



Mega-profit of KD 1.016bn for KNPC

Product quality improved ... opened markets

KUWAIT CITY, July 25, (KUNA): Kuwait National Petroleum Company (KNPC) announced on Tuesday record-breaking profits of KD 1.016 billion (approx. USD 3.32 billion) for the fiscal year (2022-2023).

CEO Wadha Al-Khateeb expressed to KUNA her pride in this exemplary achievement, indicating that the company had logged in a KD 675 million increase (approx. USD 2.2 billion) against the previous year's KD 341.380 million (approx. USD 1.11 billion), marking a 198 percent jump.

Al-Khateeb attributed this significant jump in profits to various factors including the global increase in prices of oil products, and the company's improved operational performance especially following the

complete and successful operation of eco fuel project in Mina Ahmadi and Mina Abdallah refineries.

The project, Al-Khateeb clarified, took quality of products to better levels, up to par with latest global standards, allowing the company to market products in new global markets and creating profitable opportunities.

These new large and innovative projects were accompanied with a rise in refining capacity aiming to meet demands of local markets and keep up with augmenting global demands, explained the CEO.

Al-Khateeb presented a number of marketing indices that contributed to the achievement of such profit, including putting out improved diesel and low sulfur gasoline.

Moreover, she took the opportunity to applaud the company's cadres in all its various sectors, saying that what has been achieved is nothing but the fruit of their labor.

Opinion

Leadership ... Here's the story of the king, and the change of a 'Minister of Economy'

By Ahmed Al-Jarallah

Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

KUWAIT established its sovereign wealth fund in 1953, and was therefore expected to be the largest in the world today. However, the situation in reality is different.

According to the report published by The Bloomberg agency quoting international rating institutions, this fund "has become paralyzed, and has lost many of its leaders, along with its professionalism."

This is a very dangerous indicator, because its decline, irrespective of the reasons, means a decline in global confidence in Kuwait.

It is true that it is the third in the world in terms of assets, but that does not mean it is superior. In fact, the Norwegian fund overtook it a long time ago, although it started operating in 1996, as well as other sovereign funds that started after it. The Norwegian fund acquired larger assets than the Kuwaiti fund, and has higher returns away from oil, on which Kuwait still relies on by about 93 percent. So where is the problem?

In this regard, we quote from one of the specialized reports that stated, "Disappointed economic policies since liberation have pushed the state to consume its funds."

According to logic, it should have enhanced its assets and invested locally in development projects using at least one-third of the state's sovereign money. It should have not been lost among ministers, as it was first under the Finance Minister, and in a second government, it came under the supervision of the Minister of Municipal Affairs, Social Affairs or Awaqaf and Islamic Affairs!

This improper situation reminded me of the story of a king who wanted to change his minister of Economy, who had failed in his mission. He announced that whoever trusts himself and believes that he has sufficient capabilities to win the position should apply.

Ten people came forward, and the king gave each of them 1,000 gold pieces. He then told them, "Come back after a month to show what you have done with it."

After some time had passed, nine of them came with bags of money. The first said, "I brought back 15,000 gold coins." The second one said, "I brought back 16,000." They then began to compete, but the king did not listen to them and did not care about their numbers. Finally, he looked at the tenth, and said to him: "Where is the money?"

The young man hesitated after he saw the superiority of his opponents over him. This prompted the king to ask him, "What is wrong with you?"

The young man replied: "Nothing, sir. I bought a piece of agricultural land and appointed some workers on it who also suggested buying some livestock. Now I don't have any money until the crop comes out and we sell it!"

The king looked at the young man and said to him, "You are my minister!"

The hall erupted because of the surprise met by the other men who traded and succeeded in reaping what this young man will not reap, even after three years, perhaps.

However, the king said, "Economics is the development of money. What you did is called trade. As for the economy, it is how you spend money so that it is always able to manage your life in the best way."

Indeed, other countries have preceded us, including Gulf countries, because they realized from the beginning that developing money and strengthening the economy is what is best for their people. That is why today the UAE, whose sovereign fund was established in 1976, does not depend on oil much. Rather, it has auxiliary incomes estimated at about 65 percent of the national product.

As for Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain and Oman, they have strengthened their sovereign funds and entered the stage of serious diversification of the economy, in contrast to Kuwait, which is still stagnant because it wasted its mojo due to the unprofessional interventions in its sovereign fund.

For all of this, it is necessary for the supervision of sovereign money to come either directly from the leadership, or the presidency of the Council of Ministers, and to keep it away from local political rivalries and interference.

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Newswatch

KUWAIT CITY: There is no "severe" shortage of the ministry's medicine, Minister of Health (MoH) Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi said Tuesday, affirming that there are alternatives to the unavailable ones.

During a regular National Assembly session, Al-Awadhi added that the ministry is working on automating information system regarding the medical records.

The ministry seeks to fulfill system and medicine stock as a "security" of the State through the permanent ministerial committee of food and drug security, Al-Awadhi noted. (KUNA)



People inspect burnt vehicles after raging wildfires in Bouira, 100 km from Algiers, Algeria, Monday, July 24, 2023. Wildfires raging across Algeria have killed at least 25 people, including soldiers trying to get the flames under control in the face of high winds and scorching summer temperatures, government ministries said Monday. (AP)

ALGIERS: Fires raging through forests, mountain villages and towns in northern Algeria have left at least 34 people dead - with 23 of them in the coastal region of Bejaia, according to authorities and a local radio station keeping track of the grim toll in Bejaia.

Among those killed were 10 soldiers encircled by flames during an evacuation, the Defense Ministry reported Monday night.

Bejaia, part of the Berber-speaking Kabyle region east of Algiers, was the hardest-hit area, with 23 deaths since Sunday, the local Soummam Radio reported on Tuesday. Counting the deaths from the wind-driven blazes that swept through villages to the seaside, the radio report said that 197 other people were injured in the flames.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs expressed the State of Kuwait's sympathy and solidarity with the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria on the forest fires that broke out in a number of states and resulted in several casualties. (Agencies)

ALGIERS: The Algerian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and National Community Abroad on Monday summoned the Ambassador of Denmark and the Charge d'Affaires at the Embassy of Sweden in Algeria to protest the recent Quran burning in the two countries.

In a press statement, the Ministry said it conveyed to the two diplomats Algeria's official protest and firm condemnation of the recurrent incidents of burning and desecration of copies of the Holy Quran. (KUNA)

CAIRO: One of Libya's rival prime ministers on Monday returned to the capital of Tripoli from Italy on a charter flight with a commercial airline, the first direct flight between the two countries in a decade.

Abdul-Hamid Dbeibah, who heads the Tripoli-based government, boarded the flight from Fiumicino airport in Rome. Flight AZ894 is operated by Italy's national airline, ITA Airways.

"From Rome to Tripoli through the Italian airways, ITA," Dbeibah wrote on Twitter attaching a photo of the flight ticket. The flight landed in Mitiga airport, the only functioning airport in the Libyan capital.

Dbeibah said Monday that Libyans would be able to book direct flights to Italy in September after the Italian government agreed earlier this month to lift a 10-year-long ban on civil aviation in the North African nation. (AP)

BEIJING: China removed outspoken Foreign Minister Qin Gang from office on Tuesday and replaced him with his predecessor, Wang Yi, in a move that has already fueled rumors over the personal lives and political rivalries of China's Communist Party elite.

In its announcement on the national evening news, state broadcaster CCTV gave no reason for Qin's removal.

He had dropped out of sight almost a month ago and the Foreign Ministry has provided no information about his status. (AP)



This picture released by the official website of the Iranian Army on Monday, July 24, 2023, shows Iran's Air Force drill in the central part of the country. Iran on Sunday began an annual air force drill, state media reported, as the U.S. sends more fighter planes to the region to deter the Islamic Republic from seizing commercial vessels in the Arabian Gulf area. (AP)

Parliament tackles 'payments'

MPs call for AI, cyber security commission

KUWAIT CITY, July 25, (KUNA): National Assembly Speaker Ahmad Al-Saadoun early on Tuesday inaugurated the regular session to look into the agenda including an article addressing the issue of amending civil servants' payments.

MPs are kicking off the day's tasks by endorsing minutes, examining petitions and complaints. Two hours of today's session are dedicated for discussing the "strategic alternative," revising citizens' payments. Other topics on the table are appointments to vacant senior posts, forming interim committees including one tasked with pondering solutions for problems suffered by the population in southern regions, namely Sabah Al-Ahmad, Al-Wafra, Ali

Sabah Al-Salem and Al-Khairan.

A number of legislators demand forming a transitional commission for cyber security and artificial intelligence.

The agenda also includes government's letters addressing the financial status of projects run by the Public Authority for Housing Welfare in the end of the fiscal year (2018-2020) and a letter by the head of the Anti-Corruption Authority regarding the authority's bi-annual report (2020-2021). The report that covers the period between January 2020 and September 30 2020 addresses its efforts against corruption, recorded irregularities and recommendations to tackle them.

Interior vows robust effort for security against terror, crime

KUWAIT CITY, July 25: The Ministry of Interior is determined and allegedly making robust efforts to enhance national security and protect Kuwait from terrorism, organized crime, and drug trafficking, reports Al-Qabas daily.

A reliable source within the ministry told the daily that as part of the country's international efforts, the status of Gulf and international terrorist lists has been integrated into Kuwait's border crossing database.

This is in addition to the ministry establishing regional and international collaborations to pursue individuals wanted and convicted by law for security-related crimes under existing agreements. The source also emphasized that all entry points to the country form a formidable barrier, impervious to terrorist and dangerous elements sought globally.

When questioned about the Interpol's role and functions, the source explained, "Over the past three years, the Interpol department within the General Department of Criminal Investigation has been engaged in a project linking all state outlets to internationally wanted persons' databases."

Since 2019, Kuwait's border crossings have been connected to the Interpol database project, aimed at preventing the entry of internationally wanted individuals, including terrorists and other dangerous

criminals flagged by the United Nations. The project's primary objective is to establish an information firewall at the border posts, effectively shielding Kuwait from potential threats.

The Interpol administration actively tracks serious crimes worldwide and shares valuable insights on criminal methods with local authorities, enabling them to tackle emerging criminal activities and enhance their readiness to confront security challenges.

Moreover, the Interpol department provides information to local search, investigation agencies, and law enforcement authorities, enhancing their capabilities in apprehending criminals and managing security concerns effectively.

The Ministry of Interior's unwavering commitment to protecting Kuwait from terrorism, crime, and drug-related threats is under the direct supervision of the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior, Sheikh Talal Al-Khalid.

To reinforce the country's security measures, all Kuwaiti ports have been linked to Interpol's databases since 2019, ensuring the prevention of entry for internationally wanted individuals, whose presence could pose a serious risk to public safety and national security.

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Day by Day

The country is embracing the convenience of internet-based services, but unfortunately, they come burdened with unnecessary restrictions. For instance, a visit to the Municipality to obtain a description certificate becomes a daunting task, laden with 1,000 obstacles.

Surprisingly, they even demand unrelated documents like a driver's license, proof of payment for traffic violations, or overdue bills from companies, making it feel as though the government has turned into a mere collection agency for these businesses.

O Minister of Municipality, the bureaucratic process is incredibly lengthy and exasperating. While obtaining building permits in most cases takes just a few weeks, under your purview, they seem to take months, or sometimes even years, because the forgotten documents collect dust in drawers.

However, despite the frustrations, let's remain hopeful.

... Yet tomorrow is another day.
Zahed Matar



In this image released by the official website of the Iranian Defense Ministry on Tuesday, July 25, 2023, Abu Mahdi naval cruise missiles are displayed in a ceremony to deliver the missiles to both national Navy as well as navy of the Revolutionary Guard, Iran. The missile name goes after the name of Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, deputy commander of Iran-backed militias in Iraq known as the Popular Mobilization Forces, who was killed in a U.S. drone attack in 2020. (AP)

EU to Iran

'Stop drones for Moscow'

BRUSSELS, July 25, (Agencies): The European Union (EU) Tuesday repeated its call on Iran to stop supplying drones to Russia to be used in the war against Ukraine.

