delayed gas pipeline between the two countries, a multi-billion project that has been on hold since 2014. Washington has opposed the pipeline, saying it could violate sanctions imposed on Tehran over its nuclear program.

Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian, who is on a three-day visit to Islamabad,

spoke during a televised news conference with his Pakistani counterpart and host, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari.

"We do believe that the completion of the Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline is definitely going to serve the national interests of our two countries," Amirabdollahian said.

The project, launched in 2013, required Pakistan to finish the construction of the pipeline on

its territory by the end of 2014. But the work stalled, upsetting Tehran, which has said it already invested \$2 billion in the pipeline on its side of the border.

The two foreign ministers also discussed a range of other bilateral issues, including ensuring security along their countries' shared border. The pipeline project was launched by Bhutto Zardari's father, then-President Asif Ali Zardari. (AP)

Greek island nursing its wounds

Heat, wildfires put southern Europe's vital tourism earnings at risk

RHODES, Greece, Aug 5, (AP) - Tourists at a seaside hotel on the Greek island of Rhodes snatched up pails of pool water and damp towels as flames approached, rushing to help staffers and locals extinguish one of the wildfires threatening Mediterranean locales during recent heat waves.

The quick team effort meant that "by the time the fire brigade came, most of the fire actually was dealt with," said Elena Korosteleva from Britain, who was vacationing at the Lindos Memories hotel.

The next morning, some unsettled guests cut their holiday short - but most stayed on as the resort wasn't damaged in the small brush fire outside its grounds.

The Greek island known for sparkling beaches and ancient sites is nursing its wounds after 11 days of devastating wildfires in July. After thousands of people were evacuated during the height of travel season, Rhodes is weighing how the crisis will affect its vital tourism sector, which fuels most of its economy and some 20% of Greece's.

It's the same for other Mediterranean destinations, like Italy and Spain, where the tourism sector also is being hit by heat waves and wildfires. Greece, Italy, Algeria and Tunisia combined lost more than 1,350 square kilometers (520 square miles) to blazes that affected 120,000 people in late July, according to European Union estimates. And Greece is expecting even more extreme heat in the coming days.

The mayor of Villardeciervos village, in part of northwestern Spain ravaged by fires last summer, said hikers are still coming.

"Tourism is bound to suffer a bit in the next few years, (whether) we like it or not," Rosa María López said. "On the hiking trails, there are no trees, and it is very sad to see. ... But this area is still highly valued by tourists in spite of everything. We will have to adapt."

Fires have chased away tourists in hard-hit parts of Greece and Italy. Rhodes saw mass cancellations of flights and the trend is similar in Sicily, said Olivier Ponti, vice president of insights at ForwardKeys, a travel data company with access to airline industry ticketing data.

While travel to Greece overall has not been hit too hard, Italy isn't as lucky. Wildfires "have caused a slowdown in bookings for many Italian destinations, even places not close to the fires," he said, noting a drop for Rome in the last week of July.

Even without the flames, summer heat intensified by climate change can be a turnoff for travelers.

Hoteliers are worried in southeastern Spain's coastal resort city of Benidorm, a longtime favorite for British and Scandinavian tourists.

"If heat waves were to be repeated every summer, the impact on our economy would be significant," said Antonio Mayor, chair of the hotel and tourism association in the Valencia region, which includes Benidorm. "Our activity is centered on the three summer months."

That could mean tourists head north to Scandinavian countries or the United Kingdom instead.

"Record-setting temperatures in European countries such as Greece, Italy and Spain are not scheduled to ease up as we enter August, so it might be considered a much safer option to opt for a stay in northern Europe," said Tim Hentschel, CEO of digital booking platform HotelPlanner.

The World Meteorological Organization and the EU's Copernicus Climate Change Service calculated July to be the hottest month on record. Heat records foreshadow changes ahead as the planet warms, scientists say, including more flooding, longer-burning wildfires and extreme weather events that put people at risk.

With that in mind, U.S.-based climate technology startup Sensible Weather is developing insurance that would compensate people if extreme heat wrecks their holiday.

It's rolled out "weather guarantee" coverage to travel companies in the U.K., France and the U.S., which pays travelers if prolonged rain ruins their beach break or there's no snow for a ski trip.

Sensible Weather will soon add a heat cover option "in anticipation of next summer," founder Nick Cavanaugh said. "People are asking me about it more because they're thinking about these things more."

While people differ on how hot is too hot, "in the simplest version, if it was 42 degrees Celsius (107.6 Fahrenheit) for three hours in the middle of the day and you couldn't go out and do an activity, we could give you some money back," he said.

Rhodes had expected foreign arrivals to increase 8%-10% over a bumper year in 2022, when about 2.6 million people flew in to the Greek island, mostly from Britain and Germany. But after the fires, flight cancellations in the last week of

July exceeded all bookings made in the equivalent week in 2019, said Ponti of ForwardKeys.

Manolis Markopoulos, head of the Rhodes hotel association, is optimistic that rebounding arrivals to parts of the island not damaged by flames can salvage much of the projected boost in tourism.

"Every day we're seeing more business," he said. "By Aug. 8-10, I think we'll be back to our normal pace at all these resorts," which account for about 90% of the island's 220,000 beds.

In damaged areas, "some brave tour operators have already decided to bring customers from this coming weekend," Markopoulos said. "These areas have a longer road before they return to normality - but they're not even 10% of the (island's) total capacity."

New bookings for future travel to Rhodes did take a hit, falling 76% the week of July 17, when the fires began, over the previous week. For Greece as a whole, they slumped 10%, Ponti said.

While some major British operators briefly canceled all Rhodes flights and holidays - offering refunds to people who'd booked for fire-hit areas - other budget airlines kept offering seats and reported normal travel figures, HotelPlanner's Hentschel said.

In Germany, leading travel operator TUI is again offering vacations to all parts of Rhodes after it stopped flying tourists in.

"We would do more damage to the people of Rhodes if no more tourists came now after the forest fires," TUI CEO Sebastian Ebel told Germany's dpa news agency.

Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis offered an additional incentive, appearing on ITV's "Good Morning Britain" this week to promise people whose Rhodes vacations were spoiled by the fires a free week on the island next spring or fall.

Korosteleva, the Rhodes vacationer, said the blazes should motivate action against climate change.

"It makes people aware what we've caused to the planet, that this change may not be reversible. So it's not just about tourism," said Korosteleva, who heads the University of Warwick's Institute of Global Sustainable Development. "I think it actually clearly touches upon how we need to start acting now."

Summit slated for Aug 22-24

Lula voices support for more countries to join BRICS group

BRASILIA, Brazil, Aug 5, (AP) - Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva said Wednesday that he supports more countries joining the BRICS group of large developing nations, which currently includes Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.

The group will hold a summit in Johannesburg from Aug. 22 to 24. The meeting will have in hand a list of others desiring to join the group.

"Possibly, in this meeting, we can already consensually decide which new countries can join BRICS," Lula told international journalists in the capital, Brasilia. "I am of the opinion that as many countries want to enter, if they are in compliance with the rules we are establishing, we will accept the countries' entrance."

Lula's comments came hours after Reuters reported that Brazil has resisted expanding the group's membership. It quoted unidentified Brazilian diplomats as voicing concern that adding more nations could lessen the influence of the existing members.

Around 20 countries have formally applied to join the bloc, Brazilian Foreign Affairs Minister Mauro Vieira said after Lula's session with journalists. Among them are Argentina, United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Indonesia, Iran and Venezuela, he said.

Vieira said that all BRICS members are interested in making an effort to accept other countries, but parameters still need to be discussed and there needs to be mutual agreement among leaders.

The summit in Johannesburg will occur as China and Russia, facing isolation by the U.S. and European Union, seek to expand their economic influence in developing countries. Russian President Vladimir Putin will join the summit via video call, while all other heads



In this July 17, 2023 file photo, Brazil's President Lula da Silva addresses the media prior to a meeting with European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen at EU headquarters in Brussels. Lula da Silva said Wednesday Aug. 2, 2023, that he supports more countries joining the BRICS group of large developing nations, which currently includes Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. (AP)

of state are expected to attend in person.

Since taking office, Lula has repeatedly bucked the existing Western-dominated international structure.

He has rejected the U.S. and EU's shared position of supporting Ukraine in its fight against Russia's invasion, refusing to provide arms to Ukrainian forces and pushing for peace talks to bring the war to an end.

He has called for an end to the dominance of the U.S. dollar in international trade and supported a common currency for commerce within the South American bloc Mercosur and for trade among BRICS nations. He has also taken swipes at the International Monetary Fund.

Envoy Global acquires Sesam Immigration, expands in UAE

CHICAGO/DUBAI, UAE, Aug 5, (PR Newswire) - Envoy Global, Inc., the leading immigration services provider that combines access to top legal talent with industry-leading technology to bring efficiency and transparency to the global immigration process, today announces the acquisition of Sesam Immigration, the top immigration services provider in the United Arab Emirates. The announcement is the latest expansion by Envoy of its global footprint in strategic markets around the world.

"Joining Envoy strengthens our team's ability to serve our customers with the commitment and diligence that has been the cornerstone of Sesam since our beginnings and opens the door for us to offer aligned global services to our customers," said Boris Ritter, Managing Director at Sesam. "Envoy's technology and service solutions are unmatched in the industry, and we are excited to join this strong and growing team," added Philipp von Zitzewitz, Managing Director at Sesam.

Sesam specializes in immigration services to local and international corporations operating in the UAE. The firm has existed for over two decades and has a suite of services, including immigration and visa solutions, business travel, HR consulting and more. "Sesam is a longstanding leader in

UAE immigration services, and I have admired their team of professionals for many years," said Sophy King, President of Global Immigration at Envoy. "This partnership allows Sesam to offer global immigration services to existing customers in the UAE and positions us to offer the best possible service and experience in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) region."

The UAE is increasingly important for international corporations as a global hub for foreign talent. This expansion gives Envoy a regional headquarters in the GCC region and positions the company for growth throughout the Middle East. With its acquisition of Sesam, Envoy continues to strengthen its offering, delivering U.S. immigration services through affiliated law firm Corporate Immigration Partners, P.C., with in-house immigration practices in Canada, Singapore, the UK, Ireland and now the UAE and a network of trusted partners across the globe.

"We're thrilled to add Sesam to the Envoy team," said Dick Burke, President and CEO of Envoy. "As the global immigration landscape evolves, ensuring we have the best legal professionals guiding our customers and helping them navigate the immigration process has never been more important. Today's news represents another step forward for us as a global immigration provider to leading companies."

Food prices rise after Russia ends grain deal and India 'restricts' exports of rice

FAO Food Price Index up 1.3%

LONDON, Aug 5, (AP) - Global prices for food commodities like rice and vegetable oil have risen for the first time in months after Russia pulled out of a wartime agreement allowing Ukraine to ship grain to the world, and India restricted some of its rice exports, the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization said Friday. The FAO Food Price Index, which tracks monthly changes in the international prices of commonly traded food commodities, increased 1.3% in July over June, driven by higher costs for rice and vegetable oil. It was the first uptick since April, when higher sugar prices bumped up the index slightly for the first time in a year.

Commodity prices have been falling since hitting record highs last year in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Disrupted supplies from the two countries exacerbated a global food crisis because they're leading suppliers of wheat, barley, sunflower oil and other affordable food products, especially to nations in parts of Africa, the Middle East and Asia where millions are struggling with hunger.

The world is still rebounding from those price shocks, which have increased inflation, poverty and food insecurity in developing nations that rely on imports.

Now, there are new risks after Russia in mid-July exited a deal brokered by the U.N. and Turkey that provided protections for ships carrying Ukraine's agricultural products through the Black Sea. Along with Russian attacks on Ukrainian ports and grain infrastructure, wheat and corn prices have been zigzagging on global markets.

International wheat prices rose by 1.6% in July over June, the first increase in nine months, FAO chief economist Maximiliano Torero said.

More worrying is India's trade ban on some varieties of non-Basmati

US 'challenges' world to tell Russia to stop using Ukraine grain as 'blackmail'

UNITED NATIONS, Aug 5, (AP) - U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken challenged all countries Thursday to tell Russia to stop using the Black Sea and Ukraine's grain as "blackmail" and stop treating the world's hungry and vulnerable people as leverage in its "unconscionable war."

America's top diplomat lashed out at Russia at a U.N. Security Council meeting for ignoring the world's appeals and pulling out of the year-old deal that allowed Ukraine to ship more than 32 tons of grain from Black Sea ports to needy countries.

"And what has Russia's response been to the world's distress and outrage? Bombing Ukrainian granaries, mining port entrances, threatening to attack any vessel in the Black Sea," he said.

Blinken was chairing the signature event of the United States' council presidency this month on conflict as a key driver of hunger and famine.

He announced that the United States, which has provided more than \$17.5 billion since January 2021 to address famine and food insecurity, will give \$362 million more to tackle the drivers of hunger in Haiti and 11 African countries.

He pointed to the U.N. World Food Program, which said last week it needs \$20 billion to deliver aid to everyone in need but was aiming for between \$10 billion to \$14 billion, the amount it has received in the past few years. So far this year, however, WFP said it had received only around \$5 billion and therefore 38 of 86 countries where

white rice, prompting hoarding of the staple in some parts of the world. The restrictions imposed late last month came as an earlier-than-expected El Niño brought drier, warmer weather in some parts of Asia and was expected to harm rice production.

Rice prices rose 2.8% in July from a month earlier and 19.7% this year to reach their highest level since September 2011, the FAO said.

More expensive rice "raises substantial food security concerns for a



Secretary of State Antony Blinken participates in a roundtable discussion on food security, Thursday, Aug. 3, 2023, at the Rockefeller Foundation in New York. (AP)

it operates have already seen cuts or are planning cuts in food assistance soon.

"The cost of that shortfall will be measured in growth stunted and in lives lost," Blinken said.

He also implicitly criticized China, which is the world's second-largest economic power behind the United States, saying: "The world's largest economies should be the world's largest donors, for member states to consider themselves global leaders. This is your chance to prove it."

Blinken added that "All of us. All of us can dig deeper."

At the start of the meeting, the Se-

curity Council adopted a presidential statement, approved by all 15 members, strongly condemning "the use of starvation of civilians as a method of warfare" and expressing concern at the growing number of armed conflicts all over the globe.

In 2022, "armed conflict was the most significant driver of high levels of acute food insecurity for roughly 117 million people in 19 countries and territories," the council said, adding that an estimated 148.1 million children under the age of five suffer from stunted growth because of malnutrition.

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in sunflower oil prices following "renewed uncertainties" about supplies following the end of the grain deal.

"While the world has adequate food supplies, challenges to supplies from major producers due to conflict, export restrictions or weather-induced production shortfalls can lead to supply and demand imbalances across regions," said Torero, the FAO chief economist. That will lead to a "lack of food access because of increasing prices and potential food insecurity."

Airbnb profit jumps to \$650 million in 2Q, as bookings increase

SAN FRANCISCO, Aug 5, (AP) - Airbnb said Thursday its second-quarter profit jumped more than 70% over last summer, to \$650 million, as revenue rose on strong bookings for summer-vacation rentals.

The San Francisco company said bookings grew 11% over the same period last year. Still, they were a bit lighter than analysts expected.

The shares fell 2% after nearly an hour of late trading.

Airbnb has been battling complaints that high cleaning fees have pushed prices closer to, or even above, hotels for short rentals. It changed its site to display cleaning fees upfront, when consumers are price-shopping. Prices, however, remain stubbornly

high. Airbnb had forecast that average rates customers pay per night would fall slightly in the second quarter compared with last year. Instead, the average nightly rate rose 1% to \$166.

CEO Brian Chesky said on a call with analysts that the price customers book is lower than list prices on average.

"So we do see people gravitating toward more affordable stays," Chesky said. He said some of the modest increase over last year's average rate is due to people booking bigger homes.

The company said new tools that make it easier for hosts to compare prices they charge to the nearby competition "had a moderating effect" on

rates in the second quarter. However, it expects third-quarter average prices to be higher than a year ago, partly because of a shift to higher-priced listings.

The rental giant has recently increased its effort to offer more single rooms inside homes and apartments as a low-cost option, particularly for younger travelers.

And it is fighting back against cities that seek to limit or more tightly regulate short-term rentals.

Airbnb said Thursday its second-quarter profit rose from \$379 million in the same period last year, when the company took \$89 million in restructuring charges. Adjusted to exclude special items, Airbnb said it earned 98

cents per share.

Revenue increased 18% to \$2.48 billion.

Analysts were expecting earnings of 80 cents per share on \$2.42 billion in revenue, according to a FactSet survey.

Bookings rose to 115.1 million in the quarter, up from 103.7 million a year earlier and more than one-third higher than in 2019, before the COVID-19 pandemic. But analysts expected 117.6 million.

Airbnb predicted that third-quarter revenue will be \$3.3 billion to \$3.4 billion. Analysts were expecting \$3.23 billion.

The company said it added a record number of new listings in the quarter, pushing its total over 7 million.

BUSINESS

Abu Dhabi airport handled over 10 mln passengers in H1-'23

Abu Dhabi International Airport (AUH), one of the world's fastest growing airports, saw the passenger traffic growing by 67 percent in the first half of 2023.

A total of 10,258,653 passengers passed through the airport between January 1 and June 30, 2023, compared to 6,158,376 passengers served during the same period last year, according to statistics released by the Abu

Dhabi Media Office on Thursday. Abu Dhabi International Airport also recorded 67,835 flights, a notable increase of 36 per cent compared to 49,919 flights during H1 2022.

Abu Dhabi International Airport's network continues to expand rapidly with 114 destinations served by 27 airlines during H1 2023.

The destinations with the highest passenger traffic served by

Abu Dhabi International Airport during the period included Mumbai (461,081), London (374,017), Delhi (331,722), Kochi (316,460) and Doha (261,117).

Frank McCrorie, Chief Operations Officer, Abu Dhabi Airports, said, "Our passenger traffic figures for the first half of 2023 highlights our extensive efforts to support Abu Dhabi's increasingly vibrant business, tourism and aviation sectors." (KUNA)

ADNOC acquires 30 stake in Azerbaijan Absheron gas field

The UAE's ADNOC oil company announced Friday possessing 30 percent of Azerbaijan's Absheron gas field, with the aim of enhancing its presence and development in the global gas markets.

In a news statement, the company said the move also aims to boost strategic partnership between the UAE and Azerbaijan.

The deal is subject to the customary regulatory approvals, it

said.