"We urge Iran to stop providing any type of weapons to Russia and the EU will continue to support Ukraine as long as it takes," EU spokesperson for foreign affairs and security policy, Nabila Massrali, told a news conference in Brussels today.

She noted that the EU has strongly condemned several times before the delivery of Iranian drones to Russia and their deployment in the war against Ukraine.

"This is a clear violation of UN resolution 2231," she said, adding that the 27-member bloc has already adopted sanctions against Iranian persons and entities for the development and delivery of these drones.

The EU reaction follows media reports of attacks by Russian drones on Ukrainian ports on the River Danube, destroying grain storage infrastructure. The facilities are just across the river from Romania, an EU and NATO member.

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina: The Argentine government and members of Bolivia's opposition demanded answers Monday following the sealing of an opaque defense agreement between Iran and Bolivia that raised concerns in South America's Southern Cone it could be a way for Tehran to boost its influence in the region.

The deal reached last week has particularly raised concerns in Argentina, where prosecutors have long alleged that Iranian officials were behind the 1994 bombing of the AMIA Jewish community center in Buenos Aires that killed 85 people. Iran has denied any involvement in the attack.

Argentina's Foreign Ministry sent a note to the Bolivian embassy in Buenos Aires on Monday "requesting information about the scope of the discussions and possible agreements reached during the official visit of (Bolivian Defense) Minister **Edmundo Novillo** to the Islamic Republic of Iran," an official at Argentina's Foreign Ministry said, requesting anonymity because they were not authorized to speak on the record.

The note from Argentina's diplomatic headquarters came on the same day as members of Bolivia's opposition submitted a written request to the government demanding information about the scope of the agreement sealed July 20.

"The defense minister must explain the agreement and why it has been signed with a country that has complications on the international stage when Bolivia is supposed to be pacifist according to its constitution," **Gustavo Aliaga**, a Bolivian opposition lawmaker who is the secretary of the Defense and Armed Forces Committee in the Chamber of Deputies, told The Associated Press.



OPINION OTHER VOICES



Left inset: This satellite image provided by Maxar Technologies shows trenches dug near an intersection in Berdiansk, Ukraine on Dec. 19, 2022. (AP)



Viktoriia Andrusha sits for a portrait in Kyiv, Ukraine, Tuesday, May 23, 2023. When held by Russian forces, Andrusha was told repeatedly that she would die in prison in Russia, that they would slash her with knives until she was unrecognizable, that her government cared nothing about a captive schoolteacher, that her family had forgotten her, that her language was useless. They forced captives to memorize verse after verse of the Russian national anthem and other patriotic songs. 'There was a point when I was already sitting and saying: Honestly, do what you want with me? I just don't care any more,' she says. (AP)

Thousands of Ukrainian civilians held in Russia

Lost in the Gulag of hate

The Ukrainian civilians woke long before dawn in the bitter cold, lined up for the single toilet and were loaded at gunpoint into the livestock trailer. They spent the next 12 hours or more digging trenches on the front lines for Russian soldiers.

Many were forced to wear overlarge Russian military uniforms that could make them a target, and a former city administrator trudged around in boots five sizes too big. By the end of the day, their hands curled into icy claws.

Nearby, in the occupied region of Zaporizhzhia, other Ukrainian civilians dug mass graves into the frozen ground for fellow prisoners who had not survived. One man who refused to dig was shot on the spot - yet another body for the grave.

Thousands of Ukrainian civilians are being detained across Russia and the Ukrainian territories it occupies, in centers ranging from brand-new wings in Russian prisons to clammy basements. Most have no status under Russian law.

And Russia is planning to hold possibly thousands more. A Russian government document obtained by The Associated Press dating to January outlined plans to create 25 new prison colonies and six other detention centers in occupied Ukraine by 2026.

In addition, Russian President Vladimir Putin signed a decree in May allowing Russia to send people from territories with martial law, which includes all of occupied Ukraine, to those without, such as Russia. This makes it easier to deport Ukrainians who resist Russian occupation deep into Russia indefinitely, which has happened in multiple cases documented by the AP.

Many civilians are picked up for alleged transgressions as minor as speaking Ukrainian or simply being a young man in an occupied region, and are often held without charge. Others are charged as terrorists, combatants, or people who "resist the special military operation." Hundreds are used for slave labor by Russia's military, for digging trenches and other fortifications, as well as mass graves.

Torture is routine, including repeated electrical shocks, beatings that crack skulls and fracture ribs, and simulated suffocation. Many former prisoners told the AP they witnessed deaths. A United Nations report from late June documented 77 summary executions of civilian captives and the death of one man due to torture.

Russia does not acknowledge holding civilians at all, let alone its reasons for doing so. But the prisoners serve as future bargaining chips in exchanges for Russian soldiers, and the U.N. has said there is evidence of civilians being used as human shields near the front lines.

The AP spoke with dozens of people, including 20 former detainees, along with ex-prisoners of war, the families of more than a dozen civilians in detention, two Ukrainian intelligence officials and a government negotiator. Their accounts, as well as satellite imagery, social media, government documents and copies of letters delivered by the Red Cross, confirm a widescale Russian system of detention and abuse of civilians that stands in direct violation of the Geneva Conventions.

Some civilians were held for days or weeks, while others have vanished for well over a year. Nearly everyone freed said they experienced or witnessed torture, and most described being shifted from one place to another without explanation.

"It's a business of human trafficking," said Olena Yahupova, the city administrator who was forced to dig trenches for the Russians in Zaporizhzhia. "If we don't talk about it and keep silent, then tomorrow anyone can be there - my neighbor, acquaintance, child."

The new building in the compound of Prison Colony No. 2 is at least two stories tall, separated from the main prison by a thick wall.

This facility in Russia's eastern Rostov region has gone up since the war started in February 2022, according to satellite imagery analyzed by the AP. It could easily house the hundreds of Ukrainian civilians who are believed detained there, according to former captives, families of the

missing, human rights activists and Russian lawyers. Two exiled Russian human rights advocates said it is heavily guarded by soldiers and armored vehicles.

The building in Rostov is one of at least 40 detention facilities in Russia and Belarus, and 63 makeshift and formal in occupied Ukrainian territory where Ukrainian civilians are held, according to an AP map built on data from former captives, the Ukrainian Media Initiative for Human Rights, and the Russian human rights group Gulagu.net. The recent U.N. report counted a total of 37 facilities in Russia and Belarus and 125 in occupied Ukraine.

Some also hold Russian prisoners accused or convicted of a variety of crimes. Other, more makeshift locations are near the front lines, and the AP documented two locations where former prisoners say Ukrainians were forced to dig trenches.

The shadowy nature of the system makes it difficult to know exactly how many civilians are being detained. Ukraine's government has been able to confirm legal details of a little over 1,000 who are facing charges.

Gulagu.net

At least 4,000 civilians are held in Russia and at least as many scattered around the occupied territories, according to Vladimir Osechkin, an exiled Russian human rights activist who talks to informants within Russian prisons and founded Gulagu.net to document abuses. Osechkin showed AP a Russian prison document from 2022 saying that 119 people "opposed to the special military operation" in Ukraine were moved by plane to the main prison colony in the Russian region of Voronezh. Many Ukrainians later freed by Russia also described unexplained plane transfers.

In all, Ukraine's government believes around 10,000 civilians could be detained, according to Ukrainian negotiator Oleksandr Kononeko, based on reports from loved ones, as well as post-release interviews with some civilians and the hundreds of Ukrainian soldiers returned in prisoner exchanges. Ukraine said in June that about 150 civilians have been freed to Ukrainian-controlled territory, and the Russians deny holding others.

"They say, 'We don't have these people, it's you who is lying,'" Kononeko said.

The detention of two men from the Kherson region in August 2022 offers a glimpse at how hard it is for families to track down loved ones in Russian custody.

Artem Baranov, a security guard, and Yevhen Pryshliak, who worked at a local asphalt plant with his father, had been friends for over a decade. Their relationship was cemented when both bought dogs during the coronavirus pandemic, according to Baranov's common-law wife, Iлона Slyva. Their evening walks continued even after Russia seized their hometown of Nova Kakhovka - shy Baranov with a giant black Italian mastiff and Pryshliak with a toy poodle whose apricot fur matched his beard.

Their walk ran late the night of Aug. 15, and Pryshliak decided to stay at Baranov's apartment rather than risk being caught breaking the Russian curfew. Neighbors later told the family that 15 armed Russian soldiers swooped in, ransacked the apartment and seized the men.

For a month, they were in the local jail, with conditions relaxed enough that Slyva was able to talk to Pryshliak through the fence. Baranov, he told her, couldn't come out.

She sent in packages of food and clothes but did not know if they were reaching him. Finally, on Baranov's birthday, she bought his favorite dessert of cream eclairs, smashed them up, and slipped in a scrap of paper with her new Russian phone number scrawled on it. She hoped the guards would have little interest in the sticky mess and just pass it along.

A month went by, and the families learned the men had been transferred to a new prison in Sevastopol, in Crimea. Then the trail went dark.

Four more months passed. Then a call came from the family of a man they had never met but would soon come to know well: Pavlo Zaporozhets.

Zaporozhets, a Ukrainian from the occupied Kherson region charged with international terrorism, was sharing a cell in Rostov with Baranov. Since he faced charges, he had a lawyer.

It was then that Slyva knew her gift of eclairs - and the phone number smuggled within them - had reached its destination. Baranov had memorized her number and passed it through a complex chain that finally got news of him to her on April 7.

Baranov wrote that he was accused of espionage - an accusation that Slyva scorned as falling apart even under Russia's internal logic. He was detained in August, and Russia illegally annexed the regions only in October.

"When he was detained, he was on his own national territory," she said. "They thought and thought and invented a criminal case against him for espionage."

Baranov wrote home that he was transported across prisons with his eyes closed in two planes, one of which had about 60 people. He and Pryshliak were separated at their third transfer in late winter. Pryshliak's family has received a form letter from the Rostov prison denying he is an inmate there.

The number of civilian detainees has grown rapidly over the course of the war. In the first wave early on, Russian units moved in with lists of activists, pro-Ukrainian community leaders, and military veterans. Melitopol Mayor Ivan Fedorov was taken when Russian forces seized control of his city but exchanged within a week for nine Russian soldiers, he said.

Then they focused on teachers and doctors who refused to work with the occupation authorities. But the reasons for apprehending people today are as mundane as tying a ribbon to a bicycle in the Ukrainian colors of blue and yellow.

"Now there is no logic," Fedorov said.

He estimated that around 500 Ukrainian civilians are detained just in his city at any time - numbers echoed by multiple people interviewed by the AP.

A Ukrainian intelligence official said the Russian fear of dissidents had become "pathological" since last fall, as Russians brace for Ukraine's counteroffensive. The official spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the situation.

The AP saw multiple missing person notices posted on closed Ukrainian social media chats for young men seized off the streets. The messages, written in Ukrainian, describe detentions at gunpoint at home and on the street, with pleas to send information and emojis of hearts and praying hands.

The Geneva Conventions in general forbid the arbitrary detention or forced deportation of civilians, and state that detainees must be allowed to communicate with loved ones, obtain legal counsel and challenge allegations against them. But first they must be found.

After months writing letter after letter to locate Pryshliak, his sister-in-law Liubov thinks she knows why the prisoners are moved around: "So that the families cannot find them. Just to hide the traces of crimes."

Hundreds of civilians end up in a place that is possibly even more dangerous than the prisons: the trenches of occupied Ukraine.

There, they are forced to build protection for Russian soldiers, according to multiple people who managed to leave Russian custody. Among them was Yahupova, the 50-year-old civil administrator detained in October 2022 in the Zaporizhzhia region, possibly because she is married to a Ukrainian soldier.

Under international humanitarian law, Yahupova is a civilian - defined as anyone who is not an active member of or volunteer for the armed forces. Documented breaches of the law constitute a war crime and, if widespread and systematic, "may also constitute a crime against humanity."

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editor's choice



Prayer Timings

Fajr 03:33 Asr 15:30
 Sunrise .. 05:04 Maghrib .. 18:45
 Zohr 11:54 Isha 20:13

Local

Expected weather for the next 24 hours:

By Day: Very hot with light to moderate freshening at times northwesterly wind with speeds of 12-40 km/h with a chance for rising dust over open areas.