When the deal is done, the company will possess 30 stake of the field, while the State Oil Company of Azerbaijan, known as SOCAR, and TotalEnergies both have 35 percent shares in the field.

The transaction seeks to contribute to boosting and expanding strategic partnership in energy field between the two countries, as natural gas will play

a key role of transitional fuel in the period of transmitting to low-carbon energy, it noted.

Meanwhile, Musabbeh Al-Kaabi, executive director of low carbon solutions and international growth at ADNOC, said the company continues its contributions to meeting the world's energy needs through developing and producing natural gas from some international sources like Absheron. (KUNA)

Our booth at Kuwait University reflects our keen interest in youth: Marafi

ABK promotes A+ Student account at Kuwait University during registration period

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 5: In an effort to promote its A+ Student account, Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) announced its recent presence at Kuwait University - Al Shadadiya to promote its A+ Student account to newly registered students during July 2023. Through the account, the Bank reinforces its commitment to raise financial literacy and boost a culture of saving amongst youth.

Catering to the younger generation, the A+ Student account is tailored for young adults between the ages of 16 to 25, enabling them to access an array of worthwhile services and offers, including a personalized debit card.

Among the wide range of attractive benefits and services, students who transfer their educational allowance receive an instant KD 50 cash gift and a free prepaid card valid for 2 years. In addition, A+ account holders can benefit from the exclusive VOX Cinemas 'Buy 1 Get 2 TicketsFree' offer as well as special discounts from well-known merchants and partners across Kuwait.

During the event, Johair Marafi, Acting General Manager of Retail Banking at ABK, expressed the significance of youth by stating, "The pursuit of higher education is crucial and ABK aims to provide the means for a truly worthwhile experience. We therefore took the opportunity to introduce students to the Bank's wide range of offerings, specifically our unique A+ Student account."

Marafi highlighted the account's advantageous features, making it a favorable option for university students. She also stressed the importance of meeting customer needs by offering valuable promotions through the Bank's array of business partners. "I encourage students to open an A+ account to experience the exciting benefits tailored to suit their lifestyle. I am confident this

will be a promising step towards embarking on a distinctive banking experience with ABK," Marafi said.

ABK endeavors to continually create promotions that align with the Bank's goal of offering diverse banking and financial products and services that cater to all segments of Kuwait's society. Additionally, the Bank seizes every opportunity to foster a culture of saving, particularly emphasizing its significance among younger audiences.

Marafi concluded by inviting everyone to follow the Bank's social media accounts to remain updated on the latest marketing initiatives, promotional campaigns, and offerings throughout the year.

Since the establishment of ABK in 1967, it has progressed to become one of the leading Kuwaiti banks in the region that is today known for offering a simpler banking experience. The Bank offers personal, corporate, and private banking of which includes a wide array of products and services. ABK also provides a broad range of local, regional, and global investment solutions and



Johair Marafi, Acting General Manager of Retail Banking at ABK.

services through its subsidiary, ABK Capital. Enjoying equal stability and strength, the Bank also offers the con-

Austrian leader proposes enshrining use of cash in constitution

BERLIN, Aug 5, (AP): Austria's leader is proposing to enshrine in the country's constitution a right to use cash, which remains more popular in the Alpine nation than in many other places.

Chancellor Karl Nehammer said in a statement on Friday that "more and more people are concerned that cash could be restricted as a means of payment in Austria." His office said that the "uncertainty" is fueled by contradictory information and reports. "People in Austria have a right to cash," Nehammer said.

While payments by card and electronic methods have become increasingly dominant in many European countries, Austria and neighboring Germany remain relatively attached to cash. The government says 47 billion euros (\$51 billion) per year are withdrawn from ATMs in Austria, a country of about 9.1 million people.

Protecting cash against supposed threats has been a demand of the far-right opposition Freedom Party, which has led polls in Austria in recent months. The country's next election is due in 2024.

Asked in an interview with the Austria Press Agency whether it wasn't populist to run after the Freedom Party on the issue, the conservative Nehammer replied that the party

stands for "beating the drum a lot without actually doing anything for this."

The chancellor's proposal, according to his office, involves a "constitutional protection of cash as a means of payment," ensuring that people can still pay with cash, and securing a "basic supply" of cash in cooperation with Austria's central bank. Austria is one of 20 countries that are part of the euro area.

Nehammer said he has instructed Finance Minister Magnus Brunner to work on the proposal and plans to hold a round table with the ministries concerned, finance industry representatives and the central bank in September.

"Everyone should have the opportunity to decide freely how and with what he wants to pay," he said. "That can be by card, by transfer, perhaps in future also with the digital euro, but also with cash. This freedom to choose must and will remain."

Freedom Party leader Herbert Kickl accused Nehammer of stealing his party's ideas and argued that the chancellor's "suddenly discovered love of cash" was meant only "to secure his political survival."

For more information about ABK's products and services, please follow the Bank's Instagram account @abk_

kuwait, visit eahli.com, contact Ahlan Ahli 1 899 899 or visit one of the Bank's branches across Kuwait.

Enabling customers to report issues via app

Burgan Bank launches Online customer 'complaint' feature

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 5: Burgan Bank has announced the launch of an exciting new feature on its mobile banking application that allows customers to submit complaints online conveniently. This initiative is a testament to the Bank's unwavering commitment to enhancing customer satisfaction and elevating their overall banking experience. By introducing this feature, Burgan Bank aims to promote transparency, instill confidence in the effective management and resolution of complaints, and ultimately provide exceptional service to its valued customers. With the new feature, customers can effortlessly submit complaints through their mobile devices. This saves time and effort and streamlines the complaint submission process. Once a customer files a complaint using the mobile banking app, the Bank pledges to address it within 15 working days. Additionally, customers will receive real-time updates on their app regarding the status of their complaints, ensuring transparency and keeping them informed every step of the way.

Mr. Mohammad Al-Shamlan, Senior Manager - Client Complaints & Protection Unit at Burgan Bank, expressed his enthusiasm for the new feature, stating, "The introduction of this service showcases Burgan Bank's ongoing dedication to providing superior services to all our customers, particularly by utilizing technology to revolutionize the way complaints are received through our mobile banking application. This new feature aims to simplify submitting a complaint for our customers."

Al-Shamlan also emphasized the significance of the online complaints feature in relation to customer satisfaction, which remains a top priority for Burgan Bank. He stated, "We recognize the importance of offering our customers simple and efficient channels to express their concerns and provide feedback. The new feature aligns perfectly with our commitment to continuously excel in serving them."

It is important to note that Burgan Bank continuously strives to innovate and introduce new solutions that elevate the customer experience to unprecedented heights. The online customer complaint service is just one of the many measures the Bank has implemented to solidify its position as a customer-centric financial institution.

About Burgan Bank
Established in 1977, Burgan Bank is currently the second-largest conventional bank by assets in Kuwait. From its earliest days, the Bank has significantly focused on the corporate and financial institution sectors, in addition to diversifying its offering to cater to its growing retail and private banking customer base.

Burgan Bank has majority-owned subsidiaries, collectively known as the "Burgan Bank Group", in the MENAT

region. This Group is supported by one of the largest branch networks across the region and includes: Gulf Bank Algeria - AGB (Algeria), Tunis International Bank - TIB (Tunisia), and the fully owned Burgan Bank Turkey. Furthermore, Burgan Bank has a presence in the UAE through its corporate office, Burgan Financial Services Limited.

The Bank has continuously improved its performance over the years, through an expanded revenue structure, diversified funding sources, and a strong capital base. The adoption of state-of-the-art services and technology has positioned it as a trendsetter in the domestic market and within the MENA region. Moreover, Burgan Bank's brand has been built on a foundation of real values - trust, commitment, excellence, and progression - which serve as a reminder of the high standards to which the Bank always aspires. In fact, the Bank's core philosophy of 'Driven by You' is the foundation on which its products and services are continuously developed.

The Bank obtained the ISO/IEC 27001: 2013 Information Security Management Systems certificate (ISMS) and was re-certified with the prestigious ISO 9001:2015, making it one of the few banks in the GCC and Kuwait to receive such certification for five consecutive times. The Bank also has the distinction of being the only Bank in Kuwait to have won the JP Morgan Chase Quality Recognition Award for twenty consecutive years. Moreover, in a testament to its dedication to the development of its human capital, Burgan Bank is the first bank in Kuwait to be certified as a Great Place to Work®, earning the distinct honor in 2023.

Burgan Bank is a majority-owned subsidiary of KIPCO (Kuwait Projects Company), one of the largest holding companies in the MENA region.



Mohammad Al-Shamlan Senior Manager - Client Complaints & Protection Unit.

Baltic nations plan to 'accelerate' exit

TALLINN, Estonia, Aug 5, (AP): The prime ministers of the three Baltic countries agreed Thursday to speed up their nations' disconnection from Russia's power grid by nearly one year and connect with the continental European energy network by February 2025.

In a joint declaration, Kaja Kallas, Krisjanis Karins and Ingrida Simonyte - the leaders of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, respectively - pledged the countries would complete the decoupling as soon as the technical capacity was in place.

"The shifted geopolitical situation, resulting from the unprovoked invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation, has also significantly deteriorated the energy security situation in the region and increased the risks of unplanned de-synchronization of the Baltic states' electricity systems" from the Russian grid, the three prime ministers said.

The Baltic countries, which used to be part of the Soviet Union, do not currently buy electricity from Russia but remain physically connected to the Russian power grid. Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland agreed with the European Union's executive commission in 2019 to coordinate on connecting the Baltic nations to the EU's by the end of 2025.

However, Russia's war in Ukraine led the three countries to work together to speed up the project.

The agreement announced Thursday represented a compromise. Lithuania had favored an energy exit in early 2024, citing Moscow's unreliability and its aggression in Ukraine. Estonia's government resisted a quicker cutoff, saying it lacked the required technical capabilities and might experience electricity blackouts if the transition happened too soon.

KFH 'partners' with Taly for e-payment solutions

Bid to keep pace with digital transformation developments

KUWAIT CITY, August 5: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Taly, a Fintech solution provider, aiming to forge a fruitful collaboration, diversify its e-payment solutions and keep pace with the digital transformation developments in the banking sector.

The MoU is part of KFH's efforts to support national companies and offer the best services to customers while meeting their evolving needs within the highest quality and security levels.

KFH Executive Manager Credit and Charge Card Products, Talal AlArbeed stated that KFH continues to deliver the best e-payment solutions that contribute to meeting customer needs and enhancing cooperation between the two parties, saying that KFH offers outstanding e-banking services to companies through a cutting-edge digital platform that supports multiple channels, making exclusive digital services available to its institutional and corporate customers.

He added that the agreement strengthens KFH's ceaseless efforts to enhance strategic partnerships with

companies in various fields in the Kuwaiti market and provide e-banking solutions to facilitate and meet customers' aspiration, thus cementing KFH's position and leadership in providing electronic services that are in line with digital transformation strategy.

AlArbeed went on to say that KFH has diversified innovative banking services and products and works continuously to launch the Buy Now, pay later (BNPL) service to align its strategy with the latest developments in the banking and financial industry in addition to diversifying its e-payment solutions. He added that Taly is a company specialized in providing Sharia-compliant secure, smooth and flexible payment solutions, allowing customers to buy online or in-store, and pay later without any interest or fees.

"KFH affirms, by signing such agreements, its commitment towards promoting digital transformation locally and playing a greater role in maximizing the role of technology to achieve financial inclusion and develop an innovative technical environment that accelerates banking operations to maintain the Bank's leadership

in the field," AlArbeed added.

Meanwhile, Taly Chief Executive Officer, Bader AlBader said: "We are pleased to sign this MoU with KFH, the largest bank in Kuwait and one of the region's leading brands in Islamic finance. The MoU will forge an alliance to positively revolutionize the financial technology industry."

AlBader added that Taly is the first Kuwaiti startup that provides Buy Now, Pay Later (BNPL) service in Kuwait with an approval from the Central Bank of Kuwait. It is also the first Islamic sharia-compliant company in the region.

He pointed out that Taly offers flexible and modern payment services, the first of its kind in Kuwait, through which customers can sign up with Taly and use its e-services within only two minutes.

As part of the effort to fulfil the needs of the Kuwaiti market and continue launching innovative products, AlBader explained that the service is free of charge or interests and available online, or in-stores as a payment method, allowing customers to pay later in 4 equal monthly installments or pay the full amount in 30 days.



Talal Al-Arbeed and Faisal Al-Sorayeh with Badr Al-Badr after signing the Memorandum of Understanding.

BUSINESS

Adidas brings in \$437m from 1st Yeezy sale

Adidas brought in 400 million euros (\$437 million) from the first release of Yeezy sneakers left over after breaking ties with Ye, the rapper formerly known as Kanye West, as the German sportswear maker tries to offload the unsold shoes and donate part of the proceeds to groups fighting antisemitism and other forms of hate.

The first batch of shoes released in June, which sold out, helped the company reach an

operating profit of 176 million euros in the second quarter, better than it originally planned, Adidas said Thursday. A second sale started Wednesday.

After Ye's antisemitic and other offensive comments led the company to end its partnership with the rapper in October, Adidas said it had sought a way to dispose of 1.2 billion euros worth of the high-end shoes in a responsible way.

"We will continue to carefully sell off more of the existing Yeezy inventory," said CEO Björn Gulden, who took over in January.

"This is much better than destroying and writing off the inventory and allows us to make substantial donations to organizations like the Anti-Defamation League, the Philonise & Keeta Floyd Institute for Social Change and Robert Kraft's Foundation to Combat Antisemitism," Gulden said. (AP)

Hyundai, Kia recall nearly 92K vehicles

Hyundai and Kia are telling the owners of nearly 92,000 vehicles in the U.S. to park them outside because an electronic controller in an oil pump can overheat and cause fires.

The affiliated Korean automakers are recalling the vehicles and also are telling owners to park them away from structures until repairs are made.

The recalls cover certain 2023 and 2024 Hyundai Palisades,

as well as some 2023 Tucson, Sonata, Elantra and Kona vehicles. Affected Kias include the 2023 Soul and Sportage as well as some 2023 and 2024 Seltos vehicles.

The companies say in documents posted Thursday by U.S. safety regulators that a capacitor on a circuit board in the oil pump assembly for the transmission may have been damaged by the supplier during manufacturing.

That can cause a short-circuit and increase the risk of a fire.

Kia says it has six reports of melting components but no fires or injuries. Hyundai says it has confirmed four "thermal incidents" and no injuries.

Dealers will inspect and replace the oil pump controller if necessary. Hyundai owners will be notified by letter on Sept. 25. Kia will notify owners starting Sept. 28. (AP)

The Conversation

EU human rights 'due diligence' law nears enactment

Many global firms will soon have to police their supply chains

By Rachel Chambers, University of Connecticut and David Birchall, London South Bank University

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

The European Union will soon require thousands of large companies to actively look for and reduce human rights abuses and environmental damage in their supply chains. And although it's an EU law, it will also cover foreign businesses - including American ones - that have operations in the region.

The European Parliament approved a draft of the new rules in June 2023, and now EU member states and the European Commission will negotiate to finalize the law, which is expected to begin rolling out in phases a few years from now.

We study the impacts of human rights disclosure and due diligence laws on businesses. In the past, governments have generally asked only that companies voluntarily comply with efforts to advance human rights. The EU law would be the biggest attempt yet to legally mandate compliance - with major implications for human rights and businesses around the world.

Human rights are those fundamental rights that all individuals hold simply by virtue of being human, such as rights to life and freedom of thought.

Human rights usually inform laws that limit what governments can do - for example, by obliging them to refrain from torturing people. Increasingly, however, they are also informing business regulations, because powerful companies can have serious impacts on individuals' human rights.

Businesses have a long history of human rights abuses, from the British East India Co.'s pivotal role in the slave trade and IBM's complicity in the Holocaust to more recent deadly environmental disasters involving oil and mining companies.

More contemporary examples of this are children in the Democratic Republic of Congo mining cobalt destined for cellphones or forced labor being used in the production of cotton in China's heavily Muslim Xinjiang region.

In 2011, the United Nations Human Rights Council took a step toward policing these abuses by unanimously adopting "guiding principles" on business and human rights. These principles urge governments to compel companies in their jurisdictions to respect human rights wherever they operate. Such an approach stands in contrast to more common voluntary standards, such as supplier codes of conduct, which some observers have suggested have been ineffective.

In 2017, France became the first country to actually mandate that companies police their supply chains for human rights abuses.

The EU's human rights due diligence law, first drafted in 2022, builds on the French version - but goes a few steps further.

Human rights due diligence is a process by which companies are meant to map out, understand and address all potential human rights abuses that occur throughout their operations.

The term "due diligence" is borrowed from the common business practice of financial due diligence, wherein financial risks are investigated before any large investment. So just as businesses evaluate financial risks, human rights advocates argue companies should put similar effort into investigating the risk that an activity might violate someone's human rights.

The EU law would mandate that all large companies that operate in the bloc conduct human rights due diligence among their suppliers - by, for example, making sure child or forced labor wasn't involved - but also on how their products are used by consumers - such as when a piece of technology is used to surveil citizens.

Protecting

The law would cover most human rights, including labor rights and environmental rights, past or present. In practice, that would mean companies would have to map any harmful impacts that have occurred or could occur and take action to remedy or prevent them.

The rules would also include provisions for enforcement and penalties for non-compliance through fines and other sanctions. And victims of abuse would be able to seek damages.

In its current form, the law would cover EU companies with at least 500 workers and 150 million euros (\$162 million) in net revenue, but those thresholds fall to 250 workers and 40 million euros (\$44.5 million) in sectors with a higher risk of abuse, such as clothing, footwear and agriculture. Non-European companies must comply if they have EU revenues that meet those thresholds. An estimated 13,000 EU companies and 4,000 based outside of Europe - including household names like Apple, Amazon and Nike - would be subject to the law.

If it works as intended, the EU law could be transformative in protecting human rights, including worker health and safety and workers' free speech, around the

world. According to a recent report by human rights scholars, it could be "particularly valuable in the context of transnational supply chains, where the fragmented nature of production has long presented formidable legal and practical barriers to efforts to secure greater corporate accountability for labor rights violations and poor working conditions."

While many companies have already endorsed mandatory due diligence rules, others worry this kind of government mandate would be too onerous.

A full map of risks in a company's value chain - from raw materials to consumers - is difficult to establish when suppliers are separate companies operating on the other side of the world and global supply chains are frequently large and complex.