Weather

By Night: Hot to rather hot with light to moderate northwesterly wind to light variable wind with speeds of 08-28 km/h and some high clouds will appear.

Station	Max Exp	Min Rec
Kuwait City	49	36

Kuwait Airport	49	28
Abdaly	49	31
Jahra	50	32
Salmiyah	46	38
Ahmadi	46	36
Nuwaisib	50	30
Wafra	49	28

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

Lost in

Continued from Page 2

But the distinctions between soldiers and civilians can be hard to prove in a war where Ukraine has urged all its citizens to help, for example by sending Russian troop locations via social media. In practice, the Russians are scooping up civilians along with soldiers, including those denounced by neighbors for whatever reason or seized seemingly at random.

They picked Yahupova up at her house in October. Then they demanded she reveal information about her husband, taping a plastic bag over her face, beating her on the head with a filled water bottle and tightening a cable around her neck.

They also dragged her out of the cell and drove her around town to identify pro-Ukrainian locals. She didn't.

When they hauled her out a second time, she was exhausted. As a soldier placed her in front of a Russian news camera, she could still feel the dried blood on the back of her neck. She was going to give an interview, her captors told her.

Behind the camera, a gun was pointed at her head. The soldier holding it told her that if she gave the right answers to the Russian journalist interviewing her, she could go free.

But she didn't know what the right answers were. She went back to the cell.

Three months later, without explanation, Yahupova was again pulled outside. This time, she was driven to a deserted checkpoint, where yet another Russian news crew awaited. She was ordered to hold hands with two men and walk about 5 meters (yards) toward Ukraine.

The three Ukrainians were ordered to do another take. And another, to show that Russia was freeing the Ukrainian civilians in its custody.

Except, at the end of the last take, Russian soldiers loaded them into a truck and drove them to a nearby crossroads. One put shovels into their hands.

"Now you will do something for the good of the Russian Federation," he said.

And so Yahupova ended up digging trenches until mid-March with more than a dozen Ukrainian civilians, including business owners, a student, a teacher, and utility workers. She could see other crews in the distance, with armed guards standing over them. Most wore Russian military uniforms and boots, and lived in fear that Ukrainian artillery would mistake them for the enemy.

The AP confirmed through satellite imagery the new trenches dug in the area where Yahupova and a man on the Ukrainian crew with her said they were held. He requested anonymity because his relatives still live under occupation.

"Sometimes we even worked there 24 hours a day, when they had an inspection coming," he said.

The man also spoke with other Ukrainian civilians digging mass graves nearby for at least 15 people. He said one civilian had been shot for refusing to dig. Satellite imagery shows a mound of freshly-dug earth in the spot the man described.

The man escaped during a Russian troop rotation, and Yahupova also made her way out. But both said hundreds of others are still in the occupied front lines, forced to work for Russia or die.

When Yahupova returned to her home after more than five months, everything had been stolen. Her beloved dog had been shot. Her head ached, her vision was blurred, and her children - long since out of the occupied territories - urged her to leave.

She traveled thousands of miles through Russia, north to the Baltics and back around to the front line in Ukraine, where she reunited with her husband serving with Ukrainian forces. Earlier married in a civil ceremony, the two got wed this time in church.

Now safe in Ukrainian territory, Yahupova wants to testify against Russia - for the months it stole from her, the concussion that troubles her, the home she has lost. She still reflexively touches the back of her head, where the bottle struck her over and over.

"They stole not only from me, they stole from half the country," she said.

The abuse Yahupova described is common. Torture was a constant, whether or not there was information to extract, according to every former detainee interviewed by the AP. The U.N. report from June said 91% of prisoners "described torture and ill-treatment."

In the occupied territories, all the freed civilians interviewed by the AP described cramped rooms and cells, tools of torture

prepared in advance, tape placed carefully next to office chairs to bind arms and legs, and repeated questioning by Russian's FSB intelligence agency. Nearly 100 evidence photos obtained by the AP from Ukrainian investigators also showed instruments of torture found in liberated areas of Kherson, Kyiv and Kharkiv, including the same tools repeatedly described by former civilian captives held in Russia and occupied regions.

Many former detainees spoke of wires linking prisoners' bodies to electricity in field telephones or radios or batteries, in a procedure one man said the Russians dubbed "call your mother" or "call Biden." U.N. human rights investigators said one victim described the same treatment given to Yahupova, a severe beating on the head with a filled water bottle.

Viktorii Andruska, an elementary school math teacher, was seized by Russian forces on March 25, 2022, after they ransacked her parents' home in Chernihiv and found photos of Russian military vehicles on her phone. By March 28, she was in a prison in Russia. Her captors told her Ukraine had fallen and no one wanted any civilians back.

For her, like so many others, torture came in the form of fists, batons of metal, wood and rubber, plastic bags. Men in black, with special forces chevrons on their sleeves, pummeled her in the prison corridor and in a ceramic-tiled room seemingly designed for quick cleaning. Russian propaganda played on a television above her.

"There was a point when I was already sitting and saying: Honestly, do what you want with me. I just don't care anymore," Andruska said.

Along with the physical torture came mental anguish. Andruska was told repeatedly that she would die in prison in Russia, that they would slash her with knives until she was unrecognizable, that her government cared nothing about a captive schoolteacher, that her family had forgotten her, that her language was useless. They forced captives to memorize verse after verse of the Russian national anthem and other patriotic songs.

"Their job was to influence us psychologically, to show us that we are not human," she said. "Our task was to make sure that everything they did to us did not affect us."

Then one day, without explanation, it was over for her and another woman kept with her. Guards ordered them to pack up, cuffed them and put them in a bus. The weight Andruska had lost in prison showed starkly in the cast-off jacket that hung from her shoulders.

They were soon joined by Ukrainian soldiers held captive elsewhere. On the other side, Andruska saw three Russian soldiers. Although international law forbids the exchange of civilians as prisoners of war, the U.N. report on June 27 said this has happened in at least 53 cases, and Melitopol Mayor Fedorov confirmed it happened to him.

A man detained with Andruska in March 2022 is in captivity still. She doesn't know the fate of the others she met. But many former captives take it upon themselves to contact the loved ones of their former cellmates.

Andruska recalled hours spent memorizing whispered phone numbers in a circle with other Ukrainians, on the chance one of them might get out. When she was freed, she passed them along to Ukrainian government officials.

Andruska has since regained some of her weight. She talks about her six months in prison calmly but with anger.

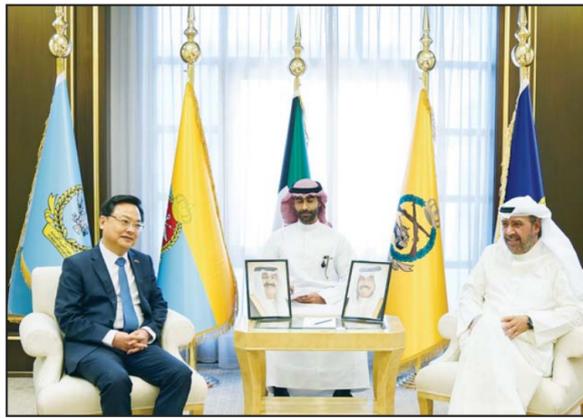
"I was able to survive this," she said, after a day back in the classroom with her students. "There are so many cases when people do not return."

In the meantime, for loved ones, the wait is agony.

Anna Vuiko's father was one of the earliest civilians detained, in March last year. A former glass factory worker on disability, Roman Vuiko had resisted when Russian soldiers tried to take over his home in suburban Kyiv, neighbors told his adult daughter. They drove a military truck into the yard, shattered the windows, cuffed the 50-year-old man and drove off.

By May 2022, Vuiko was in a prison in Kursk, Russia, hundreds of kilometers (miles) away. All his daughter has gotten from him since is a handwritten letter, which arrived six months after he was taken away and four months after he wrote it. The standard phrases told his daughter nothing except that he was alive, and she suspects he has not received any of her letters.

"I think about it every day," she said. "It's been a year, more than a year. ... How much more time has to pass?" (AP)



KUNA photo
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Ahmad Fahad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah meets the Ambassador of the People's Republic of China, Zhang Jianwei.



KUNA photo
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Ahmad Fahad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah in talks with Canadian Ambassador Aliya Mawani.

Deputy PM meets China, Canada, Ukraine, Egypt envoys

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Ahmad Fahad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah discussed Monday with a number of ambassadors various issues of joint interests, mainly bilateral relations and military cooperation.

The Ministry of Defense said in a statement that Sheikh Ahmad discussed with the Ambassador of the People's Republic of China, Zhang Jianwei the steadily developing strategic relations between the two countries and the efforts to upgrade it to new levels to serve common interests.

They also exchanged views on the most important issues of common concern. The meeting was attended by Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Oil, Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investment, Acting Minister of Finance

Dr. Saad Al-Barak, Minister of Public Works Dr. Amani Buqamaz, and Assistant Foreign Minister for Asian Affairs Ambassador Samih Johar Hayat. Later, Minister of Defense also received a number of ambassadors of brotherly and friendly countries: Canadian Ambassador Aliya Mawani, Ambassador of the Republic of Ukraine Dr. Balanutsa Oleksandr, and Egypt's Ambassador Osama Shaltout.

Sheikh Ahmad held cordial conversations with the envoys on many issues of common interest, particularly ways to expand military cooperation. They also touched upon the latest developments and in the region and international arenas. (KUNA)



Photo by Mohammad Morsi
MP Majid Al-Mutairi expressing his views during the National Assembly session on Tuesday, July 25.

Other Voices

Are we living in era of Sultan Qaraqosh

By Ahmad alsarraf

In a peculiar incident, a thief attempting to rob a house suffered severe fractures after a fall due to a poorly fixed railing. This unfortunate event led to a series of unexpected consequences, highlighting a chain of blame that culminated in unjust orders from Sultan Qaraqosh.

Upon learning of the thief's accident, the Sultan swiftly ordered the execution of the house owner, holding him responsible for negligence in maintaining his property. The owner, seeking to evade punishment, shifted the blame to the carpenter who had worked on the railing. In response, Sultan Qaraqosh, determined to maintain justice, commanded that the carpenter be hanged.

However, the situation took an unusual turn when the carpenter explained that the accident might have been a result of his distraction while hammering the nail. He claimed that a beautiful girl had captivated his attention, and her intoxicating perfume had momentarily impaired his focus. Taking this into consideration, the Sultan decided to hold the girl accountable for her apparent role in the incident and ordered her execution.

A surprising revelation came to light during the subsequent investigation - the girl's beauty had no bearing on the unfortunate event. The blame, therefore, shifted to the seller of the perfume, as it was suggested that the fragrance was overpowering enough to lead the carpenter astray. Acting on this newfound information, Sultan Qaraqosh demanded that the seller of the perfume be sentenced to death.

As the chain of accusations continued, the soldiers presented an unexpected challenge. The owner of the perfume was a tall individual, and executing him would require custom gallowes. In response, the Sultan astonishingly ordered that the seller of the perfume with a shorter stature be hanged instead, showcasing the absurdity

of the situation.

In this bizarre turn of events, Article 206 and the prohibition of beautification come into sharp focus, demonstrating the need for clear-headed judgment and fair investigation. The incident serves as a cautionary tale, reminding us that hasty decisions based on assumptions can lead to grave injustices. It calls for a reconsideration of the legal system to ensure that blame is justly assigned and that punishments are proportionate and appropriate to the actual culpability of each individual involved.

It seems, through the strange proposals of a "special type of deputies," that we are living in the Qaraqosh era.

Despite the implementation of this strict law, its impact seems to have been minimal. Those who used to indulge in alcohol continue to do so, albeit at a higher cost. The official import of alcoholic substances ceased, leading to an increase in smuggling operations. Unscrupulous individuals and adventurers exploited this situation, amassing fortunes, while counterfeit and poorly-made drinks claimed the lives of many citizens and residents. Corruption thrived as bribes facilitated smuggling operations. Tragically, the number of drug addicts skyrocketed.

Compounding the issue, some turned to tourism in neighboring Arab countries, particularly the Gulf, to find an escape from the restrictions imposed by these laws, engaging in various forms of recreation.

Now, a new group of legislators is proposing a ban on plastic surgeries for both sexes and the closure of clinics offering such procedures. However, this move may prove counterproductive, pushing such surgeries underground and away from existing regulations. The consequences could be dire, as unregulated procedures may result in fatalities, just as it happened following the implementation of Article 206 bis.

Additionally, many seeking cosmetic and restorative surgeries may travel to neighboring countries for treatment, leading to an outflow of capital and loss of control over the situation.

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Court verdict does not imply defendants safe

Appeal ruling overturned

KUWAIT CITY, July 25: In the case of the so-called Bangladeshi parliamentarian, the Court of Cassation has overturned the appeal ruling, which initially sentenced Mazen Al-Jarrah and Nawaf Al-Shelahi to 5 years imprisonment in a separate case branching from the main case, reports Al-Qabas daily.

In a related development the court has instead reaffirmed the previous criminal ruling, stating that the men cannot be tried for money laundering. A legal source clarified that the Court of Cassation verdict, however, does not imply that the defendants are innocent.

Instead, the verdict is based on the fact that they have already been convicted and sentenced to 7 years in the first case, making it not possible to try them again for the same charges.

The source emphasized the recent Court of Cassation ruling should not be misconstrued as a declaration of innocence for Al-Jarrah and Al-Shelahi due to the verdict in the first case, which sentenced them to 7

years in prison, they cannot face a second trial for the same offense.

Both individuals, along with other defendants, are currently serving their sentences at the Central Prison. The Court of Appeal's decision to overturn the previous ruling has now resulted in Sheikh Mazen Al-Jarrah and former National Assembly candidate Nawaf Al-Shelahi being sentenced to 5 years in prison. Additionally, fines amounting to one million and 360,000 dinars have been imposed on them.

Important

It is important to note that the Court of Cassation had previously closed the case of the Bangladeshi, sentencing him to 7 years in prison with hard labor, followed by deportation from the country.

A hefty fine of 2,710,000 was also imposed on him. The same ruling applied to Major General Mazen Al-Jarrah and Nawaf Al-Shelahi, sentencing them to 7 years in prison with hard labor, and each receiving a fine of 1,970,000 dinars.

Hassan Al-Khidr was sentenced to 7 years in prison with hard labor, and a fine of 180,000 dinars, and was dismissed from his job. Former deputy Salah Khorshid was given a 7-year prison sentence with hard labor and a fine of 740,000 dinars. Representative Saadoun Hammad, on the other hand, was acquitted of the charges attributed to him.

Kuwait participates in UN meeting

'Summit bolsters food security'

ROME, July 25, (KUNA): Kuwait's effective and interactive participation in the talks of the UN Food Systems Summit +2 helps to share expertise and knowledge, and strengthen food security system in light of international fluctuations, said a Kuwait official Tuesday.

Dr. Reem Ghazi Al-Fulaj, head of Kuwait's delegation to the summit and chairperson of Public Authority for Food and Nutrition (PAFN), said in a statement to KUNA.

Kuwait is taking part in this key meeting to assess the talks of the food systems began in the first summit in 2021, she said, adding that Kuwait was among the leading countries that has prepared and organized three talks of the systems locally.

Those talks resulted in several recommendations, she said, indicating that Ku-

wait, based on these commendations, started serious work to activate implementing most of them.

Of the most important achievements is activating health nutrition of school students through establishing a national committee for school nutrition headed by PAFN chief, she stated.

The recommendations also highlighted the dire need of establishing a national body tasked with nutrition and food security, she said.

She referred that the UN food summit slated for September would crystallize all recommendations to help deal with them seriously. Al-Fulaj stressed the importance of this summit in reviewing nutrition system, particularly after the COVID-19 pandemic and its impacts on all countries all over the world.



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MEW unveils ambitious energy projects to bolster production

Move aims to bring over 10K MW into electrical grid by 2030

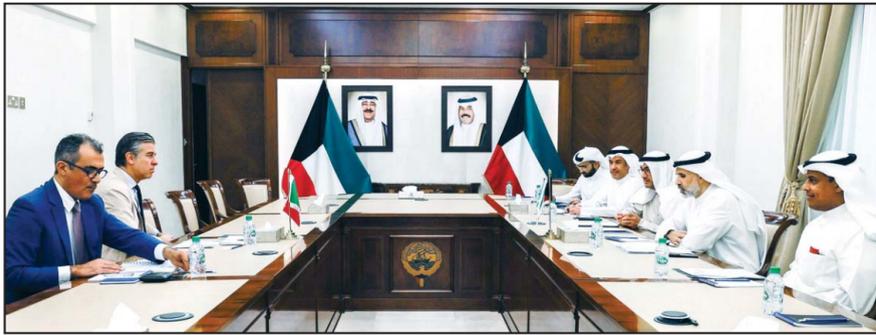
KUWAIT CITY, July 25: The Undersecretary of the Electric Power Stations and Water Distillation Sector in the Ministry of Electricity and Water, Eng. Haitham Al-Ali unveiled the ministry's plans to bolster energy production and water distillation in line with the state's development projects. The ambitious initiative aims to introduce over 10,000 megawatts into the electrical grid by 2030, reports Al-Jarida daily.

Al-Ali told the daily that these projects encompass a mix of renewable and traditional energy sources, with around 5,000 megawatts expected from renewable energy projects and over 8,000 megawatts from conventional power stations. The planned production will significantly contribute to meeting the growing energy demands of the country.

Endeavors

Al-Ali emphasized that the ministry's endeavors to extend to include water production projects alongside electricity projects. Among these are the "Northern Az-Zour station, phases two and three," as well as the "Nu-waiseeb and Khairan" stations, thus highlighting the synergy between electricity and water production.

In the meantime, Al-Ali has called upon citizens and residents to play their part in reducing energy consumption during peak periods, particularly in the scorching summer months, to preserve the nation's



The State of Kuwait and the friendly Republic of Portugal held Monday the first round of political consultations at the headquarters of the Kuwaiti Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Kuwait, Portugal hold political consultations

The State of Kuwait and the friendly Republic of Portugal held Monday the first round of political consultations at the headquarters of the Kuwaiti Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The Kuwaiti side was headed by Deputy Foreign Minister Ambassador Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah while the Portuguese side was headed by the Political Director at the Portuguese Ministry of Foreign

Affairs Ambassador Rui Vinhas.

During the meeting, Sheikh Jarrah and Vinhas reviewed different aspects of friendship and cooperation between the two friendly countries and ways of enhancing them in various fields and at different levels.

They also touched upon the latest regional and international developments of common interest. (KUNA)

valuable resources. He emphasized that rationalizing electricity and water usage not only benefits the environment but also helps alleviate the financial burden on the Ministry of Electricity and Water.

Al-Ali shed light on the significant role played by the "electric power stations and water distillation" sector within the ministry, constituting the backbone of its operations. Currently, the ministry operates seven stations, including Shuwaikh, Shuaiba, eastern Doha, western Doha, southern Al-Zour, and Al-Subbiya stations, in addition to the privately operated northern

Al-Zour station.

Looking ahead, Al-Ali highlighted upcoming projects that align with Kuwait's development plans, encompassing key sectors such as housing and services. The ministry is determined to synchronize these future projects with the country's broader development initiatives.

Among the notable projects in the pipeline is the "Nu-waiseeb station," set to be implemented in the southern region of the country. Additionally, collaborations with the Public-Private Partnership Authority will bring about projects like the "Al-Zour North Sta-

tion" phases two and three, and the impressive "Khairan station." Notably, the crown jewel of renewable energy projects, the "Al-Shagaya" station, is poised to become the largest renewable energy plant in the Gulf region, boasting an impressive capacity of 4,500 MW.

The timeline for these initiatives is well laid out, with projects scheduled for completion and entry into service between 2026 and 2028. The ministry is focused on meticulous planning and timely execution to ensure a seamless integration of these projects into the country's power grid.

Matter under study

Companies inquire about MOCI's new decision for special licenses

KUWAIT CITY, July 25: Several companies have submitted inquiries to the Ministry of Commerce and Industry on ways to reconcile and amend their existing licenses to be in line with the decision concerning new licenses for activities of a special nature that do not require headquarters, reports Al-Jarida daily quoting informed sources.

They explained that these companies intend to change their licenses, which are for companies with known headquarters and work in accordance with the previous requirements, into licenses for activities of a special nature, especially those that issued their licenses recently. Their activity code is included in the ministerial decision.

Scenarios

The officials of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry are aware of this matter, but that this matter is under study. It will be according to the scenarios developed at a later stage, to discuss all its legal and technical aspects and the way to implement it without any obstacles or pitfalls.

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry will consider examining these applications and submitting them through the Activities Classification Committee to convert the existing license into an activity license of a special nature, provided that it applies the required conditions.

The sources indicated that the next stage will be electronic.

They explained that the required amendment must be in accordance with the provisions of the new Commercial Transactions Licensing Law, its executive regulations and ministerial decisions related to it. It must also be in accordance with the controls, as the legal entity of the company requesting the license is a one-person company, and the owner of the license must be a manager of the company. The license allows the recipient to conduct his commercial business without the need to rent an office or shop.

Kuwaiti charity offers 'assistance' in Nablus

RAMALLAH, July 25, (KUNA): The Kuwait Awqaf Public Foundation (KAPF), in collaboration with the Kuwait Relief Society, distributed 2,400 food baskets to needy people and medical devices to patients in the West Bank city of Nablus.

Charge d'Affairs of the Kuwait Embassy in Jordan Mubarak Al-Hajri told KUNA on Saturday that the distribution of the aid aims to support the resilience of the Palestinian people.

He pointed out that more Kuwait aid campaigns would follow, noting that the Kuwaiti charitable activities cover all the West Bank governorates including the occupied Jerusalem as well as Gaza Strip.

The food parcels were handed out to orphans and poor families. The distributed medical devices included wheelchairs, portable oxygen concentrator machines, ventilators, hospital beds and prosthetics.

It is noteworthy that the Ministry of Commerce and Industry issued a ministerial decision regarding commercial activities of a special nature that will not require a lease contract, to issue a commercial license and carry out its business.

According to the ministerial decision No. 86/2023, up to 54 commercial activities are allowed to be practiced and commercial licenses will be issued for them for a period of three years without the need to rent a headquarters. The current activities are considered preliminary.

The ministry is studying the possibility of increasing it to more than 100 activities within the near future, as any entrepreneur can add any new activity within the international code of his trade license.

Global humanitarian role appreciated

Kuwait's aid for Rohingya refugees hailed

KUWAIT CITY, July 25, (KUNA): Head of the regional delegation of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) for the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Member States Mamadou Sow on Monday lauded the Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS)'s support to ICRC's aid operations in Bangladesh to help Rohingya refugees.

In a statement to KUNA, Sow affirmed that Kuwait's global humanitarian role is appreciated by all international humanitarian organizations especially the International Committee of the Red Cross.

Sow expressed his gratitude for the strategic partnership and Kuwait's support for the ICRC's humanitarian operations in Bangladesh.

During the years 2021 and 2022, as part of the cooperation agreement between the KRCS and the ICRC, the emergency department at Cox's Bazar Sadar Hospital provided free emergency health services to 227,065 patients from local communities and Rohingya refugees, he pointed out.

He added that on January 26, 2022, the regional ICRC mission in Kuwait signed a USD one-million grant agreement with the Kuwait Red Crescent Society, with the support of the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development, to help improve the situation of Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh.

Sow said that Kuwait's contributions to the ICRC's operations in the areas of health, water, housing and economic security have been used to improve the daily living conditions of the displaced communities in Cox's Bazar.

The regional chief noted that thanks to such contributions and changes brought about by the Sadar Hospital Support Project in (Cox's Bazar), the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare

Sadaaqa presents KT Mathew

Sadaaqa, the show that documents and celebrates India-Kuwait relationship by highlighting individual experiences presents the KT Mathew family of Kuwait on July 26.