Some companies also strongly resist the idea of being held responsible for human rights violations that take place in their supply chains overseas.

For this reason, the US has so far preferred voluntary rules when it comes to pushing companies to respect human rights.

But that's slowly beginning to change.

In 2012, California implemented the Supply Chain Transparency Act, which requires companies operating in the state to disclose their "efforts to eradicate human trafficking and slavery" in their global supply chains. And in 2021, Congress passed the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act, which bans the importation of goods mined, produced or manufactured wholly or in part in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region of China - home of the Uyghur people, who have been subjected to an intense program of state suppression since 2017.

Between these rules there is a clear trend developing of an increasing number of U.S. companies being obligated to implement some form of human rights due diligence. But these rules, unlike the developing European approach, are very narrowly tailored and don't require companies to routinely undertake due diligence.

As a result, the US companies that would be subject to the EU rules would be at a competitive disadvantage to many of their domestic rivals.

That's why we believe the time may be ripe for Congress to consider its own more comprehensive human rights due diligence law, which would let the US take the lead on the issue and have more of a say in these global standards. We believe that such a move would also be a major boon to protecting the human rights of marginalized groups across the world. (AP)

Next-gen cell redefines e-mobility

Amprion unveils high-energy lithium-ion battery for eVTOL

FREMONT, Calif., Aug 5: Amprion Technologies, Inc. ("Amprion" or the "Company") (NYSE: AMPX), a leader in next-generation lithium-ion batteries with its Silicon Anode Platform, is continuing to pioneer innovative battery technology with its newest ultra-high-power-high-energy lithium-ion battery. Leveraging the company's advanced material system capability, the cell achieves an impressive discharge rate of 10C while delivering 400 Wh/kg energy density, a major advancement for electric aviation encompassing both crewed and uncrewed aerial systems - a market projected to be collectively over \$49 billion USD by 2025.

The cell's extraordinary power output brings unprecedented benefits to the electric vertical takeoff and landing aircraft (eVTOL) and unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) industries, providing unmatched propulsion power and energy to meet the rigorous demands during takeoff, cruise, and landing. Moreover, it extends flight range by as much as 50% and increases payload capacity. The new cell's groundbreaking capabilities extend to high-performance EVs, potentially enabling them to achieve 0 to 60 mph (0 to 97 km/h) acceleration below 1.5-seconds, redefining performance standards in the EV industry, projected to reach \$67B by 2025.

Power (cross head)

"Commercial opportunities in electric mobility are profoundly impacted by their power and energy requirements," said Dr. Kang Sun, Chief Executive Officer of Amprion. "Our new cell delivers impressive specific power and energy density performance, approximately 200% higher than traditional graphite cells, while achieving

a 10C discharge rate, significantly expanding application possibilities and driving cost-effectiveness."

With an impressive power density of 3500 W/kg in standard discharge conditions and a maximum power exceeding 4400 W/kg at lower depths-of-discharge, the cell's usable discharge capability is extended. It supports high current pulses at low states of charge without going below the lower cut-off voltage, namely 3000 W/kg at 30% depths-of-discharge. The combination of high energy density and high-power density reduces battery weight and volume, leading to extended range, reduced charging frequency, and lower operating costs.

In addition, the new ultra-high-power cell boasts an ultra-fast charging (UFC) capability, reaching 80 percent charge in approximately six minutes or less, transforming mission-critical operations with swift turnaround times.

Amprion remains dedicated to providing batteries that are a key component required to advance electric mobility. Amprion expects to have samples of this cell available for customers by the end of 2023 with the commercialization of the new cells slated for early 2024.

Amprion Technologies, Inc. is a leading manufacturer of high-energy and high-power lithium-ion batteries producing the industry's highest known energy density cells. The company's commercially available batteries deliver up to 450 Wh/kg and 1,150 Wh/L. The company's corporate headquarters is in Fremont, California where it maintains an R&D lab and a pilot manufacturing facility for the fabrication of silicon anodes and cells.

Sustainable heat generation

New next-gen thermal energy storage to 'decarbonize' heat

NEW YORK, Aug 5: Brenmiller Energy Ltd. ("Brenmiller", "Brenmiller Energy" (Nasdaq: BNRG, TASE: BNRG), a clean energy company that provides Thermal Energy Storage ("TES") systems to global industrial and utility markets, has announced the launch of its next-generation TES system - the bGen™ ZERO - in alignment with the Company's new strategic focus on delivering low-cost, zero-emission solutions to electrify heat. Brenmiller will unveil its new product and strategic direction during live webinar presentations on August 9 and 10, 2023.

"With the new bGen™ ZERO, we believe we have achieved a breakthrough in sustainable heat generation - by relying exclusively on electricity from renewables or the grid, this system delivers high-efficiency, ultra-low carbon heat without combustion," said Avi Brenmiller, president and CEO of Brenmiller. "After years proving our TES technology's mettle in intensely energy-hungry environments, the zero-emission bGen™ is ready to meet surging industrial demand and lead the

transition to net-zero heat. We believe this changes the game for hard-to-decarbonize sectors, providing a scalable path to electrify heat, slash emissions, and pioneer circular economics. The bGen makes clean heat for industry a reality - reliable, renewable and emission-free."

Brenmiller Energy delivers scalable thermal energy storage solutions and services that allow customers to cost-effectively decarbonize their operations. Its patented bGen thermal storage technology enables the use of renewable energy resources, as well as waste heat, to heat crushed rocks to very high temperatures. They can then store this heat for minutes, hours, or even days before using it for industrial and power generation processes. With bGen, organizations have a way to use electricity, biomass and waste heat to generate the clean steam, hot water and hot air they need to mold plastic, process food and beverages, produce paper, manufacture chemicals and pharmaceuticals or drive steam turbines without burning fossil fuels.

NEW YORK, Aug 5, (AP): Apple's eked out a slightly higher profit last quarter even though sales dipped during the period, a showing that may not be enough to sustain investor enthusiasm that recently made the iPhone maker the first publicly held US company to be valued at \$3 trillion.

The results released Thursday covered April through June, the third consecutive quarter that the Cupertino, California, company has posted a year-over-year decline in revenue. That's its longest stretch of falling sales in nearly seven years.

Apple also indicated revenue for the current July through September quarter is expected to decline, despite the anticipated release of the next iPhone. The disappointing forecast, coupled with the lukewarm results for the past quarter, caused Apple's stock to fall 2% in Thursday's extended trading.

If the shares behave similarly during Friday's regular trading session, it will push Apple's market value below the \$3 trillion threshold it eclipsed in late June.

Revenue for Apple's most recent quarter totaled \$81.8 billion, down 1% from last year. Profit edged up 2% from a year ago to \$19.9 billion, or \$1.26 per share.

"We continue to face an uneven macroeconomic environment," Apple CEO Tim Cook told investors during the conference call.

The earnings were better than the \$1.20 per share projected by analysts polled by FactSet Research, while revenue matched analyst forecasts.

But iPhones sales - the product segment watched most closely by Wall Street - fell 2% from a year ago to \$39.7 billion, below analysts' predictions.

"Investors appear to be reacting to the slight miss in iPhone sales, but I wouldn't read too much into it as many consumers are holding out until the next iPhone release," said Investing.com analyst Jesse Cohen.

Google's owner Alphabet has said it plans to do the same, although it does not appear to have followed through yet. The company said in a June blog post that it will begin removing news links in the country

Big Tech firm posts YoY decline in revenue

Apple's earnings top forecasts, but sales fall for third straight quarter

IEP shares plunge

Icahn Enterprises halves dividend months after 'short-selling' report

NEW YORK, Aug 5, (AP): Months into the fallout from a damning short-selling report, shares for corporate raider and activist investor Carl Icahn's conglomerate Icahn Enterprises plunged Friday after the firm halved its quarterly dividend.

In sharing second-quarter financial results on Friday, Icahn Enterprises declared a distribution of \$1 per depositary unit, representing a 12% annualized yield. That's half of the firm's previous \$2 per unit payout. Its stock closed Friday down more than 23%.

The quarterly divided slash comes months after a May 2 report from short-selling firm Hindenburg Research, which claimed that IEP has been using inflated asset valuations. The report also pointed to "Ponzi-like economic structures" at the holding company - alleging that Icahn has

used money from new investors to pay out dividends to old investors.

IEP and Icahn have denied the allegations made in Hindenburg's report, previously stating that they would "fight back."

Well before Friday's announcement, the market value and stock for IEP had plummeted since Hindenburg released its short position. The company's market cap has been cut by roughly half - from about \$18 billion on May 1 to some \$9 billion Friday - and IEP's stock has fallen about 51% since the start of May.

For the second quarter, IEP reported a net loss of \$269 million, wider than the year-earlier loss of \$128 million.

"I believe the second quarter partially reflected the impact of short-selling on companies we control or invest in, which I attribute to the misleading and self-serving Hindenburg report concerning our company.

It also reflected the size of the hedge book relative to our activist strategy," Icahn said in a statement Friday, adding that the company does "not intend" to let the Hindenburg report interfere with distributing dividends.

In a Friday post on X, the platform formerly known as Twitter, Hindenburg said it remained short on IEP - and also pointed to its May prediction, which stated, "Icahn Enterprises will eventually cut or eliminate its dividend entirely, barring a miracle turnaround in investment performance."

Hindenburg is well known for short-selling. That involves borrowing a stock one expects to lose value and selling it at its current market price with the plan to buy the same number of shares back later at a lower price and pocketing the difference.

Investors have remained upbeat about Apple's prospects despite the company's modest sales erosion, largely because its results have been less wobbly than other major technology companies that suffered steeper slides coming out of pandemic. Several stalwarts in the sector have announced mass layoffs.

By contrast, Apple has held its ground while still managing to generate eye-popping profits. It has also laid the groundwork for potential growth, recently unveiling a sleek \$3,500 headset that many analysts believe will introduce the still-geeky realm of virtual reality to a wider audience.

Apple's performance capped a succession of mostly positive quarterly reports from Big Tech companies regaining their stride after stumbling

through much of year. Tech's troubles coincided with the pandemic winding down, as people weaned themselves from digital services and products that were in higher demand while they were spending more time at home.

Condition

Improving industry conditions have helped lift the tech-driven Nasdaq composite index by 33% so far this year.

But legal efforts to curb Big Tech's power could pose other obstacles.

Apple is still fighting court rulings that would allow iPhone app makers to provide payment options for digital services outside Apple's own system, which generates 15% to 30% commissions for the company. Those fees are a lucrative part of Apple's services

Google plans to do the same

Meta carries out threat to block news in Canada

MENLO PARK, Calif., Aug 5, (AP): Facebook and Instagram parent company Meta is keeping its promise to block news content in Canada on its platforms in response to a new law that requires tech giants to pay publishers for linking to or otherwise repurposing their content online.

Google's owner Alphabet has said it plans to do the same, although it does not appear to have followed through yet. The company said in a June blog post that it will begin removing news links in the country

when the law takes effect - expected in December.

Meta has threatened to block links to news sites in Canada for nearly a year in response to the law, which passed in late June. The social media company said the Online News Act "is based on the incorrect premise that Meta benefits unfairly from news content shared on our platforms, when the reverse is true."

The changes mean that people in Canada are not able to view or share news on Facebook and Instagram - in-

cluding news articles, videos and audio posted by outlets inside or outside of Canada. Links posted by Canadian outlets are still visible in other countries.

Minister of Canadian Heritage Pascale St-Onge called Meta's move "irresponsible" on Elon Musk's social media site X, formerly known as Twitter.

"They would rather block their users from accessing good quality and local news instead of paying their fair share to news organizations," she said in a

statement posted Aug. 1. Last month, Canada's government said it would stop advertising on Facebook and Instagram, in response to Meta's earlier decision to block access to news content on their social platforms as part of a temporary test.

Meta has taken similar steps in the past. In 2021, it briefly blocked news from its platform in Australia after the country passed legislation that would compel tech companies to pay publishers for using their news stories. It later struck deals with Australian publishers.



Holding the agreement from left to right: The Saudi Fund for Development (SFD) Chief Executive Officer, H.E. Sultan Al-Marshad, and the Prime Minister of Saint Lucia, Hon. Philip Joseph Pierre.

Saudi Fund signs \$75m deal to reconstruct hospital

The Saudi Fund for Development (SFD) Chief Executive Officer, H.E. Sultan Al-Marshad, signed SFD's first development loan agreement worth USD \$75 million with the Prime Minister of Saint Lucia, Hon. Philip Joseph Pierre, to fund the "Reconstruction and Rehabilitation of St. Jude Hospital Project" in Saint Lucia, through SFD.

Also in attendance was Saint Lucia's Minister for External Affairs, International Trade, and Civil Aviation, Hon. Alva Baptiste, Saint Lucia's Minister for Health, Wellness and Elderly Affairs, Hon. Moses Jn. Baptiste, the Cabinet of Ministers, and

government officials from both sides.

SFD's development loan will help to provide an integrated medical facility offering secondary medical care to Saint Lucia's population, with a capacity of approximately 100 beds. The project will also renovate several of its wings and sub-buildings, and as part of this, the hospital will be equipped with state-of-the-art facilities that will help to deliver excellent healthcare services to Saint Lucia's population.

On this occasion, the Prime Minister of Saint Lucia, Hon. Philip Joseph Pierre, said: "Today, we are one step closer to making amends to

the people of Saint Lucia, particularly to the people of the south of the island, by securing funding for the reconstruction of the St. Jude Hospital. We have been able to achieve this milestone with the support of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia through the SFD, as we embrace a new era of collaboration to find sustainable solutions to tackle pressing issues."

On his part, the Chief Executive Officer of the Saudi Fund for Development, H.E. Sultan Al-Marshad, said: "Today's agreement signifies an important step in the development cooperation between both countries."

The Conversation

Demands of pandemic took a toll on everyone

More adults than ever have been seeking ADHD medications

By Margaret Sibley
University of Washington

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

As a woman in my 30s who was constantly typing "ADHD" into my computer, I had something interesting happen to me in 2021. I started receiving a wave of advertisements beckoning me to get online help for ADHD, or attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder. One was a free, one-minute assessment to find out if I had the disorder, another an offer for a digital game that could help "rewire" my brain. Yet another ad asked me if I was "delivering" but still not moving up at work.

The reason the term ADHD litters my digital life is because I am a clinical psychologist who exclusively treats patients with ADHD. I'm also a psychiatric researcher at the University of Washington School of Medicine who studies ADHD trends across the life span.

But these advertisements were a striking new trend.

The following year, in October 2022, the US Food and Drug Administration announced a nationwide shortage of mixed amphetamine salts, a drug that is marketed as Adderall. The brand name Adderall and its generic counterparts have become one of the most common medication treatments for ADHD. Over the next several months, additional ADHD medications joined Adderall on the list of prescription drugs in short supply.

As of August 2023, the US is still experiencing a shortage of several ADHD medications, with some not expected to be resolved for at least a few more months.

The shortage appears to have been triggered by a combination of high demand and access to key ingredients. In recent months, millions of Americans have found themselves with no guarantee of access to their daily medications.

Stimulant

In March 2023, the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported an unprecedented spike in stimulant prescriptions

between 2020 and 2021. Perhaps most surprising was that the demographic showing the greatest increases in stimulant use - an increase of almost 20% in one year - were in women in their 20s and 30s.

The CDC's findings, along with the stimulant shortage, raise some interesting - and still unanswered - questions about what factors are driving these trends.

Despite the growth in awareness of ADHD over the past couple of decades, many people with ADHD, particularly women and people of color, go undiagnosed in childhood.

But unlike depression or anxiety, ADHD is quite complicated to diagnose in adults.

Diagnosing ADHD in either kids or

adults first involves establishing that ADHD-like traits, which exist on a continuum and can fluctuate, are severe and chronic enough to prevent a person from living a normal, healthy life.

The average person has a couple of symptoms of ADHD, so it can be hard to draw the line between ADHD-like tendencies - such as a tendency to lose keys, having a messy desk or often finding your mind wandering during a dull task - and a diagnosable medical disorder. There is no objective test to diagnose ADHD, so doctors typically conduct a structured patient interview, ask family members to fill out rating scales and review official records to come up with an actual diagnosis.

Challenges

Diagnostic challenges can also arise for psychiatrists and other health care practitioners because ADHD shares features with many other conditions. In fact, difficulty concentrating is the second most common symptom across all psychiatric disorders.

Further complicating things, ADHD is also a risk factor for many of the conditions that it resembles. For example, years of negative feedback may lead some adults with ADHD to develop secondary depression and anxiety. Zeroing in on the correct diagnosis requires a well-trained clinician who is able to take enough time to thoroughly gather necessary patient history.

Looking back, some clear factors have been at play, but it remains unclear the degree to which they are driving the spike in stimulant prescriptions.

In 2021, the US was still deep in the acute phase of the COVID-19 pandemic. People were still losing jobs, facing financial strains and juggling work-from-home challenges such as having children at home doing online schooling. Many families were losing loved ones, and there was a huge sense of uncertainty over when normal life would return.

The demands of the pandemic took a toll on everyone, but research shows that women may have been disproportionately affected. This may have led to a greater proportion of adults seeking stimulant treatments to help them keep up with the demands of daily life.

In addition, without access to in-person recreational spaces, the pandemic increasingly drove many people to spending more time on digital media.

In 2021, a social justice movement focused on "neurodiversity" was gaining momentum online. Neurodiversity is a nonmedical term that refers to the wide diversity of brain processes that diverge from what has traditionally been considered "typical." In this moment, #ADHD became the seventh most popular health topic on TikTok.

Relatable anecdotes of missing keys, procrastination, romantic mishaps and secret signs of ADHD began to flood the internet. (AP)

TOKYO, Aug 5: Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy (DMD) patients showed signs of disease progress slowing down, after oral consumption of Neu-REFIX β-glucan for 45 days along with routine medications. Clinical improvements published in IBRO Neuroscience reports, might be the world's first such report, wherein, a safe food supplement, mitigated biomarkers of relevance to muscle dysfunction in DMD without side-effects. Increased plasma dystrophin by 32%, indicating improved blood circulation along with muscle strength improvement, is a breakthrough, unraveling the multipronged potential of Neu-REFIX, which also beneficially reconstituted gut microbiome in DMD, gives hope of improving the quality of life and prolonging the life span of DMD patients, opined Dr. Raghavan, the lead author.