Mr. KT Mathew is a pioneer in the field of Health Science, Education and Informatics in Kuwait. He and his wife Leelamma have a special story rooted in hard work, honesty, and enterprise. Both KT and Leelamma arrived in Kuwait in the 1950s. KT Mathew joined the Chest Diseases Hospital as Senior Staff to run the microbiology lab at the age of 27. He was employee number 49 Senior Staff at the Ministry of Health, one of the earliest expatriates to join the Ministry. He had a Fulbright Scholarship to Stanford & University of Chicago but didn't have the means to reach the States. He sought work in Kuwait to pay the family debts and save up his passage money, but fate had other things in store.

In Kuwait, he met Leelamma, a young Indian woman working as lab technician at KOC's Ahmadi Hospital. They got married - the first Orthodox Christian wedding to take place in Kuwait.

The young couple began their journey together in a country that was starting to experience the effects of oil boom.

In 1975, their lives changed tracks. They had begun their lives as professionals in Kuwait but in the mid-seventies, KT Mathew chose to get into business. Since then, there has been no looking back.

mission of the Red Cross in the Arabian Gulf region.

He appreciated the continuous contributions of the Kuwait Red Crescent Society to alleviating the suffering of the displaced around the world.

Sow thanked Kuwait for its support for the regional

in Bangladesh declared that its emergency department is an exemplary department, and awarded the hospital the title of the second best district hospital in Bangladesh.

Sow thanked Kuwait for its support for the regional

Co-ops launch summer holidays activities

KUWAIT CITY, July 25: Activities in cooperative societies related to the end of the school year and the start of the summer vacation, which extends to approximately mid-September, have started emerging in succession in some cooperative societies, because their absence usually leads to citizens to resort to searching for alternative solutions, such as traveling abroad or even renting chalets, farms and rest houses in the north and south of the country, or enrolling their children in institutes with the aim of strengthening and developing the level of academic achievement, and other activities, reports Al-Qabas daily.

Most cooperative societies are still content with announcing monthly and weekly marketing festivals, and other offers in their family supplies centers.

The Sabah Al-Ahmad Cooperative Society had earlier announced the launch of a training program for newly graduated students who are children of the shareholders in the area, in order to train them on banking services, customer service and sales, with the cooperation of a local bank. The participants are offered a monthly allowance and performance incentives. The duration of the program is 60 days.

Also, Sabahiya Cooperative Society revealed the completion of registration in one of the summer clubs to serve its shareholders and their children. It offers separate activities, such as swimming, football, motor activities, Quran memorization, recreational trips, handicrafts, practical workshops, and others for a one-month period.

Weekdays (Saturday - Wednesday)	
Queen Cabana (2 persons inclusive of breakfast) per night.	2 Bedroom Chalet (4 persons inclusive of breakfast) per night.
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A DIGEST OF PUBLIC OPINION

'Resignation of ministers issue needs urgent public discussion'

"RECENT events, such as the resignation of two ministers from a ministry that has not even been formed for a month has gone largely unnoticed, raising concerns about the future of the country and its people. This is not an isolated incident but rather part of a larger issue that requires urgent public discussion," columnist **Talal Al-Saeed** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

"The matter at hand is not merely about ministerial positions; it is about the direction of the nation's journey, which seems to be stumbling and heading towards failure. It is high time to address this underlying problem and broaden the circle of consultations.

"The situation started with the issuance of a decree to form the ministry, only to be withdrawn due to the controversy surrounding one of the selected candidates. Subsequently, the same person was reappointed to the ministry. Within a month of its formation, the ministry faced another setback with a resignation, leading the president to take over its responsibilities. It is evident, as clear as the midday sun, that there is a fundamental flaw in the system that needs to be openly discussed and resolved.

"To shed light on the root cause of the problem and find viable solutions, the Ministry of Information, with its resources and expertise, should have the courage to conduct a live program where specialists and experts from different perspectives can participate. Their opinions should be respected, as they hold the key to finding a way forward. Additionally, the program should be open to viewers from the Kuwaiti public, allowing them to express their opinions freely and responsibly, in line with the principles of the Kuwaiti constitution. It is crucial that senior officials listen to this dialogue.

"The current situation reflects a government that appears indifferent to the voices of the Kuwaiti people, seemingly only concerned with the opinions of an inner circle. This dismissive approach, epitomized by the motto "Let them say what they want and we do what we want," is a cause for great concern.

"Collectively, we must attempt to heal the wound that is affecting our nation and work towards finding a remedy. The fact that the resignation of two ministers in less than a month is treated as ordinary news is a sign of a significant crisis that demands immediate attention.

"In conclusion, it is imperative to initiate a transparent and inclusive dialogue to rectify the underlying issues plaguing the ministerial march and the overall trajectory of the nation. By actively engaging the Kuwaiti people and respecting their opinions, we can strive for a more united and prosperous future."



Al-Saeed

Also:

"Several days ago, the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior, Sheikh Talal Al-Khaleid, chaired a security meeting with the assistant undersecretaries, during which the minister defined the Ministry of Interior's strategy for the next stage through several axes," columnist **Tarek Hamadeh** wrote for **Al-Anba** daily.

"The first axis represented facilitation for citizens and residents in the completion of their transactions, based on the presence of service sectors, and the more the relationship with the beneficiary through modern technology means, the fewer errors and the implementation of controls without exception, which achieves justice and equality and prevents the occurrence of abuses.

"Reviewing the licenses issued to expatriates, tens of thousands of driving licenses have been withdrawn, and the owners of these withdrawn licenses, and despite the knowledge of a large segment of them that the licenses they obtained have been canceled, they use their cars, so relying on our information, God willing, we will see the fruits of this procedure on the roads soon.

"The third axis is to continue to maintain the level of readiness and vigilance and to exert more effort and work with patience in dealing with the public and full coordination between all security sectors.

"We must beware of these people's ability to commit crimes and immoral practices, manufacture alcohol, or promote drugs and thefts to provide a source of income through which they satisfy their living needs, so they pose a great danger to society and its security, and therefore focusing on pursuing them is very important.

"As for the last axis in the order and the highest in priority, it is the drug file, and we note the remarkable progress in this case by arresting dozens of drug dealers, may God protect Kuwait from all harm. We praise the efforts made by the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior."

"The city of Jeddah in Saudi Arabia recently hosted the 18th consultative meeting of the leaders of Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries and the Gulf Summit with Central Asian countries (C5)," columnist **Tareq Boursly** wrote for **Al-Anba** daily.

"The Gulf-Asian summit was aimed at opening horizons for cooperation in all fields in order to achieve security. It also set the years 2023-2027 for cooperation between Gulf and Central Asian countries.

"The speech of the representative of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishaal Al-Ahmad, at the summit reinforced the efforts of the Kuwaiti leadership and its aspirations to establish security, achieve development in the Gulf region and strengthen strategic partnerships with countries all over the world, especially since Kuwait follows the example of its sister countries in the GCC, which gave lessons on the basics of the work mechanism for foreign policy and the economy. Therefore, our countries excelled as active players and key partners in the region and throughout the world in times of peace and war.

"Yes, the speech of His Highness the Crown Prince at the Jeddah Summit was an affirmation of the need to strengthen strategic partnerships between the Gulf countries and Central Asia (C5) in investment, economic and security fields.

"It is now time to move towards trade and economic relations. Certainly, Kuwait is aware of the new directions with countries in Central Asia, especially in the field of global trade, Silk Road and the renaissance that the Gulf states agreed to push forward with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. This establishes and organizes economic summits at the Arab and international levels.

"We witnessed that His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishaal Al-Ahmad preferred to announce the international partnership between the Gulf and Central Asian countries. It is an overt political and economic agreement and a recommendation through the lines of the spoken word of His Highness. This confirmed that the Gulf countries have triumphed over the regional crisis and global challenges towards the unification of aspirations and the word before the summits that brought us together under the slogan, 'Our Gulf is One'. Our people are one, thanks to the leaders of goodness and benevolence.

"The understandings that emerged from the first Asian Gulf Summit added future guarantees for the Gulf

countries and peoples in light of the call for investment in the Gulf and vice versa. In this manner, our region will have security, peace, stability, diversified economy and conditions attracting foreign investment.

"This summit put Kuwait and the Gulf on the track of global competition towards effectively investing international money, including the opening of trade corridors and doors for the economic diversification of those countries and their natural resources. It protects the well-being of our people. It is a qualitative leap for development in all sectors of the Gulf countries - health, education or housing, by bringing the most efficient expertise from these countries.

"The speech of His Highness the Crown Prince reflects harmony of the two authorities, along with internal reform to keep pace with the competition for the global economy, as well as the competition to build a Middle Asian Gulf economy that will strengthen cooperation in these fields - environment, scientific research, industry, tourism, culture and international issues of mutual concern.

"From the window of the summit, we saw the implementation of global projects called for by the heads of the five countries. This necessitates cooperation with the Gulf states, including the call of the president of Kyrgyzstan to cooperate in building railways linking Central Asia with the Gulf, in addition to the aspiration of the president of Tajikistan for Gulf investments in the field of energy production, and attracting investments through the establishment of a special fund to provide financial support, and most importantly, the agreement to form a partnership in order to combat all forms of terrorism."

"Discussions about the government's work program ended in the National Assembly. There were tactical criticisms about it, while many regarded it as new formula for repeating points found in the programs of previous governments," columnist **Eng Adel Al-Khorafi** wrote for **Annahar** daily.

"It is true that MPs are accustomed to this type of criticism, because of electoral ambition or the demands of people in their constituencies to show their strength in front of the executive authority.

"All that has ended and the recommendations have been presented. Thus, the government's task has begun, but these questions remain: What will happen with these recommendations that will undoubtedly take their time in the committees? Will the Council of Ministers implement the proposed projects or will it work outside the program?

"It is necessary to lay down a plan and objectives through which the government, or even any small institution, works.

For example regarding taxes and fees, how will you convince the people in this regard if the Assembly and the people initially rejected them? If this recommendation is not implemented, what kind of performance we will witness in light of the critical situation due to the resignation of two ministers and the rumor about another minister submitting his resignation as well?

"Under such circumstances, it must be said explicitly that the government needs to change its approach. The mentality that prevailed in the past is no longer useful in light of the tensed situation the people are suffering. This is in addition to the solid and strong public will that dictated what it wanted in front of those who did not adhere to the electoral program in the past, as well as the growing resentment over the government's approach which, Kuwaitis believe, caused many crises in the country.

"The executive authority has a big responsibility. We are waiting for the government to prove its ability to manage the country and implement its plan despite the sudden resignation of two ministers (finance and education)."

"As part of State efforts to develop the educational system, there have been many distinct and prominent signs that left a clear impact," columnist **Dr Essa Al-Omairi** wrote for **Al-Anba** daily.

"Far from areas which do not serve the development of performance in the matter of global education, we say that the distinguished efforts we are talking about include the steps taken by higher education officials and staff to improve the educational edifice.

"Heading the staff in supervising the work is virtuous professor Vice-Dean of Education Lamia Al-Melhem, as well as Assistant Undersecretary Wafaa Al-Sarraf who is in charge of the management of external offices. They have been exerting outstanding and tangible efforts to achieve an important goal - to ease the burdens of our students abroad.

"These efforts have excelled in many locations and contributed significantly to the devotion of our scholarship students to their academic achievement. Such efforts aim to realize the desired goals of sponsorship and implementation of the State's directives to provide our students with the best conditions and means, so they can focus on their studies and achieve the best results. In this manner, our students will return to their home country armed with Science and knowledge that contribute to their entry into scientific life according to the best scholastic and educational standards.

"We must stand in appreciation of the State, considering its relentless and continuous endeavor to provide the best means in the field of education and guarantee the sustainability of the educational system - the reason it once reached the highest ranks on more than one level.

"When the foundation is correct and the inputs are based on advanced international standards, the outputs are correct and the desired goals of providing the best education and the best results are achieved. As a continuation of the education and scholarship chain, the efforts of those in charge of higher education must be commended here."

"The government's plan is not the Holy Qur'an that cannot be amended. Some are now frustrated, as they believe the program will not be implemented," columnist **Waleed Ibrahim Al-Ahmad** wrote for **Al-Rai** daily.