Neu-REFIX is an allergen-free β-glucan, unique for its source, as an exo-polysaccharide from Aureobasidium Pullulans, produced in GMP certified facility in Japan, possessing purity, functionality, water solubility and dosage standardization like a drug, preservable at room temperature, and orally consumable as such or with food. Immune modulatory effects in pre-clinical studies, in healthy Japanese volunteers and Covid-19 patients, showed its potentials as a disease modifying adjuvant, worth undertaking clinical trial in DMD, to yield beneficial effects by controlling inflammation and fibrosis.

Reduced

Neu-REFIX reduced fibrosis, inflammation, enhanced muscle regeneration, in MDX mice and in a six-month-long clinical study in young boys, improved NSAA, 6MWT and MRC, and these disease modifying potentials were presented in MDA Conference 2023. Neu-REFIX, can be consumed at any stage of DMD, with standard of care medications. Therefore, it's worth evaluating as a drug-adjuvant because, as reported, Neu-REFIX as a single agent, has helped accomplish, what the current disease modifying treatments, cell-based therapies, and angiogenesis approaches are together, trying to achieve, said Prof. Naoki Yamamoto, a co-researcher.

GNCorp, which spearheaded this accomplishment, has signed a MoU with MAP Healthcare, a subsidiary of SHBK International Holding Group, UAE and intends collaborating with

Safe, immunogenic in humans

AAHI gets \$18m to develop RNA vaccine for 'chikungunya virus'

SEATTLE, Aug 5: The Access to Advanced Health Institute (AAHI) has announced that it has received an \$18 million award from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to develop a temperature stable, single-dose vaccine candidate for the chikungunya virus. The vaccine uses the innovative RNA platform technology to protect against the virus, a major cause of morbidity and mortality in Asia, Africa and Latin America for which no vaccine exists. AAHI's approach to an RNA vaccine against chikungunya is distinctly different from the RNA vaccines which are currently approved by the FDA to prevent other diseases. Unlike other RNA vaccines, this candidate will generate a live "attenuated" virus that could potentially induce strong and long-lasting immune protection against this mosquito-borne disease. The award from NIH will support development, preclinical testing and human clinical evaluation of a vaccine that meets an increasingly urgent need for a reliable, abundant supply.

While not commonly fatal, chikungunya virus causes fever, headache, rash, and debilitating often chronic joint and muscle pain. People with chronic chikungunya symptoms often overwhelm healthcare services in areas of the world where there is already poor healthcare infrastructure, which perpetuates health inequity. The goal of the award is to develop an effective

like-minded organizations to validate Neu-REFIX in larger studies. Clinical research in Limb-Girdle Muscle Dystrophy (LGMD), multiple sclerosis and psoriasis are underway, to evaluate Neu-REFIX's efficacy as a universal immune modulator.

RS Oncology is bringing exciting new science to patients who will have the best chance of benefiting from new therapies. PRX3 is a novel drug target with potential for treating patients

with the asbestos related cancer, mesothelioma. It is a key defense against oxidative stress and is located in the mitochondria, the energy generating factories. Inhibiting PRX targets cancer, not normal cells.

MITOPE, a first-in-human Phase I clinical trial, is investigating a first-in-class PRX3 inhibitor, RSO-021 (clinicaltrials.gov using the identifier NCT05278975, sponsor RS Oncology, LLC [RSO], Boston, USA). Dose escalation is ongoing across four UK sites with a planned enrollment by Q2 2024. Phase 2 expansion will bring on board additional sites in Q4 of 2023.

Early experience with RSO-021 in MITOPE was presented to a global audience of mesothelioma clinicians, scientists, and allied professionals at the 2023 International Mesothelioma Interest Group (iMig) conference hosted in Lille, France in June. The industrial symposium was entitled New Horizons for Cancer Therapy - Targeting Oxidative Stress Vulnerabilities.

equipment and techniques employed by vaccine manufacturers worldwide that are easy to tech transfer and scale, unlike current mRNA vaccine technology. We hope that these advances will ultimately increase availability and access to highly effective vaccines. This is the first attempt, to the best of our knowledge, to advance a RNA-launched live-attenuated vaccine candidate to the clinic."

The 5-year project builds upon work supported by the NIH (R43AI127053) for AAHI's proof-of-concept ground-laying work, which demonstrated that a liquid presentation of this live-attenuated chikungunya RNA vaccine candidate elicited strong immune responses in animals after a single dose, protecting them from mortality and joint swelling after being challenged with the virus (Voigt et al. 2021). NIH's support for the development of a temperature stable, single-dose chikungunya vaccine candidate that is safe and immunogenic in humans may enable future development of other RNA-delivered live-attenuated vaccine candidates against other viruses that disproportionately affect poor and marginalized areas of the world.

AAHI plans to expand on this work to develop more efficient and equitably accessible RNA vaccines that can reach people in all areas of the world, regardless of geography or socio-economic status.

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Soprano Netrebko sues Met for cutting ties over Russia-Ukraine war

NEW YORK, Aug 5, (AP) — Soprano Anna Netrebko, once among the Metropolitan Opera's biggest box office draws, sued the company and general manager Peter Gelb on Friday, alleging defamation, breach of contract and other violations related to the institution's decision to drop her following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

The suit, filed in US District Court in Manhattan, asks for at least \$360,000 in damages for lost performance and rehearsal fees. Netrebko claims the Met caused "severe mental anguish and emotional distress" that included "depression, humiliation, embarrassment, stress and anxiety, and emotional pain and suffering."

The Met dropped the Russian soprano from future engagements shortly after Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022. Gelb had demanded she repudiate Russia President Vladimir Putin.

"Since Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the Met and Peter Gelb have used Anna Netrebko as a scapegoat in their campaign to distance themselves from Russia and to support Ukraine," the management of the 51-year-old soprano said in a statement.

The Met said in a statement: "Ms. Netrebko's lawsuit has no

merit."

The American Guild of Musical Artists filed a grievance on Netrebko's behalf and arbitrator Howard C. Edelman ruled in February that the Met violated the union's collective bargaining agreement when it canceled deals with Netrebko to appear in Verdi's "Don Carlo" and "La Forza del Destino" and Giordano's "Andrea Chénier." He awarded her compensation for the lost performances, which the union calculated at \$209,103.48.

Performance

Netrebko, who made her Met debut in 2002, was due to receive the Met's top fee of \$17,000 per performance, the suit said.

Edelman's decision said Netrebko voluntarily withdrew from performances of Wagner's "Lohengrin" and Puccini's "Turandot" and was not owed for those.

The lawsuit alleges breach of additional agreements for 40 performances of Puccini's "Tosca" and Tchaikovsky's "Pique Dame (The Queen of Spades)" during the 2024-25 season and Puccini's "Manon Lescaut" and Verdi's "Macbeth" in 2025-26. Going beyond the scope of the arbitration, the suit claims Netrebko was discriminated against because of national origin.

Netrebko alleges the Met and Gelb "harmed Netrebko's relationship among audiences, including by encouraging protests against her performances" and "reputation caused by Gelb and the Met has caused other opera houses and cultural institutions in the United States to refrain from hiring Netrebko." It said Netrebko was forced to sell her New York City apartment at a loss.

The suit said "due to the Met's requirement that Netrebko issue public statements opposing the actions of Russian government, Russian politicians have denounced Netrebko, Russian theater companies have canceled contracts with her, Russian audiences have criticized her on her social media channels and in the Russian press, and Netrebko and her family and friends in Russia have suffered the risk of harm, retaliation, and retribution by the Russian government."

While absent from the US, Netrebko opened the 100th anniversary season of Italy's Arena di Verona in June with a new production of Verdi's "Aida."

She is scheduled to appear this month at the Teatro Colon in Buenos Aires, Argentina, and her 2023-24 season includes engagements with Berlin's Staatsoper unter den Linden, the Vienna State Opera, Milan's Teatro alla Scala and the Paris Opéra.

Variety



This image released by Warner Bros. Pictures shows Jason Statham in a scene from 'Meg 2: The Trench.' (AP)

Film

More Megs, more problems and more villains in sequel

Statham jumps even bigger sharks in 'Meg 2'

LOS ANGELES, Aug 5, (AP) — Before we, ahem, dive into our review of "Meg 2," a few fun facts on the Megalodon, the titular real-life prehistoric shark, according to some unusually detailed production notes from the studio:

It weighed up to 50 tons (45 metric tons) and exceeded 60 feet (18 meters) in length. Its vertebrae were the size of a large dinner plate - no salad plates here! There's "no likelihood" that any actually survived to this day (we'd feel better with "no chance," but OK.) And, its jaw was so wide, it could swallow two adults side by side.

We know what you're thinking, and so are we: Jack and Rose could've both fit into that jaw! Case closed. James Cameron, are you listening? Way to nip a controversy in the bud.

In any case, no Jack and Rose in this film, but there are plenty of other people who get swallowed, chomped on, or masticated in "Meg 2: The Trench," directed by Ben Wheatley, a film that screams: "Sequel! What do we do now?" And so there's more, more and more. More Megs. More problems. More ludicrous plot points, more cartoonish villains, and more dialogue cheesier than an overripened Brie wheel left out on a picnic table.

But also, in the film's saving grace, more Jason Statham, whose gruff but amiable veneer has a calming effect on the proceedings. Elsewhere, playing off other stars, Statham can seem stiff, or one-note. Here, he's in his element, and that same style is a comfort. (Then again, it could be he's the only character written with even a dollop of charisma.)

Many films begin with flashbacks - few as far back as the Cretaceous period, but that's where we start. We see first lizards, then, what, bigger lizards? No, dinosaurs! These creatures increase in heft until a huge dinosaur destroys everything in its wake. And then, out of the surf storms a Meg, to swallow up this now-puny dinosaur as if it were a mini-pack of Doritos. It's a well-deserved laugh.

We pivot to the present, where we meet Jonas Taylor (Statham), expert diver, eco-warrior and shark-battler, back doing his thing, which means escaping certain death on the high seas. Jonas no longer has his love interest from the last film, single mom Suyin Zhang, but is now parenting her 14-year-old daughter, Meiying, and that's where his heart lies.

Then there's Meiying's uncle, Jiuming Zhang (Chinese action star and filmmaker Wu Jing, joining the franchise) an adventurer who doesn't mind taking a few risks. For example, he decides to jump into the tank at his Mana One research facility to play around with the Meg they have in captivity. He almost dies in front of everyone, including Meiying, laughing off the danger.

Danger

But the danger really begins when the scientists take their two submersibles down to "the trench," 25,000 feet (7,620 meters) down to be precise, to a sector of the ocean sealed off by the thermocline, a cloud of ... oh, never mind, let's get to the sharks.

Because now the submersibles encounter more Megs. Bigger Megs. And when they get stuck down there, thanks to some dastardly villains, a mole in their own operation, a sabotaged rescue ship and some questionable decision-making, Jonas has to improvise.

This involves the team walking (yep, walking) across the trench in EV suits quickly running out of oxygen, to get to a secret station where said villains are mining something - what, we don't know, even when Jiuming briefly explains it and says a handful is worth \$1 billion. "Billion with a B?" Jonas asks, in more of that crackling dialogue.

But they make it back to the surface, because if they didn't, the final hour of this film wouldn't exist - a wacky showdown at a beach resort imaginatively called "Fun Island," full of vacationers about to be attacked not only by Megs but by ...

Dinosaurs! Yes, because of that well-known action-sequel rule: "When in doubt, add dinosaurs." (They did it in "Transformers: Age of Extinction," remember?)

So now, we have Jonas and his team battling not only Megs but dinosaurs and oh, also, we should mention, a really large octopus. These tentacles show up early and often and if you ever wanted to know what happens when a giant shark meets a giant octopus, here's your chance.

At a certain point, somebody says "I just hope this goes better than last time." It's a cheeky reference to the first film, but also a rather dangerous line to include in a sequel, because they almost never go better than last time. This one doesn't either, but at least it's upfront about what it's doing: just making stuff bigger and crazier. (By the way, Jonas actually jumps a shark. On a jet ski. Bearing harpoons.)

And through it all, Statham's steady presence remains the connective tissue.

Not that you should get attached to anyone's connective tissue here.

"Meg 2: The Trench," a Warner Bros Pictures release, has been rated PG-13 by the Motion Picture Association "for action/violence, some bloody images, language and brief suggestive material." Running time: 116 mins. Two stars out of four.

Also:

LOS ANGELES: Gal Gadot gets her "Mission: Impossible"-style action film in the international espionage thriller "Heart of Stone." The film, debuting Friday, Aug. 11, on Netflix, stars the "Wonder Woman" actor as a superspy for a shadowy global peacekeeping agency called the Charter. "Heart of Stone," directed by Tom Harper, boasts plenty of stunt sequences and international locales, with Gadot starring alongside Jamie Dornan, Alia Bhatt, Keya Dhawan and Sophie Okonedo.

NEW YORK: Actor Jonathan Majors' domestic violence trial was postponed until at least Sept 6 after New York City prosecutors asked Thursday for more time to prepare.

Majors, 33, appeared in court for what was to have been the start of his trial on charges stemming from a March confrontation with a woman who says he twisted her arm behind her back, struck her on the head and pushed her into a vehicle. The woman was treated at a hospital for minor neck and head injuries, including a cut to her ear.

Majors is charged with misdemeanors, including assault, and could be sentenced to as much as a year in jail if convicted.

The judge set a new tentative trial date of Sept 6 after prosecutors from the Manhattan district attorney's office requested more time for discovery.

Majors walked out of the courtroom after the hearing, acknowledging some seated in the gallery. At one point he bumped his hand to his heart to a woman seated near the door.

His attorney, Priya Chaudhry, said in an email that Majors was unjustly arrested and that it was he who "suffered at the hands" of his accuser.

She said Majors was "the real victim in this shameful ordeal," adding that he "has had his life, career, and reputation torn apart. Yet he remains unwavering in his determination to be absolved from this harrowing ordeal."

Majors has starred in the movies "Creed III," "Antman and the Wasp: Quantumania," among other features.

"We look forward to presenting the full facts and evidence at trial," said Doug Cohen, a spokesperson for the Manhattan District Attorney's Office. (AP)

SAN SALVADOR, El Salvador: A funeral home in El Salvador has taken Barbie mania to an extreme, offering pink coffins with Barbie linings.

It's all designed so you can be a Barbie fan till the day you die — and even after that.

The pink metal coffins are on sale at the Alpha and Omega Funeral Home in the city of Ahuachapán, near the border with Guatemala.

Owner Isaac Villegas said Friday he had already offered the option of pink coffins before

the July premiere of the Barbie movie. But the craze that swept Latin America convinced him to decorate the cloth linings of the coffins with pictures of the doll. The coffins are also decorated with little white stars.

"I said, 'We have to jump on this trend,'" Villegas said of the coffins, noting "it has been a



Majors



Chaudhry

success."

He said the funeral home has already launched a promotional campaign around the Barbie boxes, and has sold 10 of them.

Though that doesn't mean 10 people have actually been buried in them — many people in El Salvador buy a pre-paid package for future burial.

Villegas said that until a year ago, families had preferred traditional coffins in colors like brown, black, white or gray. But a year ago, he sold his first pink coffin to family who wanted their very happy relative buried in a happier-colored coffin.

Now he has no plans to turn back, though he still offers

darker colors.

"We are going to have more pink coffins, because people are asking for it," he said.

Latin America jumped on Barbie mania with pink-colored tacos and pastries, commercial planes bearing the Barbie logo, political ads, and even Barbie-themed protests. (AP)

People & Places

Obits

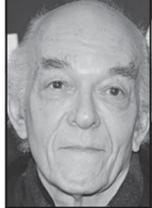
Composer Davis dead

Breaking Bad actor Margolis dies at 83

NEW YORK, Aug 5, (AP): Veteran character actor **Mark Margolis**, who had a breakout role as a mobster in "Scarface" but became best known decades later for his indelible, fearsome portrayal of a vindictive former drug kingpin in TV's "Breaking Bad," has died. He was 83.

The actor died on Thursday at Mount Sinai Hospital in New York City following a short illness, according to a statement from his son, Morgan Margolis.

Margolis was nominated for an Emmy in 2012 for outstanding guest actor in "Breaking Bad" as Hector "Tio" Salamanca, the murderous elderly don who was unable to speak following a stroke. But this actor did not need dialogue; he communicated via facial expressions and the sometimes menacing use of a barhop bell taped to his wheelchair.



Margolis

Much of his character's backstory later played out on "Better Call Saul," the prequel in which he guest-starred from 2016 to 2022. Margolis has said he based his portrayal of the kingpin partly on his own experience caring for a relative who'd suffered a stroke.

On social media, admirers shared scenes of Hector — especially of his explosive demise. Margolis was hailed on the official X (formerly Twitter) account of "Breaking Bad" as an "immensely talented" actor "who — with his eyes, a bell, and very few words — turned Hector Salamanca into one of the most unforgettable characters in the history of television." And the show's star, Bryan Cranston, praised his co-actor on Instagram, saying he was "fun and engaging off the set, and (in the case of 'Breaking Bad' and 'Your Honor') intimidating and frightening on set. His quiet energy belied his mischievous nature and curious mind."

Breakout

Margolis also was known for many film roles, particularly in the films of Darren Aronofsky: "Requiem for a Dream," "The Fountain," "Noah," "Black Swan," "The Wrestler" and "Pi." But his breakout film role was mobster Alberto "The Shadow" in Brian de Palma's 1983 "Scarface," opposite Al Pacino's Tony Montana, who famously shoots and kills Alberto before the latter can detonate a car bomb and kill an innocent woman and her kids.

Other film roles included "The Thomas Crown Affair," "Gone Baby Gone," "Ace Ventura: Pet Detective," and "Stand Up Guys."

Margolis was born in Philadelphia in 1939 and studied acting in New York City with noted teacher Stella Adler. "I used to say, if God is a woman, this is him," Margolis said in a 2022 interview about Adler. Focusing on the stage in his early career, he appeared in dozens of shows off-Broadway, including at the Public Theater in New York, and on Broadway in the short-lived "Infidel Caesar," based on Shakespeare's "Julius Caesar" but set in Cuba. "The play crashed in about four weeks," Margolis mused in the 2022 interview. "It was beautiful but ahead of its time." He also founded Blue Dome, a touring theater troupe.

Though best known for "Breaking Bad" and "Better Call Saul," Margolis' many TV roles also included "The Equalizer," "Oz," "American Horror Story: Asylum," "Crossing Jordan," "Californication," and "The Affair." He most recently appeared in five episodes of Showtime's "Your Honor" as a Mafia kingpin.