"We say this because some lawmakers have been attacking the program without realizing the possibility of adding bills, such as increasing the salary of employees and pension of retirees.

"The country's ship has yet to sail. It must be pushed forward to sail, then close ranks and cooperate in overcoming difficulties and face the huge waves during the nation-building journey.

"Let us be optimistic and move towards real development and renaissance and combat corruption. When we say combating corruption, we mean the government bears the heaviest burden in catching thieves and recovering the looted national funds. It is not enough to imprison the thief, while the recovery of stolen public money remains outside the coverage!

"Today, the government must treat its wounds and confront members of the National Assembly by taking steady steps, without blocking or evading interrogations that seem to be looming on the horizon!"

— Compiled by Mai Eisoukary

DGFD finds charred remains of person; expat hangs self

Man shoots himself; 2 expats arrested for thefts

KUWAIT CITY, July 25: The Public Relations and Media Department of the General Fire Force stated that charred remains of a person have been found inside a container, reports **Al-Rai** daily.

The daily added, after the Directorate-General of Fire Department (DGFD) received a report that a container was ablaze in the suburb of Saad Al-Abdullah fire brigade from the Tahrir Center rushed to the site of the fire and put out the fire and found the charred remains of a person inside.



Al-Rai photo

The container in which the charred remains were found.

Man shoots self: A security source stated that a person who shot himself at the shooting range in Sabhan, was rushed to a hospital but doctors could not save his life, reports **Al-Rai** daily.

The source added, "The security men moved to the location of the incident to find out the circumstances, according to the report" but gave no details.

The daily did not give more details.

22 persons held: Officers at the Residence Affairs Investigations General Department in the Interior Ministry has arrested 22 individuals who violated the Residency and Labor laws and shut down two fake domestic labor recruitment offices in Salmiya and Sabah Al-Nasser, reports **Al-Rai** daily.

The Public Relations and Security Media Department disclosed that the officers raided the two offices found to be housing nine individuals who violated the Residency and Labor laws in Sabah Al-Nasser; in addition to 13 who were arrested in Salmiya. Six of those arrested are under Article 20 visa (domestic workers), eight absconders, six who failed to present a valid identification document, one under Article 18 visa (private sector employee) and one wanted by law for committing an undisclosed crime.

All those arrested were referred to the competent authorities and legal measures were taken against them.

Guard commits suicide: An Asian guard in his 30s committed suicide by hanging himself inside his room in the camel area. The Operations Room of the Ministry of Interior received a report two days ago from a citizen who found the guard's lifeless body in his room, reports **Al-Anba** daily.

Upon receiving the report, security personnel, forensic experts, and a coroner promptly arrived at the site to investigate. The preliminary findings revealed that the expatriate, who worked as a guard on the farm, had committed suicide by tying a rope around his neck and fixing it to the ceiling of his room.

The body has been transferred to the forensic evidence department for further examination.

8 A/C units stolen: Two expats have been arrested for stealing 8 air-conditioning units from 3 Hajj headquarters located in the Mangaf area, reports **Al-**

KUWAIT CITY, July 25: The Ministry of Health issued an administrative decision on forming a committee to conduct interviews and choose the best applicants for these positions - health, financial and administrative attachés in Kuwaiti embassies abroad, reports **Al-Qabas** daily.

The decision, which is the first of its kind according to the ministry, specifies the tasks of the committee; such as reviewing and evaluating the qualifications of applicants, and interviewing those who meet the conditions as per the decisions and circulars of the Civil Service Commission (CSC) and relevant ministerial decisions. This move is aimed at ensuring impartiality and equality among applicants.

The ministry said this decision, which was issued under the directive of Health Minister Dr Ahmed Al-Awadi, will guarantee transparency.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Health has transferred the excellent job performance bonus for eligible employees in the Engineering Affairs Sector to the Central Bank of Kuwait in order to deposit the bonus to the bank accounts of beneficiaries, reports **Al-Anba** daily quoting sources.

Sources confirmed that the ministry continues to disburse the bonus to employees whose annual job performance evaluation was amended.

Anba daily. The daily said the suspects attempted to flee the scene but were identified and arrested by the securitymen after coordinating efforts with Hajj campaigns.

The theft occurred yesterday and the arrest came after the owners of the Hajj campaigns provided the CCTV footage of the suspects stealing the units which proved instrumental in tracking down the criminals. Additionally, the van used during the crime was identified through the video clips.

Sources added the grievances regarding the bonus will be submitted to the concerned authority after the payment of the bonus to all beneficiaries.

In the meantime, Minister of Health Dr Ahmed Al-Awadi recently issued three ministerial decisions regarding the work mechanism in the public health, dental and healthcare sectors as part of organizational procedures and based on the administrative structure of the ministry to ensure smooth flow of work, reports **Al-Anba** daily.

These decisions include the appointment of Dr Al-Mundhir Al-Hassawi as Assistant Undersecretary for Public Health Affairs, in addition to his duties as head of the AIDS Office. Dr Ahmed Asad was appointed Assistant Undersecretary for Dental Affairs, in addition to his duties as head of the Jahra Specialized Dental Center; while Dr Nadia Juma was appointed Assistant Undersecretary for Healthcare Affairs, in addition to her duties as head of the General Medical Council.

According to the ministry, the Healthcare Sector consists of the following departments: primary healthcare, affairs of people with special needs, patients' safety, prevention and response to chronic non-communicable diseases, school health and health services for the elderly.

The ministry added that the three decisions took effect on Sunday.

4 sought for thefts: Police are looking for four unidentified suspects for breaking into a company in the Al-Mutla'a area and stealing the company's main seal, three notebooks, cartons, a portable hard disk, and a prepaid water card, reports **Al-Anba** daily.

The daily added, the incident came to light when a Bangladeshi guard, who was responsible for the site's security, informed the company management. The incident has been classified as a felony.

Interior vows

Continued from Page 1

The Interpol department plays a crucial role in coordinating with Gulf Arab and international police organizations, dating back to its establishment in 1962, after Kuwait signed the Criminal Exchange Agreement under the League of Arab States.

Some of the essential tasks performed by the Interpol department include pursuing criminals wanted outside Kuwait's borders, tracking down individuals wanted by other countries within Kuwait, facilitating international exchange of security and judicial information, and collaborating with state agencies to locate and apprehend wanted persons.

In addition, the Interpol administration executes agreements concerning the transfer of prisoners to and from Kuwait in coordination with the Ministries of Foreign Affairs.

Recently, the Interpol administration organized a workshop focused on combating bioterrorism, which saw participation from various national entities such as the Ministry of Health, Fire Department, scientific research organizations, customs, the Ministry of Defense, and the General Directorate of Civil Defense, to fortify Kuwait's national plan for civil defense.

Through these proactive measures and continuous efforts, Kuwait aims to bolster its security apparatus and stay ahead in combating terrorism and criminal activities both nationally and globally.

The most important tasks of Interpol management include pursuing wanted criminals outside Kuwait, chasing the wanted persons inside Kuwait, international exchange of security and judicial information and coordinating with state agencies to follow up on wanted persons.

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French President Emmanuel Macron pays tribute to the Kanak tribe of Hwadrilla, where the 19 Kanak militants are buried, on Ouvéa Island, off New Caledonia, Saturday, May 5, 2018. The French president headed to the South Pacific on Monday, July 24, 2023 to make France's voice heard in a region shaping up as a prime geopolitical battleground for China and the United States. (AP)



Macron promotes French interests on a trip to South Pacific

The French president is pressing his country's interests in the South Pacific this week and trying to make France's voice heard in a region shaping up as a prime geopolitical battleground for China and the U.S.

President Emmanuel Macron's trip to Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu and New Caledonia starting Monday comes as French forces take part in massive U.S.-Australian-led military exercises in the region. With troops, citizens and resources spread across

its Pacific territories, France wants to protect its interests and project its power alongside like-minded democracies worried about China's growing assertiveness.

The most strategically important stop is Thursday in Papua New Guinea, which has seen growing Chinese influence and signed a new security cooperation pact with the U.S. in May. The most populous Pacific Island nation is also negotiating a security treaty with Australia.

Macron's office insists the trip is not aimed at pressing an "anti-China policy," but at encouraging regional powers to diversify their partnerships beyond Beijing and Washington. He felt the trip was needed because of "new, more intense threats" to security, institutions and the environment in the region, according to an official in Macron's office who spoke on condition of anonymity because they weren't authorized to speak publicly on the matter. (AP)

Market Movements

25-07-2023

	Change	Closing pts		Change	Closing pts
UAE - DFM	+0.53	4,014.86	JAPAN - Nikkei	-0.06	32,682.51
PAKISTAN - KSE 100	+0.72	46,399.21	EGYPT - EGX 30	-0.40	17,479.94
PHILIPPINES - PSEI	+0.45	6,661.11			
SAUDI - Tadawul	+0.68	11,882.68			

Business

UK's reputation in global AI arena boosted

Britain's 'Brain' heralds new era of commerce enabled AI

LONDON, July 25, (PR Newswire): Rezolve AI Limited, the UK's leading AI innovator, today announced the introduction of its transformative AI platform, 'Brain'. This remarkable development promises to catalyse a new era of eCommerce interaction and data analysis, further boosting the UK's reputation in the global AI arena.

Developed by the expert team at Rezolve led by Dr Salman Ahmad, 'Brain' is a product discovery engine that redefines eCommerce interactions. By harnessing proprietary sophisticated algorithms, advanced machine learning, and natural language processing, Brain behaves like a highly knowledgeable sales assistant, armed with unparalleled product information and insight.

With Brain, consumers can engage eCommerce sites conversationally, asking detailed queries and receiving responses that exhibit deep product understanding and relevance. These interactions can be carried out in any one of 95 different languages allowing instant interaction regardless of nationality and retail store. This approach to product discovery and customer interaction revolutionises the eCommerce landscape, offering a level of personalised service previously unseen.

Dan Wagner, noted, "Brain is more than a product; it is a catalyst for a

new era of business efficiency, empowering organisations to harness data and deliver superior customer experiences. Britain has always been at the forefront of developments in search and retrieval and from the early 90s I have been working with the very best minds from Cambridge University in shaping computer-aided text and image retrieval. Brain is the culmination of decades of sophisticated British technical engineering and Brain today leads the world in Natural Language Processing and Large Language Models engineered for commerce."

Michelle Donelan, Secretary of State for Science, Innovation, and Technology added, "Rezolve's Brain is yet another example of great British AI innovation. AI has the potential to transform our public services, create better jobs and grow our economy. Alongside our global leadership on AI safety, the Department of Science, Innovation and Technology is driving innovation throughout the UK, creating the environment for companies to start-up and grow."

Saurabh Chandra, Managing Director of Boston Consulting Group's Platinium, AI pioneer and an Ex Amazon and Flipkart veteran, commented, "Rezolve's conversational AI offering - Brain - is perfectly aligned with the changing trends in the retail industry and has the potential to be a game-

changer. Not only is it enhancing the consumer experience and driving business growth, but it also delivers real-time insights using Data & AI/ML (machine learning), at scale. Brain is at the vanguard of AI developments based on distributed computing, federated data architecture, effective AI/ML models and an open API interface providing a plug & play experience for B2C & B2B customers and their ecosystems."

To learn more about Rezolve and Brain, please visit www.rezolve.com and www.mybrain.zone.

Editors Notes:

Brain is designed for businesses, consumers, and academic institutions to ingest and analyse their own proprietary content focussing on product catalogues but not restricted to them. For instance, academic institutions can upload dissertations, which Brain can then summarise and analyse, providing critical insights and understanding.

These adaptable Brain functions integrate seamlessly with existing systems across a wide array of industries, promoting a seamless transition into this innovative AI era. The functionalities of Brain can be tailored to suit specific needs, from enhancing customer service interactions to optimising returns management and refining after sales support.

\$23.7 bln in combined assets

Atlantic Union announces deal to acquire American National

RICHMOND, & DANVILLE, Va., July 25, (Business Wire): Atlantic Union Bankshares Corporation ("Atlantic Union") (NYSE: AUB) and American National Bankshares Inc. ("American National") (Nasdaq: AMNB) jointly announced today that they have entered into a definitive merger agreement for Atlantic Union to acquire American National in an all-stock transaction. Combining the two organizations will strengthen Atlantic Union, the largest regional bank headquartered in Virginia, by deepening its presence in Southwest and Southside Virginia.

The combined company will have total assets of \$23.7 billion, total deposits of \$19.1 billion and gross loans of \$17.3 billion, based on financial data as of June 30, 2023.

"American National is a high-quality community bank with an exceptional 114-year history, a strong core deposit base and outstanding asset quality," said John C. Asbury, President and Chief Executive Officer of Atlantic Union. "This is a company and leadership team we have long admired and know well, and the relationship between our two banks spans decades. We expect that our combined footprint will bring additional convenience to our customers and position us as an even stronger competitor against the large national, super-regional and smaller community banks. Increasing our presence in Roanoke and entering Southside Virginia will further build out our Virginia franchise and the transaction will also allow us to gain meaningful entry into North Carolina's attractive Piedmont Triad region and Raleigh. With a more diversified deposit base, expected synergies and enhanced growth market opportunities, we believe the combined franchise will be able to generate a higher level of financial performance for our shareholders."

"Partnering with Atlantic Union will unlock more value for all of our stakeholders," said Jeff Haley, Chairman, President and Chief Executive Officer of American National. "In a rapidly changing industry, this combination will give us the ability to continue to meet our customers' banking needs with new technology and resources while providing increased opportunities for our employees. I believe we are bringing together two of the best banks in Virginia to realize tremendous opportunities. And at the root of this partnership are two solid banks with very compatible cultures which ultimately will make us stronger together."

"As Jeff said, we are excited about the opportunity to bring two of the best banks headquartered in Virginia together," said Ron Tillet, Chairman of Atlantic Union's Board of Directors. "We believe that the combination of our two companies creates a uniquely valuable franchise that is able to better serve our customers and markets while creating long-term shareholder value."

Two members of the American National board of directors, Nancy Howell Agee and Joel R. Shepherd, will join the Atlantic Union board of directors. After closing, Haley will assist in the integration of the two companies and advise on the combined bank's regional community banking model in the legacy American National markets and serve as the bank's representative to two Danville-based charitable trusts.

Under the terms of the merger agreement, each outstanding share of American National common stock will be converted into the right to receive 1.35 shares of Atlantic Union common stock, valuing the transaction at approximately \$416.8 million, or \$39.23 per share, based on Atlantic Union's ten-day weighted average closing stock price ending July 24, 2023.

The merger agreement has been unanimously approved by the board of directors of each company. The companies expect to complete the transaction in the first quarter of 2024, subject to the satisfaction of customary closing

conditions, including regulatory approvals and American National shareholder approval.

Piper Sandler & Co. is acting as financial advisor to Atlantic Union and Covington & Burling LLP is acting as its legal advisor in the transaction. Keefe, Bruyette & Woods, Inc., is acting as financial advisor to American National and Williams Mullen is acting as its legal advisor in the transaction.

Atlantic Union will host a conference call to discuss its second quarter earnings at 9:00 a.m. Eastern Time today, July 25, 2023 and American National will join to discuss today's announcement.

The webcast with investor presentation can be accessed at:

<https://edge.media-server.com/mmc/p/g5jw6mu3>. For analysts who wish to participate in the conference call, please register at the following URL: <https://register.event.com/register/B11a5d16a5982740369c57e980002f5ab6>. To participate in the conference call, you must use the link to receive an audio dial-in number and an Access PIN.

Presentation slides for the conference call are available on Atlantic Union's investor website: <http://investors.atlanticunionbank.com> and on American National's investor website: <https://americannationalbank.q4ir.com/overview/corporate-profile/default.aspx>. A replay of the conference call will be posted on Atlantic Union's investor website.

Senior leadership of Atlantic Union will be available virtually to members of the news media from 3:15 p.m. to 3:45 p.m. Eastern Time today, July 25, 2023. To participate, please contact Beth Shivak, Atlantic Union's SVP and Director of Corporate Communications at: 804.327.5746.

Headquartered in Richmond, Virginia, Atlantic Union is the holding company for Atlantic Union Bank. Atlantic Union Bank has 109 branches and approximately 125 ATMs located throughout Virginia, and in portions of Maryland and North Carolina. Certain non-bank financial services affiliates of Atlantic Union Bank include: Atlantic Union Equipment Finance, Inc., which provides equipment financing; Atlantic Union Financial Consultants, LLC, which provides brokerage services; and Union Insurance Group, LLC, which offers various lines of insurance products.

About American National Bankshares Inc.

American National is a multi-state bank holding company with total assets of approximately \$3.1 billion. Headquartered in Danville, Virginia, American National is the parent company of American National Bank and Trust Company. American National Bank is a community bank serving Virginia and North Carolina with 26 banking offices. American National Bank also manages an additional \$1.2 billion of trust, investment and brokerage assets in its Wealth Management Division.

Certain statements in this press release constitute "forward-looking statements" within the meaning of the Private Securities Litigation Reform Act of 1995. Examples of forward-looking statements include, but are not limited to, statements regarding the outlook and expectations of Atlantic Union with respect to the proposed transaction, the strategic benefits and financial benefits of the proposed transaction, including the expected impact of the proposed transaction on the combined company's future financial performance (including anticipated accretion to earnings per share, the tangible book value earn-back period and other operating and return metrics), the timing of the closing of the proposed transaction, and the ability to successfully integrate the combined businesses.

Wall St rises ahead of Big Tech profit reports



A currency trader watches monitors at the foreign exchange dealing room of the KEB Hana Bank headquarters in Seoul, South Korea, Tuesday, July 25, 2023. Asian stock markets followed Wall Street higher on Tuesday after China's ruling Communist Party promised to shore up its sagging economy ahead of a Federal Reserve meeting traders hope will announce this interest rate cycle's final increase. (AP)

Asian markets follow Wall St up

NEW YORK, July 25, (AP): Stocks are ticking higher Tuesday as Wall Street waits to hear from some of its most influential companies, and whether their huge rally this year was justified.

The S&P 500 was 0.3% higher in afternoon trading, near its highest level in more than 15 months. The Dow Jones Industrial Average was up 59 points, or 0.2%, at 34,470, as of 12:38 p.m. Eastern time, and the Nasdaq composite was 0.7% higher.

General Electric was helping to lead the market as earnings reporting season picks up momentum. GE rallied 5.9% after it reported stronger profit for the spring than analysts expected. It also raised its forecasts for full-year revenue and profits.

Another industrial giant, 3M, rose 5% after the maker of Scotch-Brite and Post-it raised its forecast for profits for the full year thanks in part to cost cutting efforts. Home builder PulteGroup climbed 5.8% after reporting stronger profit for the spring than expected.

On the losing side of Wall Street were airline stocks, led by Alaska Air Group. It fell 9.9% despite reporting stronger profit and revenue for the latest quarter than expected. Analysts said investors may have been disappointed with its financial forecasts for the current quarter.

Raytheon tumbled 12.5% after it said

accelerated removals and inspections are needed for some of its Pratt & Whitney aircraft engines to look for a rare condition in powder metal. That pushed it to lower its forecast for how much cash it will generate this year, though it reported stronger profit and revenue for the spring than analysts expected.

This week is a busy one for earnings reports, and roughly 30% of the companies in the S&P 500 are on the schedule. Attention turns next to two behemoths that will report after trading closes Tuesday, Alphabet and Microsoft.

They are two of the seven stocks behind the majority of the S&P 500's 19% gain through the first half of the year. Both are up at least 38% for the year so far on expectations they'll continue to deliver strong growth, and the numbers they produce in the afternoon will offer more clues about whether those expectations are reasonable.

This week's other highlight for Wall Street is also getting underway Tuesday: the Federal Reserve's latest meeting on interest rates.

The wide expectation is for the Fed on Wednesday to announce another increase to interest rates, as it tries to get high inflation under control. That would take the federal funds rate to a range of 5.25% to 5.50%, its highest level since 2001 and up from virtually zero early last year.

High rates grind down on inflation by slowing the entire economy and hurting prices for stocks and other investments. The hope among traders is Wednesday's move will be the final increase of this cycle because inflation has been cooling since last summer.

Such hopes, along with rising belief that the economy can avoid a long-predicted recession, have helped stocks rally strongly this year. The job market has remained remarkably solid, which has allowed U.S. households to keep spending and propping up the economy. A report on Tuesday showed confidence among U.S. consumers rose by more than economists expected.

But many on Wall Street warn the Fed is unlikely to give any signals on Wednesday that it's done raising rates. Inflation is still high, even if it's moderated somewhat, and the economy may have to "yield to a long but shallow recession if the Fed is to return inflation to its 2% target," according to Steven Ricchiuto, US chief economist at Mizuho Securities.

In the bond market, yields were mixed for Treasuries.

The 10-year Treasury yield rose to 3.89% from 3.88% late Monday. It helps set rates for mortgages and other important loans. The two-year Treasury yield, which moves more on the market's expectations for Fed action, slipped to 4.90% from 4.92%.

Europe

In early trading, the FTSE 100 in London rose 0.1% to 7,686.57. The CAC 40 in Paris lost less than 0.1% to 7,424.47 and the DAX in Frankfurt shed less than 0.1% to 16,186.36.

Asia

Asian stock markets followed Wall Street higher Tuesday after China's ruling Communist Party promised to shore up its sagging economy ahead of a Federal Reserve meeting traders hope will announce this interest rate

cycle's final increase.

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

The Chinese ruling party on Monday promised measures to boost sluggish economic growth by supporting real estate sales and other struggling sectors but gave no details and didn't mention possible stimulus spending.

Any stimulus is "unlikely to be significant" while Beijing takes a "gradual and targeted approach," said Andrew McCaffery of Fidelity International in a report.

The Shanghai Composite Index rose 2% to 3,226.95 and the Hang Seng in Hong Kong surged 3.2% to 19,268.04. The Nikkei 225 in Tokyo shed 0.3% to 32,598.91 while the Kospi in Seoul advanced less than 0.1% to 2,629.26. Sydney's S&P-ASX 200 gained 0.4% to 7,335.40.

India's Sensex opened up less than 0.1% at 66,403.69. New Zealand declined while Southeast Asian markets advanced.

Oil

In energy markets, benchmark U.S. crude rose 20 cents to \$78.94 per barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. The contract rose \$1.67 on Monday to \$78.74. Brent crude, the price basis for international oil trading, advanced 15 cents to \$82.63 per barrel in London. It gained \$1.67 the previous session to \$82.74.

Currencies

The dollar was little-changed at 141.45 yen. The euro advanced to \$1.1075 from \$1.1071.

China Trading Desk launches China Travel Dashboard

China Trading Desk, a premier provider of marketing and advertising solutions for the Chinese market, is proud to announce the release of our game-changing tool - the China Travel Dashboard. Built to provide unparalleled insights into the evolving attitudes, expectations, and behaviours of outbound travellers from China, this dashboard is born out of our deep understanding of the Chinese market, a sector that has

witnessed a remarkable upward trajectory in recent years.

Our newly launched China Travel Dashboard is designed to act as a compass, helping our clients navigate the complexity of this dynamic market. The dashboard brings a treasure trove of critical information to your fingertips, transforming it into a must-have tool for formulating and executing digital marketing campaigns aimed at Chinese tourists.

Here's a quick overview of the unique modules the China Travel Dashboard encompasses: Subramania Bhatt, Founder & CEO of China Trading Desk, stated, "We are thrilled to bring this comprehensive tool to our esteemed clients. The China Travel Dashboard is a solid reflection of our relentless commitment to staying on the cutting edge of providing data that's most relevant for our advertisers and agencies. (AP)

Rossell Techsys unveils state-of-the-art lab

Rossell Techsys, a leading global engineering and manufacturing company in the aerospace and defense sector, is proud to announce the inauguration of its new Calibration and Metrology Lab at its India facility in Devanahalli, Bangalore. This milestone event, attended by Peter Johnson, vice president and general manager of Fabrication for Boeing Commercial Airplanes, represents a significant leap forward

in the company's commitment to customer-centric investments and enhanced value delivery. It also underscores Rossell Techsys' unwavering dedication to quality and customer satisfaction.