His roles on the big screen spanned some 70 movies, most recently Matthew Coppola's 2022 "Broken Soldier" with Sophie Turner and the late Ray Liotta.

Margolis is survived by his wife of 61 years, Jacqueline Margolis, and his son Morgan, who is CEO of Knitting Factory Entertainment. The family plans to have a private memorial and funeral.



Carl Davis, the American composer and conductor behind the scores for numerous award-winning British television shows and movies, has died, aged 86.

In a statement, his family said Davis, who is perhaps best-known for the score of "The World at War," a hugely influential documentary series about World War II that aired in 1973, died Thursday in Oxford following a brain hemorrhage.

"We are so proud that Carl's legacy will be his astonishing impact on music," the family said. "A consummate all-round musician, he was the driving force behind the reinvention of the silent movie for this generation and he wrote scores for some of the most-loved and remembered British television dramas."

Career

Davis, who was born in Brooklyn in 1936, started his career in New York, rising to prominence as co-author of the 1959 revue "Divisions," which won an off-Broadway Emmy. He subsequently travelled to the 1961 Edinburgh Festival and made Britain his home.

Moving to London, Davis soon found himself at the heart of the UK's theatre, television, and movie scene, composing for the National Theatre and The Royal Shakespeare Company. He scored an array of programs on British television, including the BBC's 1995 "Pride and Prejudice."

His most prominent television work was his score for "The World at War," which was narrated by **Laurence Olivier** and broadcast over 26 weeks on the commercial network ITV. His forbidding theme music set the tone for the factual non-sensationalist horror to come.

Davis's most successful film work was 1981's "The French Lieutenant's Woman," which starred **Meryl Streep** and **Jeremy Irons**, and won him a BAFTA award, Britain's equivalent of an Oscar. Other notable movie credits include 1984's "Champions" starring **John Hurt** and 1989's "Scandal" with **Ian McKellen** and **Joanne Whalley**.

He also wrote and reconstructed scores for over 50 silent films starring some of the great silent film stars, including **Charlie Chaplin**, **Buster Keaton** and **Harold Lloyd**.

He was also a composer of symphonic concert works, and ballet scores which have been performed worldwide.

"Carl was a central figure in our roster since his arrival in 1990, over half of the company's existence," said **Richard King**, CEO of Faber Music. "We are honored and proud to have worked alongside such a compositional giant, and our thoughts are with Carl's family at this time."

Davis, who was made a Commander of the Order of the British Empire in 2005 by the late **Queen Elizabeth II**, is survived by his wife **Jean Boht**, their two daughters and three grandchildren.



Keith Urban performs 'Texas Time' at the 58th annual Academy of Country Music Awards on May 11, 2023, at the Ford Center in Frisco, Texas. Country superstar Urban and Kix Brooks of powerhouse country duo Brooks & Dunn will be inducted into the Nashville Songwriters Hall of Fame this year, according to an announcement by the organization Thursday, Aug. 3. (AP)

Music

Singer talks 2024 album, craft of songwriting

'Recognized as writer is extraordinary'

LOS ANGELES, Aug 5, (AP): On Thursday, the Nashville Songwriters Hall of Fame announced that Keith Urban was among its class of 2023 inductees. The newest arrived live from Columbia Studio A, just a block and a half from where the country music superstar stayed when he first landed in the Music City from Australia in 1989, hoping to make a name for himself.

"It's truly surreal," Keith Urban told The Associated Press.

He said that if someone told him, then, that he would one day be inducted in the hall, "I just wouldn't have believed it."

Urban spoke to AP shortly after the announcement to talk about the craft of songwriting, his forthcoming studio album out in 2024 — the longest break he has taken between albums since the start of his career, heading back to Las Vegas for an extended residency and beyond.

Answers are edited for clarity and brevity.

AP: In your speech at the Hall announcement, you mentioned first coming to Nashville in 1989 — does this award allow you to reflect on those early days?

Urban: I still drive down 16th and into Music Row and it's like time evaporates. And I'm right back, driving down the exact same avenue to go to a songwriting session.

I was writing five days a week at MCA publishing over there, and on one hand, it was an excruciatingly tough time for me because it wasn't really how I wrote songs: sitting in a room with a complete stranger, a couple of legal pads, and acoustic guitars in a windowless room. That's kind of how it was done back then.

It was such a training ground for me, I guess, because I was kind of forced into an environment that wasn't natural to me. But I learned so much from it about songwriting. As tough as it was, it's probably where I learned the most about songwriting.

AP: And this is an award about songwriting — particularly noteworthy, given the collaborative nature of writing rooms in Nashville and country music.

Urban: To be recognized as a writer is extraordinary, because I've always loved songwriting. When I started really writing poetry in school, and I started writing songs just out of a desire to not be stuck, always singing somebody else's song, playing in cover bands, and realizing "This is going nowhere for me. I want to write my own songs."

Ed Sheeran was asked, "How do you write a good song?" And he said, "Start with the bad ones." And I think that's like the truest comment about songwriting. You got to get the really lame, mediocre ones out of the way so you can get to the stronger, better ones. Gosh, I wrote not that long ago with Tyler Hubbard on a song called "Dancing in the Country," and that session was great. I'm constantly learning about songwriting from my collaborations.

AP: What can we expect from your next album?

Urban: I've got another single coming out in the next couple of months; we're trying to choose one of these particular three right now. Most of the album, I'd say, is finished. I think I've got one basically one more song to record from the ground up and then a whole bunch of others that just need to be mixed. I'm in the final stages of landing the plane right now. An album will come out sometime next year.

AP: How would you describe it?

Urban: I started working on an album at the beginning of last year. I spent the better part of the year in and out of the studio while I was touring, only to get to probably February of this year and sort of look at it all and feel like it really wasn't a group of songs that was speaking to me. There was another album in me, I guess. It was a weird feeling. I actually never had that happen with a record, where I bailed on two thirds of it. I probably kept about three out of those 12 or so songs.

It was the worst feeling of like, "Okay, it's back to the drawing board. I got to get in there and start writing some songs." And so really from February all the way through to now, the whole record just took a whole different direction when I had time to write. It was the missing heart of the body of songs that I'd recorded. And everything started to pop, you know, and all three of the next single contenders we've got right now, I'm a writer on all three of them.



American-born conductor and composer **Carl Davis** thanks spectators during the Hollywood Night, the last concert of Prague Proms music festival in Prague, Czech Republic, on July 19, 2015. Carl Davis, the American composer and conductor behind the scores for numerous award-winning British television shows and movies, including 1973's "The World at War," a hugely influential documentary series about World War II, has died. He was 86. (AP)

Variety

NEW YORK: Police have a person in custody in connection with the death of **O'Shae Sibley**, a man who was fatally stabbed after a confrontation between a group of friends dancing to a Beyoncé song and several young men who taunted them, authorities said Friday.

The New York City Police Department declined to immediately identify the person or say what criminal charges they would face, if any, describing them only as a "person of interest."

Sibley, a 28-year-old professional dancer, died July 29 after being stabbed in the torso at a **Brooklyn** gas station. His death drew tributes from celebrities including **Beyoncé** and **Spike Lee**.

Sibley was at a Mobil station with friends getting gas, listening to music and dancing on a hot night when they were heckled by a group of young men.

Security camera video showed the two groups arguing for a few minutes. Both sides had walked away when Sibley and a friend abruptly returned and again confronted one of the young men, who had stayed behind recording on his phone.

On the video, Sibley could be seen following the teen and then lunging at him before the two disappeared out of the camera's view. A moment later, he walks backward into view, checking his side, then collapses to the sidewalk.

Sibley performed with the dance company **Philadanco** in his native **Philadelphia** and in New York, where he took classes with the **Alvin Ailey** American Dance Theater's Ailey Extension program.

Mayor **Eric Adams** has promised "justice for O'Shae's family and loved ones." (AP)



TOKYO: The men who came forward to allege they were abused as teenagers by Japanese boy band producer **Johnny Kitagawa** now have a powerful listener: the United Nations.

Damilola Olawuyi, chair of the UN Working Group on Business and Human Rights, told reporters Friday the number of victims may total several hundred, and he accused Japan's mainstream media of standing silent about the alleged abuse for decades.

Olawuyi raised serious questions about the sincerity of the response from the talent agency **Kitagawa** founded, **Johnny & Associates**. He urged other entertainment industry players to carry out a "transparent and legitimate investigation with a clear timeline."

Junya Hiramoto, one of seven men who talked with Olawuyi's team, was moved to tears by the UN official's remarks.

"I felt our message had been clearly relayed," he said. "They gave me such courage."

Pichamon Yeophantong, a fellow

member of the UN group who appeared with Olawuyi at the Japan National Press Club in Tokyo, urged the Japanese government to do more.

"This case highlights the need for the government, as the primary duty-bearer, to ensure transparent investigations of perpetrators and that victims obtain effective remedies, be they in the form of an apology or financial compensation," she said.



Beyoncé



Lee

Olawuyi and other experts have been in Japan since July 24. They met with government officials, human rights advocates, trade unions and companies, to learn about how businesses may be violating human rights and harming the environment.

A full report is set to be presented to the UN Human Rights Council in June, which will include recommendations for change. (AP)

LOS ANGELES, Aug 5, (AP): Country superstar Keith Urban and Kix Brooks of powerhouse country duo Brooks & Dunn will be inducted into the Nashville Songwriters Hall of Fame this year.

The organization announced its newest inductees on Thursday. They also include Casey Beathard and David Lee Murphy, in the contemporary songwriter category, and Rafe Van Hoy in the veteran songwriter category. They will be formally inducted on October 11 during the 53rd Anniversary Nashville Songwriters Hall of Fame Gala held at the Music City Center.

Chair of the organization's board of directors, Rich Hallworth, and Mark Ford, its executive director, made the announcement at Nashville's historic Columbia Studio A.

Urban, a four-time Grammy Award winning Australian country music superstar, is one of the greatest success stories of modern country music, winning awards and making a name for himself with both self-penned songs, and songs he made his own. Among

his creations, "But For The Grace of God," "Who Wouldn't Wanna Be Me" and "Days Go By," became smash hits.

Kix Brooks' songwriting in Brooks & Dunn helped shaped the iconic '90s country music sound, with tracks like the Grammy-nominated "Brand New Man," "You're Gonna Miss Me When I'm Gone" and "Only in America."

Casey Beathard is known for writing such hits as Eric Church's "Hell of a View" and Zach Williams and Dolly Parton's "There Was Jesus."

David Lee Murphy's best-known tracks include Kenny Chesney's "Living in Fast Forward" and David Lee Murphy's "Dust on the Bottle."

Rafe Van Hoy wrote the classics George Jones and Tammy Wynette's "Golden Ring" and Deborah Allen's "Baby I Lied."

"Gathering for this occasion - to recognize and welcome the members of our incoming class - is always one of the highlights of our year," Hallworth said in a statement.

AP: Does fatherhood appear as a theme on the new album?

Urban: I've never written about that; it doesn't speak to me from a writing standpoint quite that way, I think, it's in my spirit. I love songs about hope, wild longing, working through things, and just sheer, mindless fun. At this stage there is one song that will probably finish the album, it's called "Break the Chain," and that's probably the most personal song, out of everything.

AP: You're headed back to Vegas for a residency in November. What about that performance format speaks to you?

Urban: There's a little bit more intimacy that brings a different connection, I think, between me and the audience. There's also the production that you can build, that doesn't have to physically be able to get in and out of trucks every night, so it liberates potential for what we can design. That's one big plus for me.

And then there's the challenge every night. You've got a lot of fans there, but you've also got a lot of just curious people, people that come to Vegas and they're like, "Okay, who's on what's on? What show should we go to?" It's the job of getting these people to be a part of this moment. It takes me right back to the club days when you walk out on stage, and no one knew who you were. No one could care less that you're the band playing in the corner, and you've just got to grab everybody's attention. Vegas is a little bit like that for me. It's exciting.

Climate

'Warming biggest threat'

As climate changes, doctors work evolve

NEW YORK, Aug. 5, (AP) — In the 1990s, two hurricanes devastated Samoa in the South Pacific Ocean, wiping entire communities off the map and killing dozens of people. "Everything was just decimated," Malama Tafuna'i, a primary care physician in Apia, the territory's capital, said. "It looked like a bomb had gone off."

A young girl at the time, Tafuna'i watched as her father, a doctor, would go out to treat patients while her household navigated the aftermath of the storms.

"He still had to go to work and the rest of us had to figure out, you know, how do we make sure that we've got a shelter for tonight or where are we going to get food from?" she said.

Tafuna'i's early experiences help her navigate the impacts of climate change, both as a physician and as a citizen of Samoa, where extreme weather events frequently upend daily life. She uses the knowledge she has accumulated to help other doctors consider climate impacts when treating patients.

Tafuna'i, who has practiced medicine in Samoa for the better part of two decades, knows that once the hurricane-force winds die down and the flood waters recede, public health disasters — vector-borne disease outbreaks, bacterial infections, malnutrition due to crop loss — soon follow. People lose their homes in these storms and spend days exposed to mosquitoes and other pathogen-carrying insects. Decaying sanitation systems overflow and spread E. coli and other dangerous bacteria through communities. Entire fields of crops are wiped out by flooding, and families already struggling with food insecurity go hungry.

Tafuna'i can spot these links between extreme weather events and disease, but actually treating the effects of rising temperatures on the Samoan population can be tricky. It's exceedingly difficult to assess a sick patient and determine that climate change itself is the main driver of that patient's illness, Tafuna'i said. What she does see, however, is that climate change compounds and exacerbates existing health inequities in Samoa.

Disaster

"Once a disaster hits, it sets back the whole system big time," said Tafuna'i, adding that then "we have to figure out a way back up to wherever the starting point was at the time."

As the planet warms, Samoans and millions of other people around the globe will increasingly see their health affected by warming. Climate change, the World Health Organization says, is the "single biggest health threat facing humanity."

Climate-driven malnutrition, malaria, diarrhea, and heat stress are projected to kill an additional 250,000 people worldwide every year, which will come with an annual cost of between \$2 and \$4 billion. And those are just a few of the leading causes of climate-related mortality. There are countless other ways in which our changing planet affects human health, some of them still beyond our understanding.

Samoa only has two hospitals, one of which is a 20-bed facility staffed by junior doctors. Ten health clinics staffed primarily by nurses serve Samoa's rural population. The Samoan medical system, severely underfunded and understaffed, is far less prepared to shoulder the burden of rising temperatures than developed countries in the West. Nevertheless, doctors like Tafuna'i, who have long worked on the front lines of the crisis, have been among the first in the world to recognize the importance of arming doctors with the tools they need to both recognize how climate change will affect human health and to properly treat patients experiencing the health ramifications of a rapidly changing environment.

For many years, Tafuna'i was the only clinical lecturer at the National University of Samoa, a tiny medical school on the island of Upolu. She noticed that the school wasn't teaching students about climate change — an omnipresent issue on an island that is experiencing some of the most severe sea-level rise on the planet.

In recent years, as rising temperatures have triggered public health emergencies of growing magnitude all over the globe, medical professionals and research institutions in the West have begun to catch on.

Renee Salas, a doctor at Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston, remembers when the city was in the throes of a record-breaking heat wave in 2019. A team of emergency medical technicians arrived in an ambulance carrying an elderly gentleman suffering from heatstroke, the deadliest form of heat-related illness. The patient's rectal temperature was 106 degrees Fahrenheit (41 degrees Celsius), which meant death was imminent. The emergency workers told Salas that when they climbed up the stairs and opened the door to the man's apartment, it felt like they were being "hit with heat from the Sahara desert." The patient and his wife, who both lived in the apartment, didn't have air conditioning. Just one window was cracked open.

Salas and her team managed to save the man's life, but the incident still weighs on her. "I often think about that patient's wife who still remained in that same apartment," she said. "We know from data that more than one-third of heat-related deaths are due to climate change, and that is making that disease more likely."

Research

A year after that incident, in 2020, the Lancet, a premier medical journal, published a frightening assessment of the latest research and data on the intersection of warming and health — its "most worrying" outlook since the journal began publishing the assessments in 2016. Almost every indicator of health tracked by the dozens of interdisciplinary researchers who compiled the report, such as excess morbidity and mortality, showed evidence of climate stress. Two-thirds of the cities surveyed by the report said they "expected climate change to seriously compromise their public health assets and infrastructure."

In the US, networks and groups such as ClimateRx, the Medical Society Consortium on Climate and Health, and Climate MD have cropped up with the aim to bring "climate solutions to the bedside." Those efforts — which include teaching doctors how to recognize climate-related illnesses, such as tick-borne diseases and heatstroke, in patients and communicating about climate change with patients in a hospital setting — haven't been immune to typical growing pains. The disparate initiatives within the larger climate-and-health movement are disorganized, and there's no easy way for the various sects to share data and know-how. But that's starting to change.

In May, the National Institutes of Health funded a first-of-its-kind national Research Coordination Center on Climate and Health, based jointly at Harvard and Boston University. The research center, described as a "clearinghouse to facilitate data exchange and share best practices," provides a blueprint for what needs to happen on a global scale.

Meanwhile, doctors like Tafuna'i are sitting on years of knowledge about global warming's unbound potential to erode public health and stress health systems. Tafuna'i's experiences teaching students and treating patients in Samoa could serve to inform and educate countries that are just beginning to confront these challenges. But, thus far, there's been no indication that the West is looking to Samoa and other nations on the front lines of climate change for guidance.



A pregnant woman stands for a portrait in Dallas, Thursday, May 18, 2023. On Friday, Aug. 4, US health officials approved the first pill, Zurzuvae, specifically intended to treat severe depression after childbirth, a condition that affects thousands of new mothers in the U.S. each year. (AP)



The body of black bear is seen after being dragged outside after being shot and killed when it broke into a house early Thursday morning, Aug. 3, in Luther, Montana. (AP)

Discovery

Volcano spews ash cloud: A remote volcano in Alaska's Aleutian Islands that has been active in recent weeks spewed an ash cloud up to 30,000 feet (9,144 meters) in the sky on Friday, prompting warnings to pilots.

"Significant ash emissions" were possible for several hours following the unrest on Shishaldin Volcano, according to the Alaska Volcano Observatory.

Volcanic ash is angular and sharp enough for use as an industrial abrasive. The powdered rock can cause a jet engine to shut down.

The volcano is 679 miles (1,093 kilometers) southwest of Anchorage, near the center of Unimak Island, the largest island in the Aleutians.

About 40 people live in False Pass on the island's east side, and the National Weather Service issued a statement saying trace ashfall was possible around the village. (AP)

Norwegian climber retires: A Norwegian who just became the fastest climber to scale all the world's 14 highest mountains announced she was retiring from climbing high peaks on Saturday upon her return to Nepal.

Kristin Harila along with her Sherpa guide Tenjin were given a hero's welcome at the Kathmandu airport where hundreds including mountaineers, government officials and well-wishers gathered to welcome them back with cheers and flower garlands.

Harila and Tenjin scaled Mount K2 in Pakistan last week, thus concluding the climb of the 14th peak — that is more than 8,000 meters (about 26,000 feet) — high in 92 days, shattering the previous record of 189 days.

"I don't think I will try any eight-thousand meters for a while," Harila said. "I have done 28 eight-thousand meters in total so I think I have done my part."

The 37-year-old climber began the mission of setting a new record in April by scaling Mount Shishapangma followed by other peaks in China as well as Nepal, including Mount Everest. She then moved on to Pakistan to complete her list of climbs.

This year was her second attempt to set the record of becoming the fastest climber of the 14 peaks.

The last record for the fastest climb of the 14 peaks was held by **Nirmal Purja**, a Nepal-born British citizen who scaled them in 189 days in 2019, beating the previous record of more than seven years set by a South Korean climber. Purja's climbs were later adapted into a popular Netflix documentary, "14 Peaks: Nothing is Impossible." (AP)

Bear killed after break-in: A Montana couple got a late-night wakeup call from a barking dog alerting them that a black bear had broken into their living room before the man shot and killed the animal with a handgun.

The confrontation with the large bruin happened in the rural community of Luther at the base of the rugged Beartooth Mountains, where Thomas Bolckom and fiancée Seceley Oblander live with their two dogs.

After staying up late the night before — the couple was scheduled to fly that morning to Arizona for their bachelor and bachelorette parties — they awakened about 3 a.m. to their dog Maizey barking

furiously upstairs from the house's main floor, Oblander said.

Bolckom, 27, a commercial painter and elk hunter, went to investigate and tried to coax the lab-pit bull mix downstairs when he turned around "and there's this black bear standing in the living room five feet away," Oblander said.

Wearing only a t-shirt and underwear, Bolckom ran back downstairs, got a handgun and returned to the living room where he shot the bear. It ran into another room

Health

2 lots of Tydemy birth control pills under recall

US approves postpartum depression pill

WASHINGTON, Aug. 5, (AP) — Federal health officials have approved the first pill specifically intended to treat severe depression after childbirth, a condition that affects thousands of new mothers in the US each year.

The Food and Drug Administration on Friday granted approval of the drug, Zurzuvae, for adults experiencing severe depression related to childbirth or pregnancy. The pill is taken once a day for 14 days.

"Having access to an oral medication will be a beneficial option for many of these women coping with extreme, and sometimes life-threatening, feelings," said Dr. Tiffany Farchione, FDA's director of psychiatric drugs, in a statement.

Postpartum depression affects an estimated 400,000 people a year, and while it often ends on its own within a couple weeks, it can continue for months or even years. Standard treatment includes counseling or antidepressants, which can take weeks to work and don't help everyone.

The new pill is from Sage Therapeutics, which has a similar infused drug that's given intravenously over three days in a medical facility. The FDA approved that drug in 2019, though it isn't widely used because of its \$34,000 price tag and the logistics of administering it.

The FDA's pill approval is based on two company studies that showed women who took Zurzuvae had fewer signs of depression over a four- to six-week period when compared with those who received a dummy pill. The benefits, measured using a psychiatric test, appeared within three days for many patients.

Antidepressant

Sahar McMahon, 39, had never experienced depression until after the birth of her second daughter in late 2021. She agreed to enroll in a study of the drug, known chemically as zuranolone, after realizing she no longer wanted to spend time with her children.

"I planned my pregnancies, I knew I wanted those kids but I didn't want to interact with them," said McMahon, who lives in New York City. She says her mood and outlook started improving within days of taking the first pills.

"It was a quick transition for me just waking up and starting to feel like myself again," she said.

Dr. Kimberly Yonkers of Yale University said the Zurzuvae effect is "strong" and the drug likely will be prescribed for women who haven't responded to antidepressants. She wasn't involved in testing the drug.

Still, she said, the FDA should have required Sage to submit more follow-up data on how women fared after additional months.

"The problem is we don't know what happens after 45 days," said Yonkers, a psychiatrist who specializes in postpartum depression. "It could be that people are well or it could be that they relapse."

Sage did not immediately announce how it would price the pill, and Yonkers said that'll be a key factor in how widely its prescribed.

Side effects with the new drug are milder than the IV version, and include drowsiness and dizziness. The drug was co-developed with fellow Mas-

Cyberattack disrupts hospitals, health care services across US

MANCHESTER, Conn., Aug. 5, (AP) — Hospitals and clinics in several states on Friday began the time-consuming process of recovering from a cyberattack that disrupted their computer systems, forcing some emergency rooms to shut down and ambulances to be diverted.

Many primary care services at facilities run by Prospect Medical Holdings remained closed on Friday as security experts worked to determine the extent of the problem and resolve it.

John Riggi, the American Hospital Association's national advisory for cybersecurity and risk, said the recovery process can often take weeks, with hospitals in the meantime reverting to paper systems and humans to do things such as monitor equipment and run records between departments.

"These are threat-to-life crimes, which risk not only the safety of the patients within the hospital, but also risk the safety of the entire community that depends on the availability of that emergency department to be there," Riggi said.

The latest "data security incident" began Thursday at facilities operated by Prospect, which is based in California and has hospitals and clinics there and in Texas, Connecticut, Rhode Island and Pennsylvania.

"Upon learning of this, we took our systems offline to protect them and launched an investigation with the help of third-party cybersecurity specialists," the company said in a statement Friday. "While our investigation continues, we are focused

on addressing the pressing needs of our patients as we work diligently to return to normal operations as quickly as possible."

The White House has been monitoring the cyberattack, said Adrienne Watson, a spokesperson for the National Security Council.

Watson also said in a statement that "the Department of Health and Human Services has been in contact with the company to offer federal assistance, and we are ready to provide support as needed to prevent any disruption to patient care as a result of this incident."

In Connecticut, the emergency departments at Manchester Memorial and Rockville General hospital were closed for much of Thursday and patients were diverted to other nearby medical centers.

"We have a national Prospect team working and evaluating the impact of the attack on all of the organizations," Jillian Menzel, chief operating officer for the Eastern Connecticut Health Network, said in a statement.

The FBI in Connecticut issued a statement saying it is working with "law enforcement partners and the victim entities" but could not comment further on an ongoing investigation.

The incident had all the hallmarks of an extortion ransomware but officials would neither confirm nor deny this. In such attacks, criminals steal sensitive data from targeted networks, activate encryption malware that paralyzes them and demand ransoms.

sachusetts pharmaceutical company Biogen.

Both the pill and IV forms mimic a derivative of progesterone, the naturally occurring female hormone needed to maintain a pregnancy. Levels of the hormone can plunge after childbirth.

Sage's drugs are part of an emerging class of medications dubbed neurosteroids. These stimulate a different brain pathway than older antidepressants that target serotonin, the chemical linked to mood and emotions.

Also:

NEW YORK: Federal regulators are warning consumers that now-recalled lots of the Tydemy birth control pill "may have reduced effectiveness" due to decreased levels of a key ingredient of the product.

Lupin Pharmaceuticals, which manufactures Tydemy, notified customers on Saturday that it was voluntarily recalling two batches of the oral contraceptive — after one lot tested low for ascorbic acid and high "for a known impurity."

Inadequate ascorbic acid "could potentially impact the effectiveness" of the birth control, Lupin said in a company announcement published by the Food and Drug Administration, which could result in unexpected pregnancy.

In an addition alert published by the

FDA on Tuesday, regulators confirmed that no reports of adverse effects related to the recalled lots of Tydemy had been reported to date.

Even though this recall impacts just two batches of one brand, it's important for people using Tydemy birth control pills to check their stock — and contact a health care provider if needed.

The Tydemy lots under recall were distributed across the US from June 2022 through May 2023. The products can be identified by their lot codes — L200183 and L201560 — and expiration dates of January 2024 and September 2024, respectively.

Lupin is instructing Tydemy patients to continue taking their medication — and immediately contact a health care provider "for advice regarding an alternative contraceptive method," the FDA said, if their birth control was impacted by the recall or if they experience any problems taking the product.

According to Lupin's announcement last week, the company is also notifying wholesalers, distributors, pharmacies and other retailers and is arranging for the return for all of the products impacted by the recall. Contact information for reimbursement requests can be found on the recall notice.

The Associated Press reached out to Lupin for additional comment Thursday.



Purja



Harila

so he shot the bear several more times. The animal had broken in through a screened window, Oblander, 26, said it had no other way out and was between Bolckom and the door.

"I never thought there would be a bear in our house, so that was quite the wakeup call at three in the morning," she said. "I just stayed downstairs with the dogs, trying to help keep them out of the way and let Tom handle it. He did a great job." (AP)

SPORTS

Mystics snap 3-game losing streak

Ionescu makes 6 3-pointers, Liberty dominate Minnesota

MINNEAPOLIS, Aug 5, (AP): Sabrina Ionescu scored 18 points on six 3-pointers, Breanna Stewart added 17 points and the New York Liberty beat the Minnesota Lynx 76-66 on Friday night.

New York (21-6) has won three straight since dropping a home game to Minnesota on July 28. Ionescu had 31 points and seven 3-pointers in that game.

Ionescu finished with six of New York's nine 3-pointers in the rematch. The Liberty struggled from the field, shooting just 40%, but dominated the paint. New York out-rebounded Minnesota 43-32, including 16 offensive rebounds that led to 25 second-chance points.

New York also held Minnesota to just 24 second-half points.

Betnijah Laney scored 17 points and Jonquel Jones had 15 points and 17 rebounds for New York. Courtney Vandersloot had a team-high seven assists.

BASKETBALL

Minnesota star Napheesa Collier played her first game since dropping 24 points and 11 rebounds on July 26. She was out with a right ankle sprain.

Collier had 18 points and eight rebounds and Kayla McBride added 14 points for Minnesota (13-15). Lindsay Allen added nine points and 10 assists.

Mystics 79, Sparks 77

In Washington, Tianna Hawkins scored 17 points, Queen Egbo added 15 and the Washington Mystics beat the Los Angeles Sparks to snap a three-game losing streak.

Natasha Cloud put Washington ahead 75-67 with 3:28 remaining in the fourth quarter before Los Angeles scored the next six points to get within 75-73. Hawkins ended Washington's scoring drought on a fast-break layup with 39 seconds left for a four-point lead. After Los Angeles went 1 of 2 from the free-throw line, Cloud sealed it by

making two free throws with 8.1 seconds left.

Shatori Walker-Kimbrough scored 11 points, and Cloud and Li Meng each finished with 10 points for Washington (13-13), which was coming off a three-game road swing.

Washington led 48-40 at halftime as the Sparks shot just 43% from the field and turned it over 10 times. Los Angeles finished with 16 turnovers.

Azura Stevens had 19 points while Nneka Ogwumike added 18 for Los Angeles (9-18). Dearica Hamby scored 14 points and Zia Cooke had 10 points.

Washington hosts Los Angeles again on Sunday.

Sun 88, Fever 72

In Indianapolis, Tiffany Hayes scored 18 points, DeWanna Bonner added 14 and the Connecticut Sun beat the Indiana Fever.

Connecticut dominated the first half. The Sun scored 13 straight points in the first quarter to take an early 20-10 lead. Bonner, Hayes and Natisha Hiedeman combined for 26 of Connecticut's 31 points in the first quarter, while the Fever scored 22 points.

The Sun extended their lead to 56-33 by halftime after shooting 66% from the field, including making 7 of 13 3-pointers. Bonner had 11 points in the first half and Hiedeman added 10.

The Sun scored the final nine points of the third quarter after Indiana got within 65-54 and cruised in the fourth.

Alyssa Thomas, coming off back-to-back games with a triple-double, had 11 points, seven rebounds and eight assists for Connecticut (20-7). Dijonai Carrington also scored 11 points and Olivia Nelson-Osoda had 10 points, 10 rebounds and four assists.

Aliyah Boston had 19 points and eight rebounds for Fever (7-20). Kelsey Mitchell added 13 points, Erica Wheeler had 12 and Emma Cannon scored 11.

Sky 104, Wings 89

In Arlington, Kahleah Copper and Courtney Williams each scored 25 points, Alanna Smith added 20 and the Chicago Sky beat the Dallas Wings to spoil Natasha Howard's first career triple-double.

Williams made a career-high five 3-pointers, on just six attempts, and Copper made all four of her 3-pointers. Chicago was 14 of 24 from behind the arc and shot 55% overall in reaching 100-plus points for the second straight game.

Howard finished with 28 points, 12 rebounds and 10 assists for just the third triple-double in Dallas' franchise history.

Williams made back-to-back 3-pointers to put Chicago ahead 95-76 midway through the fourth quarter. Her third 3-pointer of the quarter put Chicago into triple-digits for the third time this season.

Marina Mabrey added 16 points, five rebounds and four assists for Chicago (11-15).

Satou Sabally scored 18 points for Dallas (15-12). Arike Ogunbowale was held to 11 points on 4-of-16 shooting and Maddy Siegrist had 10 points.

Braves shut out Cubs



Baltimore Orioles starting pitcher Dean Kremer throws to the New York Mets in the first inning of a baseball game in Baltimore. (AP)

Thomas hits 2nd homer of the game, Nationals beat Reds

CINCINNATI, Aug 5, (AP): Lane Thomas hit his second homer of the game in the 10th inning to seal the Washington Nationals' 6-3 victory over the Cincinnati Reds on Friday night.

Thomas' two-run shot, his team-leading 18th of the season, came off closer Alexis Díaz (3-3) and followed a run-scoring double by Jake Alu that broke a 3-3 tie.

A two-run homer by Joey Meneses off Reds starter Graham Ashcraft tied it in the eighth. The Reds had led since the first inning behind strong pitching from Ashcraft and three solo homers.

Nick Senzel and Matt McLain homered on back-to-back pitches from Nationals starter Patrick Corbin with one out in the first.

Then Elly De La Cruz rocketed a line drive into the left-field seats to put the Reds up 3-0 in the third. His ninth homer of the season was also the first one he's hit from the right side of the plate.

Braves 8, Cubs 0

In Chicago, Max Fried dominated through six innings in his return from a strained left forearm, Sean Murphy and Marcell Ozuna homered on back-to-back pitches in Atlanta's seven-run fourth inning and the Braves cooled off Chicago.

BASEBALL

Fried allowed three baserunners, all on singles, in his first start since May 5.

Austin Riley added a deep solo shot in the seventh for major league-leading Atlanta, which has won three straight and six of seven.

Fried (3-1), a runner-up for the NL Cy Young Award last season, struck out eight before exiting after 72 pitches. The wiry 29-year-old left-hander retired the first 12 with no hard contact before Cody Bellinger singled to lead off the fifth.

Rangers 6, Marlins 2

In Arlington, Adolis García hit two drastically different solo homers. Corey Seager also went deep and newly acquired left-hander Jordan Montgomery worked into the seventh inning to help Texas beat Miami.

García put the Rangers ahead to stay when he went the opposite way with a high-arching 334-foot homer just inside the right-field pole for a 3-2 lead in the third. In the sixth, the slugger known as "El Bombi" hit a 433-foot drive that landed in the second deck of seats above the visitors bullpen in left-center. His 27th and 28th homers of the season increased his AL-leading RBI total to 88.

A day after three-time Cy Young Award winner Max Scherzer won in his first game with the Rangers, their other new starter acquired before the trade deadline struck out six, walked one and allowed two runs before leaving two batters into the seventh. Texas got Montgomery (7-9) and reliever Chris Stratton from St. Louis on Sunday.

Orioles 10, Mets 3

In Baltimore, James McCann had three hits and five RBIs and Jordan Westburg hit a three-run homer to help Baltimore rout the Mets in New York manager Buck Showalter's return to Camden Yards. Showalter received a video tribute and a standing ovation from the fans in Baltimore, where he managed from 2010-2018 and guided the Orioles to three postseason appearances. Then the AL East leaders won for the sixth time in eight games to stay two ahead of Tampa Bay.

Ryan O'Hearn hit an RBI single

off Phil Bickford (2-4) to break a 2-all tie in the sixth - Westburg, who was running on the pitch, scored all the way from first. McCann added a two-run double later in the inning, and Adley Rutschman hit a sacrifice fly.

Dodgers 10, Padres 5

In San Diego, Chris Taylor and pinch-hitter J.D. Martinez drew consecutive bases-loaded walks during a Padres bullpen meltdown in the five-run eighth inning that lifted NL West-leading Los Angeles to its sixth straight victory against San Diego.

The Dodgers won their fourth straight game overall and kept the Padres from reaching .500 for the first time since May 11. Since losing 5-2 to the Padres on May 5, the Dodgers have outscored the Padres 29-12 in the six straight wins.

Rookie center fielder James Outman had a big game for the Dodgers, robbing star Fernando Tatis Jr. of a homer with a spectacular leaping catch and then connecting for his 13th homer.

Mariners 9, Angels 7

In Anaheim, Eugenio Suárez provided the go-ahead run in the eighth inning and set a Seattle franchise record with his 10th straight game with an RBI as the Mariners beat Los Angeles in a slugfest where the teams combined for seven home runs.

Ty France, Dylan Moore, Julio Rodríguez and Cal Raleigh went deep for Seattle, which had its sixth four-homer game of the season. The Mariners have won three straight and five of their last six.

Luis Rengifo, Mike Moustakas and Mickey Moniak homered for the Angels. They have lost four straight.

Suárez put Seattle up 8-7 with a base hit up the middle off Reynaldo López (2-6) to bring home Rodríguez. Suárez broke the previous consecutive RBI mark of nine, which was set by Edgar Martínez in 1995. Raleigh provided some insurance with a solo shot in the ninth.

Astros 7, Yankees 3

In New York, Yainer Diaz hit a three-run homer in the first inning off a struggling Luis Severino, Jordan Alvarez homered in the fifth to knock out the right-hander and Houston beat New York.

Rookie Hunter Brown (8-7) won consecutive starts for the first time since April, allowing two runs and five hits in six innings. Brown struck out four, walked one and got eight groundouts - three on the first pitch.

Kyle Tucker added a two-out two-run RBI double in the sixth and stole two bases. Alex Bregman had the other RBI for the Astros when he was hit in the back by Severino's fastball with the bases loaded in the second.

Pirates 8, Brewers 4

In Milwaukee, Alfonso Rivas had a three-run homer and a triple among his three hits, leading Pittsburgh past Milwaukee.

Rivas was playing his second

game for the Pirates since being acquired from San Diego on Tuesday.

Bryan Reynolds also went 3 for 5 with a homer, and Henry Davis and Josh Palacios also went deep for the Pirates. Palacios and Reynolds hit back-to-back homers off Bryse Wilson in the sixth inning to extend Pittsburgh's lead to 8-3.

Rays 8, Tigers 0

In Detroit, Jose Siri homered and in three runs, Zack Littell won his second straight start and Tampa Bay routed Detroit.

Littell (2-2) have up three hits and a walk in six innings.

Harold Ramirez had three hits and scored twice, and former Tiger Isaac Paredes had two hits and two RBIs. The Rays won for the fourth time in five games.

Blue Jays 7, Red Sox 3

In Boston, Davis Schneider homered in his first major league at-bat and Toronto tied its season high with five home runs to beat Boston.

Whit Merrifield, Vladimir Guerrero Jr., Daulton Varsho and Matt Chapman also went deep to help the Blue Jays increase their lead over Boston for the third and final AL wild-card spot.

Toronto starter Alek Manoah (3-8) pitched 6 2/3 innings. He allowed three runs and struck out five.



Thomas

Merrifield hit a towering fly ball off James Paxton (6-3) on the game's first pitch that had plenty of carry for his 14th career lead-off home run. Two batters later, Guerrero blasted a no-doubt shot of his own for Toronto's second solo home run of the inning.

Royals 7, Phillies 5

In Philadelphia, Bobby Witt Jr. homered and stole a base, Michael Massey also went deep and Kansas City beat Philadelphia for its seventh straight victory.

Witt became the first player in MLB history with at least 20 home runs and 30 stolen bases in each of his first two seasons. Dairon Blanco drove in three runs and stole three bases for Kansas City.

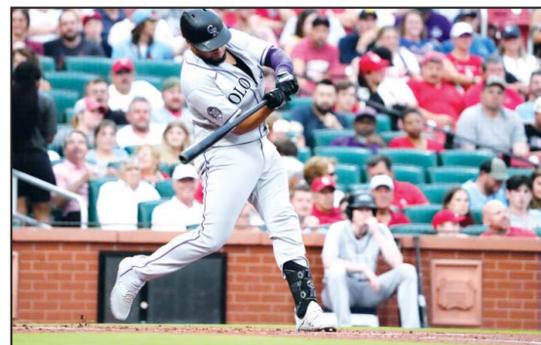
Nick Castellanos homered for the Phillies, who opened a 10-game homestand. Philadelphia began play holding the second wild-card spot in a tightly bunched playoff race.

Twins 3, Diamondbacks 2

In Minneapolis, Michael A. Taylor homered to lead off the seventh inning, the third solo shot of the game for Minnesota in its victory over Arizona.

Jorge Polanco and Max Kepler went deep against Diamondbacks starter Merrill Kelly, who otherwise cruised through six innings with nine strikeouts.

Taylor greeted Scott McGough (1-7) with an opposite-field drive off a 1-2 fastball into the flower boxes above the limestone facade



Colorado Rockies' Elias Diaz hits a two-run single during the first inning of a baseball game against the St. Louis Cardinals in St. Louis. (AP)

MLB Results/Standings

WASHINGTON, Aug 5, (AP): Results and standings from the MLB games on Friday.

Team	Opponent	Score
Tampa Bay	8 Detroit	0
Cleveland	4 Chicago W. Sox	2
Toronto	7 Boston	3
Houston	7 NY Yankees	3
Kansas City	7 Philadelphia	5
Baltimore	10 NY Mets	3
Texas	6 Miami	2
Minnesota	3 Arizona	2
Seattle	9 LA Angels	7
Atlanta	8 Chicago Cubs	0
Washington	6 Cincinnati	10
Colorado	9 St. Louis	4
Pittsburgh	8 Milwaukee	4
LA Dodgers	10 San Diego	5

American League

Team	W	L	Pct	GB
Baltimore	68	42	.618	-
Tampa Bay	67	45	.598	-
Toronto	61	50	.550	7-1/2
Boston	57	52	.523	10-1/2
New York	57	53	.518	11

National League

Team	W	L	Pct	GB
Atlanta	70	37	.651	-
Philadelphia	59	51	.536	12-1/2
Miami	58	53	.523	14
New York	50	59	.459	21
Washington	47	63	.427	24-1/2

Central Division

Team	W	L	Pct	GB
Milwaukee	59	52	.532	-
Cincinnati	59	53	.527	-1/2
Chicago	56	54	.509	2-1/2
Pittsburgh	49	60	.450	9
St. Louis	48	63	.432	11

West Division

Team	W	L	Pct	GB
Los Angeles	63	45	.583	-
San Francisco	61	49	.555	3
Arizona	57	54	.514	7-1/2
San Diego	54	56	.491	10
Colorado	43	66	.394	20-1/2

beyond right field that put the Twins in front.

Johan Duran recorded his 20th save in 24 tries for the Twins, the flame-throwing closer's latest shaky finish.

Guardians 4, White Sox 2

In Cleveland, Andrés Giménez hit a two-run homer among his career-high three extra-base hits, Logan Allen earned his first home victory in more than three months and Cleveland beat Chicago.

Giménez fouled off the first two pitches of his at-bat in the fifth inning, attempting to lay down a bunt and move Steven Kwan to second base. He then swung away, sending a fastball from Mike Clevinger (4-5) into the right field stands to break a 2-all tie.

Allen (5-4) allowed two runs and four hits over six innings, snapping a six-start winless streak at Progressive Field. The left-hander, who struck out five and walked four, had not won at home since going six innings in his major league debut against Miami on April 23.

Emmanuel Clase worked the ninth for his 29th save, tying Baltimore's Felix Bautista for the AL lead.

Rockies 9, Cardinals 4

In St. Louis, Nolan Jones had four hits and three RBIs and Colorado beat St. Louis in a matchup of last-place clubs.

Elias Diaz had two hits and drove in two runs as Colorado won for just the third time in nine games. The Rockies finished with 15 hits.

Nolan Gorman hit two solo homers for St. Louis, which has dropped six of eight.

Cardinals right-hander Adam Wainwright (3-6) was tagged for seven runs and nine hits in three innings. He remains stuck on 198 career wins in his final season.

Chris Flexen (1-5) was the winner.



Indiana Fever's Kristy Wallace shoots during the second half of a WNBA basketball game in Indianapolis. (AP)

Richest annual agreement in NBA history

Davis, Lakers agree on 3-year, \$186m extension

LAS VEGAS, Aug 5, (AP): Anthony Davis is under contract to the Los Angeles Lakers for the next five seasons, after agreeing to an extension that comes with the highest per-season average salary in NBA history.

Davis and the Lakers have agreed on a three-year, \$186 million contract extension, Klutch Sports CEO Rich Paul said Friday. ESPN first reported that the Lakers and Davis struck the deal.

At an average value of \$62 million per season, the extension becomes the richest annual agreement in league history, surpassing the average of \$60.8 million per season that Boston Celtics wing Jaylen Brown got last month as part of his five-year supermax deal worth up to \$304 million.

Davis is an eight-time All-Star and four-time All-NBA selection and was picked to the league's 75th anniversary team. He is coming off a season in which he averaged 25.9 points, 12.5 rebounds and 2.6 assists on a career-best 56% shooting - numbers that represent one of the best years of his career.

The deal takes effect with

the 2025-26 season. Davis will make about \$40.6 million this coming season, then \$43.2 million in 2024-25 - before the extension kicks in and carries through 2027-28. It will push Davis' career on-court earnings to roughly \$500 million by the time the contract expires, and in the final three years of the deal he'll make about \$750,000 for every regular-season game on the Lakers' schedule.

The Lakers are 117-77 (a .603 winning percentage) in regular-season games in which Davis has played during his four seasons with the club; they're 53-60 (a .469 winning percentage) in the 113 games that he has missed in that span.

BASKETBALL

When healthy, he and LeBron James are still one of the most formidable 1-2 punches in the NBA. They led the Lakers to the 2020 NBA title and helped the team reach the Western Conference finals this past season - where they were swept by eventual champion Denver.

"We are trending in the right direction," Davis said when last season ended. "Obviously, the goal is to win championships, and we wanted to be not just knocking on the door but actually get it done, walk through the door. So that's our goal. That's our goal every time we step on the floor for training camp, and I'm 100 percent sure that will be the goal next year."

Over his first 11 seasons, Davis has averaged 24 points and 10.4 rebounds. He has scored at least 50 points in a game five times, not counting the 52 points he had in the 2017 All-Star Game - which was a record until Boston's Jayson Tatum scored 55 in the All-Star Game this past February.

USA Basketball assembles what it calls a select team to practice with and scrimmage against its national team before big events like the World Cup and the Olympics, while hoping those games become a real test.

Mission accomplished.

CHANGE OF NAME
I Huzefa holder of Indian Passport No **T8209865** Having Permanent Address (201,204 Al Rahem Apartment, Opp Tekrawala masjid, Ambawadi kalipul, Surat, Gujarat, India-395003) Residing In Kuwait at present ,herby declare that Hence Forth my name will be Read As under given name **Huzefa Husain** and Surname **Bhinderwala**

Change Name

I, **RAEDMAHDY ABDUL RASHID KAZI** holder of Indian Passport No. **U0191652** having permanent address: **Atpo:Karoshi, Tal:Chikodi, Dist:Belagavi, Pin:591226, Karnataka, India** residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as under: **RAED MAHDY**

Fiji win Pacific Nations Cup after easily handling 14-man Japan

NZ rally from 17-3 down to beat Australia in 2nd Bledisloe Cup test

DUNEDIN, New Zealand, Aug. 5, (AP) — Tries on debut to winger Shaun Stevenson and backrower Samipeni Finau helped the All Blacks rally from 17-3 down at halftime to beat the Wallabies 23-20 in the second Bledisloe Cup match on Saturday, their last home test before the Rugby World Cup.

The Wallabies stunned the All Blacks with two tries in the first seven minutes and had the majority of possession in the first half while the All Blacks worked off scraps. Hard running, good offloads and quick work at the breakdown also had the All Blacks on the back foot through most of the half.

Scrumhalf Tate McDermott was influential in his first match as Wallabies captain. The All Blacks were forced to make more than 100 tackles, the Wallabies barely a third as many.

But the second half belonged to the All Blacks who won the match with a Richie Mo'unga penalty in the final moments.

Head coach Ian Foster made a dozen changes to his match 23 after New Zealand's 38-7 win in the first test in Melbourne last weekend which secured the Bledisloe Cup for the 21st straight year. Stevenson was one of three players on debut and there was an obvious lack of combination and communication early among the All Blacks team.

The All Blacks were lucky to limit the Wallabies' lead to only 14 points at halftime. They came out determined to turn things around in the second half and within four minutes Stevenson had scored his first test try.

The whole tenor of the match changed and it was the All Blacks who were mostly in possession, inside the Wallabies and constantly pressing.

After winger Leicester Fainga'anuku lost the ball over the goal line in the 55th minute, replacement flyhalf Richie Mo'unga kicked a penalty for the All Blacks which made the score 17-13.

Mo'unga settled the All Blacks after a first half in which Damian McKenzie too often kicked away possession. New Zealand also ran on a new front row and that made a major difference. The All Blacks had struggled in set pieces in the first half but

came on at flyhalf for the Wallabies and kicked a penalty from halfway to level the score at 20-20.

But Cooper knocked the ball on in the 78th minute and from the ensuing scrum, the All Blacks won a penalty. Mo'unga stepped up and with a minute on the clock calmly slotted the winning goal.

"That was a proper test match," All Blacks captain Sam Cane said. "That first half they fired all the shots and we were just hanging in there and they took it to us in a big way."

"I'm really proud of the composure and the way we fought our way back in the second half. That's a great test match and it was a great test for us as a group."

The All Blacks now have won all

four of their tests this season against Argentina, South Africa and Australia (twice). Australia has lost all four against the same teams but will take some heart from their performance on Saturday.

□ □ □

Another red card cost Japan as it succumbed to Fiji by a flattering 35-12 in the Pacific Nations Cup decider at Prince Chichibu rugby stadium.

Japan flanker Pieter Labuschagne was sent off in the seventh minute. Fiji already led 7-0 and went on to 21-0 by halftime.

Fiji had three tries in the second half disallowed and led 28-0 going into the last 10 minutes. That's when Japan scored a couple of tries to Fijian-born wingers Jone Naika-

bula and Semisi Masirewa around a yellow card for Fiji fullback Sireli Maqala. But Fiji had the last say with a fifth try and second for replacement scrumhalf Frank Lomani.

Fiji won the Pacific Nations Cup for the sixth time in the last nine tournaments.

But Japan's fate was decided early when Labuschagne, in his first test since November, was marched for an upright tackle. The same tackle into an opponent's head caused a red card for Michael Leitch against Samoa two weeks ago. Japan lost 24-22.

But Fiji was a step up in class.

In the first half, center and captain Waisea Nayacalevu scored from a counterattack early, the forwards showed their power to get prop Eroni

Mawi across, and scrumhalf Simone Kuruvoli was rewarded for a one-sided scrum.

Fiji heads to Europe to wind up its preparations for the rugby World Cup against tournament host France on Aug. 19 in Nantes and England on Aug. 26 at Twickenham.

Japan's last warmup is against Italy on Aug. 26 in Treviso.

In Apia, Samoa rebounded from a heavy home loss to Fiji last weekend by thrashing Tonga 34-9, scoring four tries to none. Samoa took control after holding a slender 13-9 lead at halftime, thanks to successive tries by flanker Miracle Fai'ilagi off a rolling maul, center Duncan Paia'aua and replacement scrumhalf Melani Matavoa from a lineup error.

RUGBY

dominated in the second when their discipline also was markedly better.

They conceded first-half penalties which cost them momentum but when they were the Wallabies were on retreat it was the visitors who were most heavily penalized.

After flyhalf Carden Gordon had kicked three from three in the first half, he hit the post in his first attempt in the second. The All Blacks then broke out: A strong scrum, a penalty and they were knocking again at the Wallabies goal line.

After numerous phases, Aaron Smith passed to Finau at pace and he crashed across under the posts. The All Blacks led for the first time, 20-17.

It was short-lived. Quade Cooper



New Zealand's Leicester Fainga'anuku is tackled by Australia's Mark Nawaqanitawase during the Bledisloe Cup rugby test match between the All Blacks and Australia in Dunedin, New Zealand. (AP)



Kotaro Matsushima of Japan tried to pass the ball against Simone Kuruvoli (right), of Fiji during a Pacific Nations Cup rugby match in Tokyo, Japan. (AP)

Valente gives US 2nd gold medal in as many days at cycling worlds

Hinze rallies for 500-meter time trial title

GLASGOW, Aug. 5, (AP) — Jennifer Valente kept the Americans atop the podium at the cycling world championships.

The Olympic champion in the multidiscipline omnium, Valente bided her time in the peloton for most of the 40-lap endurance event known as the scratch race. But with one lap to go, the 28-year-old from San Diego sprinted around the outside of Poland's Daria Pikulik in Turns 1 and 2, then held off Dutch rider Maïke van der Duin at the line to capture the gold medal.

New Zealand's Michaela Drummond beat out reigning champ Martina Fidanza of Italy for bronze.

CYCLING

"At the very beginning of the competition, there's a lot of racing to go," said Valente, who is also part of the U.S. pursuit team and will be contesting the Madison, elimination race, points race and the omnium during a busy stay in Glasgow, Scotland.

Valente was second in the scratch race in 2020 and third two years ago in Roubaix, France.

"It's really exciting," Valente said, "but just trying to refocus, actually, on the rest of the races."

In the men's team sprint, and a rematch of last year's final, the Dutch team of Roy van den Berg, Harrie Lavreysen and Jeffrey Hoogland avenged its loss to Australia by the slimmest of margins - 35 hundredths of a second for the three-lap race.

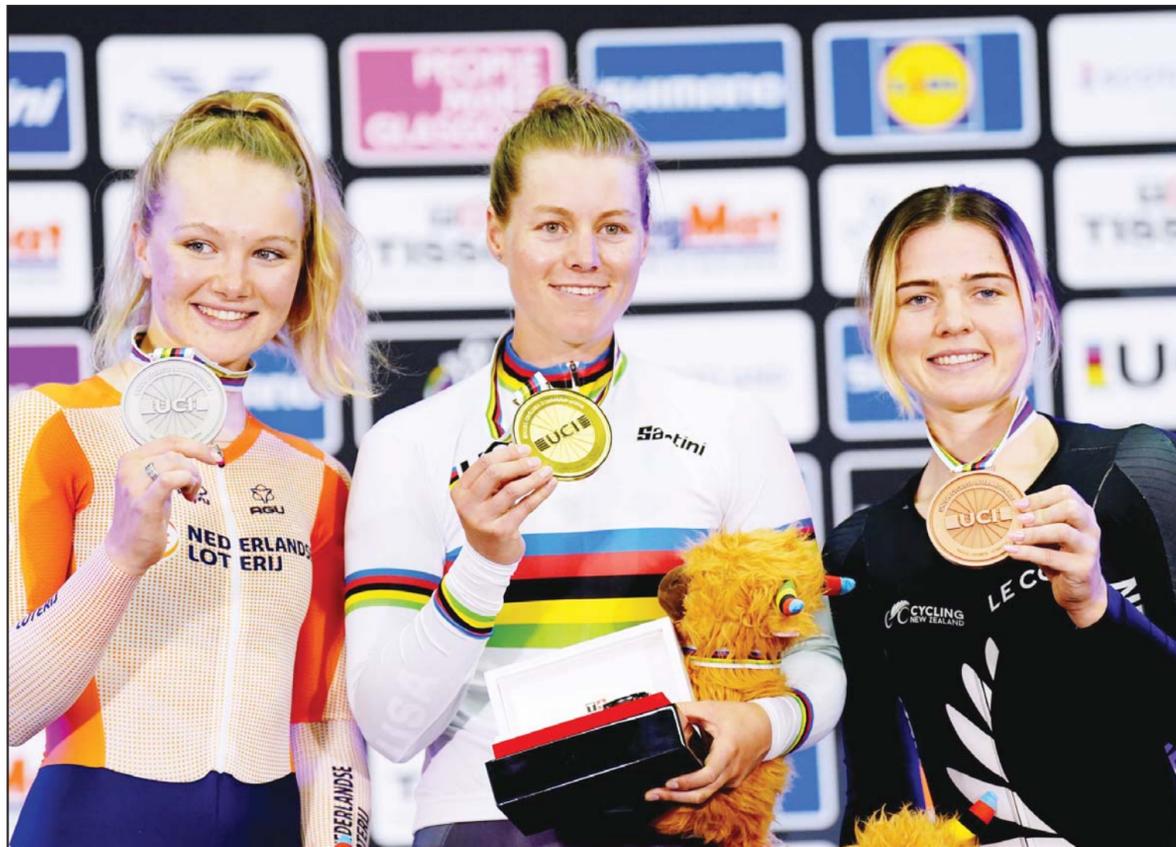
The Netherlands led by a tenth of a second after the first lap, but the Australian team of Matthew Richardson, Leigh Hoffman and Matthew Glaetzer clawed most of the gap back by the bell lap. That left Hoogland and Glaetzer in a one-lap sprint for gold, and the Dutch rider narrowly clipped his Australian rival to capture his fifth team sprint world title.

"I looked at the scoreboard and I saw that we were a little behind, then we were in front, then we were behind," said van den Berg, who peeled off first and anxiously watched the times for the last two laps. "It was a rollercoaster of emotions."

"It feels good to have that jersey back," added Lavreysen, part of the Dutch team that won Olympic gold in Tokyo in 2021.

France rallied from a slow start to defeat Britain for the bronze medal.

In the women's 500-meter time trial, sprint star Emma Hinze



USA's Jennifer Valente (center), celebrates on the podium after winning gold in the Women's Elite Scratch Race, alongside Netherlands' Maïke van der Duin (left), who won silver and New Zealand's Michaela Drummond, who won bronze, during day two of the 2023 UCI Cycling World Championships at the Sir Chris Hoy Velodrome, Glasgow, Scotland. (AP)

of Germany trailed Australia's Kristina Clonan after the first of two laps inside the Sir Chris Hoy Velodrome. But the six-time world champion in various events rallied over the second lap, stopping the clock in 32.820 seconds to add a seventh rainbow jersey to her closet by a tenth of a second.

Clonan, a former runner who transitioned to cycling, took the silver medal. Lea Friedrich gave Germany a second rider on the medal stand when the 2021 world champion edged Britain's Sophie Capewell for bronze.

Last year's world champion, Taky Marie-Divine Kouame of France, failed to qualify for the finals.

Meanwhile, the golden ride by reigning omnium world champion Valente built on a fast start for the Americans in Scotland.

One day earlier, Valente's team pursuit teammate Chloe Dygert roared to dominant win in the individual pursuit, lapping her opponent in the finals of their 12-lap race. And earlier, Valente and Dygert joined Olivia Cummins and Lily Williams in posting the third-fastest time in team pursuit qualifying.

Dygert also has a busy world championships program with the road race and time trial still to come.

Purdy feels 'normal' as he works his way back from surgery

SANTA CLARA, Calif., Aug. 5, (AP) — Brock Purdy knows the process of getting ready for the season after major elbow surgery in the offseason is a deliberate one with each day providing a new test.

He got an unexpected one earlier this week when teammate Clelin Ferrell hit his surgically repaired throwing arm as he attempted a throw, knocking the ball out and causing San Francisco 49ers coach Kyle Shanahan to "to hold my breath so I didn't lose my mind." For Purdy, it was just another play on his road back to being

the starting quarterback.

"I feel like as a coach, a teammate watching, yeah, they might be scared about that, especially how things ended last year with my arm," Purdy said Friday. "But, honestly for myself, it's just football. I wasn't even thinking about it. He hit the ball out of my hand and I was going through to finish the throw and the ball ended up being on the ground. It's football. Was I mad at Clelin or anything like that? I told him, 'Dude, it's football. I get it. We're in a competing environment. Things happen.' But for myself, was I scared about it? Was I timid after

that? No."

Purdy tore the ligament in his throwing elbow in the NFC title game loss at Philadelphia on Jan. 29 and underwent surgery in March. He began throwing in late May and has been taking part in two out of every three practices since training camp opened last month. Purdy said he doesn't feel like he needs more milestones along the comeback like taking his first hit in a game from an opponent to himself that he has full recovered.

"For me I feel like normal when I'm out there, so I feel like I just got to get into a rhythm and play and go through

FOOTBALL

progressions and just play quarterback," he said. "It's not really, 'Hey, I have to get tackled here just so I feel good about my arm.' There's nothing like that, that goes through my mind. So, I just play football. I go through my reads, and I feel normal."

After showing some signs of rust early in camp as he worked his way back from the surgery, Purdy has looked sharper in recent days.

He got his most extensive work during a heavy practice Friday. He connected on a deep TD pass to Deebo Samuel in practice Friday and had eight straight completions at one point during team drills. His one big mistake Friday came when he was pressured by Ferrell and threw a short pass that was intercepted by Tashaun Gipson.

Capitals sign power Wilson

Pens forward Guentzel to miss at least 3 months after right surgery

PITTSBURGH, Aug. 5, (AP) — Pittsburgh Penguins forward Jake Guentzel is out at least three months after undergoing right ankle surgery.

Penguins general manager/president

of hockey operations Kyle Dubas said Guentzel had the surgery on Wednesday. The 28-year-old Guentzel had been dealing with a lingering ankle issue during the offseason.

"As Jake continued to increase the intensity of his preparation for the upcoming season, it was apparent that his ankle injury was not resolving in a way that was satisfactory to him or the Penguins," Dubas said Friday in a statement.

Guentzel, an All-Star in 2022, has thrived since arriving in Pittsburgh in the latter stages of the 2016-17 season. Playing primarily alongside Sidney Crosby, Guentzel has scored 197 goals to go with 217 assists in 453 career games.

Dubas said Guentzel will be reevaluated in 12 weeks, meaning he will miss at least the start of the 2023-24 season, which begins on Oct. 10 when Pittsburgh hosts Chicago.

Tom Wilson is staying with the Washington Capitals for the long term after getting a new contract that could keep the homegrown power forward with the team for his entire NHL career.

Wilson signed a seven-year extension worth \$45.5 million on Friday, a deal that keeps him from hitting free agency next summer. Instead, he will count \$6.5 million against the salary cap from the time the new contract kicks in for the 2024-25 season through 2031.

ICE HOCKEY

"Tom possesses all the intangibles needed to win in this league, and we are extremely pleased to sign him to a long-term contract - giving him the opportunity to finish his career in a Capitals uniform," general manager Brian MacLellan said. "Throughout his career, Tom has improved every facet of his game through his drive and competitiveness. We feel his work ethic and leadership qualities will be a tremendous asset to our organization for years to come."

Wilson, who will be 30 when the new contract begins, has been an important part of the Capitals' core for a decade after they drafted him in the first round in 2012. He had 15 points in 21 games on their 2018 Stanley Cup run.

"Feeling extremely honored today as I get to sign an extension with the city that I've called home for the last 10 years," Wilson posted on social media. "(Playing for the Capitals) means so much to me and I can't wait to continue to compete and leave it all out there with this team. Thanks to the Caps family for the support."

The deal makes Wilson the only player on the roster signed past 2030 - three years longer than captain Alex Ovechkin. It also opens the door for the respected teammate and fan favorite to be the new face of the franchise and perhaps wear the "C" once Ovechkin retires.

Longtime teammate T.J. Oshie joked he would have given Wilson \$10 million a year.

"Not many I've seen with the same amount of heart and love for his teammates and his organization and his fans," Oshie posted on social media. "This guy leaves everything on the ice every night, leads by example and protects his own. Earned his spot on the team from fighting and penalty killing and tough minutes to top line, power play and scoring big goals. I hope my son grows up to be a lot like Tom."



Guentzel



Japan supporters pose on the tribune prior to the Women's World Cup second round soccer match between Japan and Norway in Wellington, New Zealand. (AP)

Sports

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Japan edge Norway to reach quarters

Miyazawa stars

WELLINGTON, New Zealand, Aug 5, (AP): Japan scored its 14th goal of the Women's World Cup and conceded its first Saturday, beating Norway 3-1 to reach the quarterfinals for the fourth time.

Hinata Miyazawa sealed the win with her fifth goal of the tournament in the 81st minute to remain the leading scorer. Risa Shimizu's 50th-minute goal followed an Ingrid Syrstad Engen own goal in the first half to help give Japan its fourth straight win of the tournament.

With five goals the 23-year-old Miyazawa equals the record for a Japan player at a World Cup. Homare Sawa scored five in 2011 when Japan won the tournament. She won the Golden Boot that year.

This Japan team already has scored more goals than the 2011 team.

SOCCER

Guro Reiten headed a superb goal for Norway in the 21st minute to end Japan's flawless defensive performance and leave the teams locked 1-1 a halftime.

After beating Spain 4-0 with only 23% of possession in its group-stage finale, Japan once again was a tactical chameleon in the round of 16 - playing with more than 60% of possession in a commanding performance.

Japan traded its regular blue uniform for pastel colors Saturday, pink and purple. The softer color scheme did nothing to dull its attacking style; it pressed forward from the start and had its first corner after two minutes.

"We knew Norway were going to play to their strength but all of our players really worked hard," Japan coach Futoshi Ikeda said. "We made several adjustments in the second half and it was great that they led to the goals and the win."

"Whether we are No 1, we will find out if we continue winning. We will find out at the end."

While it was ineffective, it was an



Norway's Sophie Roman Haug (left), and Japan's Hana Takahashi (right), challenge for the ball during the Women's World Cup second round soccer match between Japan and Norway in Wellington, New Zealand. (AP)

early declaration of intent. With long balls or sharp, quick passing, Japan continually pressed forward and Norway, which conceded only one goal in group play, often seemed rattled at the back.

When the defense finally yielded, it was in unusual circumstances. In the 15th minute Miyazawa curled the

ball in from depth on the left and Engen extended her leg to parry the ball. She managed only to deflect it wide of Aurora Mikalsen in goal for the eighth own goal of the tournament.

Japan seemed well on top but in the 21st minute, and from the first time in the match Norway had threatened, Vilde Boe Rise got away on the right, took

the ball to the byline and crossed to the middle where Guro Reiten stood tall and headed wide of the diving Ayaka Yamashita into the left corner.

The goal came entirely against the run of play. After a half-hour, Japan had 183 completed passes to Norway's 88, had more than 60% five shots on goal. Miyazawa, Aoba Fujino, Jun

Endo and others had been threatening.

Shimizu's winner came in the 50th minute as Japan pushed forward again from halfway. Miyazawa tried to hold up the ball near goal, lost possession to Boe Rise, who tried a back pass but rolled the ball into the path of Shimizu rushing in from the right to score.

"There is still a long way to go but

after we felt frustrated in 2019, I feel like we've overcome an obstacle," Shimizu said. "We'll head to the next one, but I feel we got a really great victory today."

Miyazawa produced a copybook finish in the 81st, running onto a superb through ball and directing her shot wide of Mikalsen.



Spain's Laia Codina reacts after scoring her team's fourth goal during the Women's World Cup second round soccer match between Switzerland and Spain at Eden Park in Auckland, New Zealand. (AP)

Man United sign Højlund from Atalanta for \$82mn

SYDNEY, Aug 5, (AP): Manchester United signed Denmark striker Rasmus Højlund from Atalanta on Saturday in a move that ends the Premier League club's search for a replacement for Cristiano Ronaldo.

Højlund cost an initial 64 million pounds (\$82 million) and that fee could go up by a further 8 million pounds (\$10 million) dependent on his success. He has signed a five-year contract with an option to extend by 12 months.

In an off-season that has seen United repeatedly linked with a move for Harry Kane, the club has opted to go with an emerging talent in Europe, rather than one of the most prolific strikers of his generation.

The 20-year-old Højlund has impressed with his performances for Atalanta in the Italian league, but only scored 10 goals in all competitions in his one season with the club. He has played less than 100 senior games.

Højlund had previously been identified as a rising prospect with

Copenhagen in his home country and then with Austrian team Sturm Graz.

Højlund is unlikely to be available at the start of the season after sustaining a tissue injury in training with Atalanta. He is recovering and has been able to train, but it is likely to take a few weeks before he can play. United opens its Premier League season on Aug. 14 against Wolverhampton.

Ten Hag has been looking for a center forward since Ronaldo's departure last November and, as well as Kane, had been linked with Napo-

li striker Victor Osimhen.

Kane's price tag had been seen as an obstacle to a move to United, while there were doubts Tottenham would be prepared to sell to a Premier League rival. Bayern Munich appears to be leading the race to sign the England captain, who will become a free agent at the end of the season.

Højlund has been handed one of the most prestigious jobs in soccer as United's striker.

It is also one of the most demanding, having been held by some of the sport's greats like Wayne Rooney, Robin van Persie and Ronaldo.



Højlund

SOCCER

Switzerland was one of only three teams that didn't concede a goal in the group stages, but was 4-1 down by halftime against Spain, which wore blue jerseys instead of its familiar color of red.

Not that it made any difference as one of the tournament favorites won in style.

Bonmati scored her first in the fifth minute after Switzerland goalkeeper Gaëlle Thalmann had pushed Alba Redondo's effort against the post. The Swiss couldn't clear the ball and Bonmati collected it, turned sharply in the box and fired low into the corner.

Switzerland was gifted an equalizer in the 11th through Codina's own goal. The defender picked up the ball just inside her own half, but without looking, turned and swept an overhit backpass beyond Coll, who was advanced out of her goal.

Spain was back in front in the 17th as Redondo headed a bouncing ball low into the corner. It was her third goal of the tournament.

Spain continued to look for more goals and Bonmati scored her second in the 36th when showing quick footwork to make space in the box before

placing a shot into the corner.

It was 4-1 in the 45th as Codina made amends for her earlier error by bundling the ball over the line from a corner.

Meriam Terchoun, one of three half time substitutes for Switzerland, forced a save from Coll from close range after the break. It was her team's only effort on target all match.

Switzerland all-time leading scorer Ana-Maria Crnogorovic had just one shot on goal in group play and didn't fire a shot against Spain.

Hermoso swept in a fifth for Spain in the 70th to score her third of the tournament.



Switzerland's Coubma Sow (right), takes a shot on goal as Spain's Aitana Bonmati watches during the Women's World Cup second round soccer match between Switzerland and Spain at Eden Park in Auckland, New Zealand. (AP)

Switzerland fail to advance

Dominant Spain seal historic WCup last 8 spot

South Africa eye another upset vs Dutch

Qualification on the line as US, Sweden meet again

AUCKLAND, New Zealand, Aug 5, (AP): Aitana Bonmati scored twice as Spain routed Switzerland 5-1 on Saturday to advance to the quarterfinals of the Women's World Cup for the first time.

Spain responded emphatically to its 4-0 loss against Japan in its group-stage finale in a blowout against the Swiss in Auckland.

Alba Redondo, Laia Codina and Jennifer Hermoso also scored in the win at Eden Park. Codina showed plenty of relief to score from close range after conceding an own goal in the first half.

Spain coach Jorge Vilda made some big calls after his team was routed by Japan. Two-time Ballon d'Or winner Alexia Putellas was left on the bench and goalkeeper Cata Coll was picked for her full international debut. They were among five changes to his starting lineup, which paid off as his team produced a dominant performance.

SOCCER

their group, which knocked them down to second and a Sunday match against Sweden in the round of 16.

Sweden is ranked third in the world and won its group by sweeping all three games. The seventh World Cup meeting between the two teams - the most frequent matchup in tournament history - will be played in Melbourne, Australia.

Netherlands, meanwhile, is ranked ninth in the world and faces South Africa in Sydney. The Dutch were runners-up to the United States in the 2019 World Cup final.

"Everything is related to our ambition as a football country," Netherlands coach Andries Jonker said through a translator. "Being part of the top-10 in the ranking, that's my goal, and if you want to achieve that, you need to show something and we want to do that in our way."

US vs Sweden

One of the top players in women's soccer will end her World Cup career after the match between the United States and Sweden.

SOCCER

Megan Rapinoe, the Golden Boot winner of the 2019 tournament with six goals and three assists for the Americans, has said she will retire after the World Cup. Same for Sweden midfielder Caroline Seger, who said her fifth World Cup will be her last.

Both teams want to win Sunday to ensure their superstar centerpiece can continue in the tournament. For Seger, the World Cup is the one gap on her resume.

Seger's 235 appearances for Sweden are the most for any female player in Europe, and although she has two Olympic silver medals and two World Cup bronze medals, Sweden has never won a major tournament. Seger's teammates don't want to see her career end without a chance to play for the World Cup title.

The 38-year-old Seger has been struggling with a calf problem all year

and trained alone in the two days of practice leading into the showdown with the U.S.

Rapinoe, meanwhile, has taken on a smaller role for the Americans in her final tournament. Also 38, she was a substitute in the United States' first and third games of group play and didn't get off the bench in the middle match.

American striker Alex Morgan said both Rapinoe and Seger have had "incredible" careers.

"I'm very optimistic about our chances tomorrow, but regardless, these are players that have really changed the game," Morgan said. "Not only in Sweden and the U.S. but globally. Having been able to play with both of them, they're great teammates and have been leaders for so long at the highest stage. They're huge impact players."

The U.S. scored just four goals in the opening stage, but Rapinoe said she wasn't overly concerned about what has appeared to be a lackluster start to the tournament - the team still managed to advance. And she clearly didn't want her World Cup journey to end just yet.

Netherlands vs South Africa
Netherlands is trying to finish one spot higher in the Women's World Cup than it did in 2019, when the Dutch lost to the United States in the championship match.

The first step in the round of 16 is No. 54-ranked South Africa, which notched its first win in a World Cup in a group-stage finale. A 3-2 win over Italy advanced the Banyana Banyana to the knockout stage for the first time in team history.

"They fought like warriors. They fought like the heroines that we know that they are," South Africa coach Desiree Ellis said. "They fought to be historically remembered and they've made history, not just getting our first win, but going to the round of 16 and that is freaking amazing."

This is only the second World Cup appearance for South Africa, but its play in the group stage has the Banyana Banyana believing they can hold their own against the Dutch.