"We are delighted to inaugurate our state-of-the-art Calibration and Metrology Lab," said Mr. Rishab Mohan Gupta, Promoter Group member and Director, Rossell India Limited.

"This facility represents our commitment to maintaining the highest standards of precision and quality in all aspects of our operations. It allows us to deliver exceptional value to our customers, who rely on us for critical components. With this investment, we enhance our capabilities and reinforce our position as a trusted leader in the aerospace and defense industry." (AP)

Earnings Per Share stands at 11 fils compared to 8 fils in the previous year

ABK first half financial results: KD 23.9 mln net profit –30% growth

KUWAIT CITY, July 25: Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) recently announced its financial results for the first half of the fiscal year 2023 ended 30 June 2023. ABK reported a Net Profit of KD 23.9 million compared to KD 18.4 million in the same period in 2022, reflecting a 30% increase. Earnings Per Share stood at 11 fils compared to 8 fils in the previous year.

ABK reported an Operating Profit of KD 44.3 million, Total Assets of KD 6.3 billion, Customer Deposits of KD 4.0 billion, and its loan portfolio totaled KD 4.3 billion. The Non-Performing Loan (NPL) ratio stood at 1.36%, NPL Coverage at 376%, Capital Adequacy Ratio (CAR) at 15.06%, and Shareholders' Equity at KD 497.5 million.

Financial Performance

Commenting on the results, Mr. Talal Behbehani, Chairman of ABK, stated, "ABK's performance in the first half of 2023 is a result of proactive financial management focused on achieving sustainable growth and enhancing value despite the economic challenges prevalent in the local, regional and global markets. Our strategy focuses on enriching customer experience and simplifying our offerings by adopting the latest digital and technological solutions. We also continue to enhance and build on cross-border offerings for our customers across the markets in which we operate and continue to capitalize on growth opportunities in these markets."

He added, "We remain prudent and cautious in managing our risks, securing the interests of our shareholders and stakeholders, protecting the intrinsic value of our franchise, and enhancing the solidity of our balance sheet. Our investment grade credit ratings by Moody's (A2) and Fitch (A) are a reflection of the confidence ABK has secured at the global level."

"I would like to also reaffirm our preparedness to actively contribute to development initiatives aligned with Kuwait Vision 2035 and our determination to foster successful outcomes in line with the national strategic vision," continued Mr. Behbehani.

The Chairman expressed his appreciation to the central banks and regulatory authorities in Kuwait, Egypt and the UAE, alongside the Dubai International Financial Centre (DIFC), for their ongoing support and guidance. Mr. Behbehani also lauded the efforts of ABK's shareholders, Board of Directors, Executive Management and staff for their persistent dedication in ensuring that ABK continues to demonstrate high levels of performance.

Mr. Abdulla Al Sumait, Acting Group CEO at ABK, reiterated, "Our financial results depict notable growth across several key financial indicators, reflecting the effectiveness of our implemented strategy."

He continued, "Our commitment to expanding our market presence remains unwavering, encompassing both individual and corporate clients. We ensure to meticulously analyze any developments to proactively devise strategies to effectively navigate obstacles that may arise."

In addition to the strength of ABK's strategy, Mr. Al Sumait attributed the positive financial results to the consistent efforts of employees. He emphasized, "ABK places a significant emphasis on attracting top talent to join our workforce. We also continue to place particular focus on increasing the percentage of national employment, specifically amongst the youth segment. This is in addition to women empowerment with an aim of achieving gender equality in the workplace."

He shared that it is crucial to continuously develop employees' skill sets and capabilities, foster innova-



Mr. Talal Mohamed Reza Behbehani - ABK Chairman.



Abdulla Al-Sumait - Acting Group Chief Executive Officer

tion and provide training sessions with specialized institutes. Highlighting their importance, he said, "These efforts are imperative for developing a conducive work environment, enhancing employee productivity, and strengthening competitiveness in the banking sector."

Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) Considerations
Recognizing the increasing importance of ESG factors to investors and stakeholders, ABK has diligently endeavored to incorporate these principles into its business.

ABK disclosed its firm belief that robust ESG practices have a direct and positive impact on its financial results. This contributes to sustainable development, ultimately fostering long-term growth.

Through the integration of ESG into our operations, the Group strives to minimize environmental impact, promote social well being, and deliver responsible governance practices. This, in turn, greatly contributes to positioning ABK as a responsible and ethical financial institution.

Digital Transformation
ABK strongly believes that digital transformation is vital when it comes to empowering banks to meet changing customer expectations, drive operational efficiency, reduce costs, enhance security, and explore new business opportunities.

"This is an important enabler to offer seamless, convenient, and personalized service to customers," said Mr. Al Sumait. This was exemplified in the recent inauguration of ABK's digital branch in Al Khiran Mall, boasting cutting-edge technology, alongside the launch of various digital services. He continued, "These endeavors aim to enhance customer confidence, trust, and convenience by simplifying banking transactions."

Corporate Social Responsibility
ABK shed light on its leading role in corporate social responsibility, which includes supporting, sponsoring, and implementing various initiatives, activities, sports, and wellness events. This includes participation in career fairs at universities to support students and education where involvement in

UAE, UN, INTERPOL & EUROPOL join forces to tackle Environmental Crime and climate crisis

'Global challenges require global solutions'

ABU DHABI, July 25, (AP): The International Initiative of Law Enforcement for Climate (I2LEC), a joint initiative led by the UAE Ministry of Interior in close partnership with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), launched today its roadmap for the years 2023 to 2025 focusing on five major initiatives aimed at tackling environmental crime and the climate crisis at large.

The launch followed a meeting of the I2LEC's Steering Committee, which discussed the need for global action, including increased training and joint operations to address climate challenges and combat crimes against the environment. The roadmap will guide the actions and areas of work of I2LEC in the years ahead.

The Steering Committee gathered I2LEC partners and representatives from international bodies including UNODC, INTERPOL, the UNEP/OCHA Joint Environmental Unit, EUROPOL, ESRI, UNPOL and the UAE Ministry of the Interior, who unanimously agreed to the importance of international cooperation and coordination in addressing the challenges brought about by climate change, on a global scale.

The 2023- 2025 Roadmap encompasses a number of global initiatives, spearheaded by various members of the Steering Committee. These initiatives include a White Paper on crimes that affect the environment in addition to a global gaps and needs assessment, a UN Climate Incident Observers, a Global Training Hub, and Interpol-led Joint Climate Operations Unit targeting crimes that affect the environment and climate change. Each of these initiatives will be led by an organization member of the I2LEC Steering Committee.

Lt. Col. Dana Humaid, Director General of the International Affairs Bureau of the UAE Ministry of Interior, highlighted the importance of having a roadmap in place to ensure all relevant partners are proactively enhancing the ability of law enforcement agencies to address the challenges brought about by climate change:

"Global challenges require global

such events reflects its pledge to give back to society and strengthen its presence in the community.

ABK also continues its support of the 'Let's Be Aware' banking awareness campaign. In collaboration with the Central Bank of Kuwait and Kuwait Banking Association, the goal of the campaign is to raise financial and banking awareness among customers and promote financial inclusion in society.

ABK was recognized as one of the top three contributors to the campaign's success in 2022, as announced earlier this year. As such, ABK remains dedicated to spreading relevant information through its branches, social media platforms, and other potential opportunities.

Since its establishment in 1967, ABK has progressed to become one

Ooredoo, Zain and TASC Towers Holding enter exclusive negotiations to create an independent tower company

DOHA/KUWAIT CITY/DUBAI, July 25: Ooredoo Q.P.S.C. ("Ooredoo") - Ticker: ORDS announced that Ooredoo Group has entered exclusive negotiations with Mobile Telecommunications Company K.S.C.P. (Zain Group) and UAE based TASC Towers Holding to combine their approximately 30,000 telecommunication tower assets in Qatar, Kuwait, Algeria, Tunisia, Iraq and Jordan into a jointly owned independent tower company in a cash and share deal.

This new partnership will form the largest tower company in the MENA region. The enlarged tower company will continue to operate as an independent and standalone entity providing passive infrastructure as a service throughout the region with a focus on operational efficiencies, synergies and reduction of carbon footprint.

Both Ooredoo and Zain will retain their respective active infrastructure, including wireless communication antennas, intelligent software, and intellectual property with respect to managing their telecom networks.

solutions. This productive Steering Committee meeting has once again highlighted that not only is it critical that law enforcement is prepared for climate change, but that we also have the means and understanding to prevent and prosecute crimes against the environment.

At the Ministry, we will be leading the I2LEC global preparedness assessment, allowing us to gain an authoritative understanding of the gaps and needs of global law enforcement in relation to climate change. Following this, we will also be establishing a global training hub in Abu Dhabi, to support law enforcement agencies around the world in this endeavor", said Lt. Col. Humaid.

Dr. Hatem Aly, UNODC Regional Representative for the Gulf Cooperation Council Region, reiterated UNODC's support to I2LEC as the co-chair of the initiative.

"On behalf of UNODC at large, I reaffirm our utmost commitment to the technical and strategic support at all levels for the implementation of this joint initiative. To this end, UNODC will embark on a comprehensive research paper on crimes that affect the environment, with the aim of presenting these findings at COP28 under the I2LEC banner. Initiatives and projects adopted within the framework of the I2LEC will tap into the existing data platforms and specialized expertise of our partners members of the initiative towards increased public awareness and strengthening technical capacities of law enforcement addressing crimes that affect the environment and climate. In this context, UNODC pledges to avail the integrated technical capacities of its relevant regional and global

instruments and programmatic platforms."

Steven Kavanagh, Executive Director for Police Services at INTERPOL commented: "Tackling environmental crime has become a key mission of law enforcement agencies. For the past 100 years, INTERPOL has played a leading role in developing international law enforcement operations according to the most prevalent threats. As the stakes of climate change raise, our environmental security strategy must reflect the scale of the threat we all face. We are passionate about this mission, and we are determined to leverage our expertise in environmental enforcement to deliver a stronger response and global joint operations together with I2LEC partners."

United Nations Police Adviser Faisal Shahkhan added, "A comprehensive response to address the climate crisis is urgently needed. I applaud the launch of this two-year roadmap, which will help strengthen our support to police in host countries that are tackling climate challenges and crimes against the environment. Mainstreaming environmentally responsive policing through critical partnerships such as this contributes towards building a United Nations Police force that is better prepared for a future of rising temperatures, increased food and water insecurity, climate-related crime and conflict. We look forward to contributing to the I2LEC initiative, including through the training and deployment of United Nations Police experts".

Guilhem Soulie, Esri's Lead for National Security in Middle East & Africa, highlighted the importance of having access to diverse datasets and

This transaction will create a potential shareholder value uplift for both Ooredoo Group and Zain Group through a more efficient capital structure. Both operators are committed to executing on their respective growth strategies to unlock significant capital and maximize value for shareholders while at the same time reducing the carbon footprint within the MENA region.

The parties will proceed with negotiations on an exclusive basis with a view to signing definitive agreements in Q3 2023. Ooredoo's tower network in Oman is following a stand-alone process.

The potential transaction remains subject to, amongst other factors, agreement on final terms, signing of definitive agreements and obtaining of all required corporate and regulatory approvals. The implementation of this transaction is expected to be executed in a customized timeline for each market considering the regulatory environment and ensuring a smooth transition for the operations.

enabling their joint management in order to enable I2LEC-relevant analytics to be performed:

"Crimes against climate have second, third order consequences, or ripple effects, that demand proper intelligence workflows to be dealt. This in turn demands full collaboration between a very diverse base of national and international organizations. Esri is humbled in leveraging its technological expertise to such an amazing array of international law enforcement agencies and is committed to providing its technology and expertise, particularly in the creation of the global preparedness assessment and interactive dashboard to massively increase our access to real-time climate intelligence."

The first Steering Committee meeting took place after several important milestones since the establishment of the initiative, including the I2LEC pledge, which was presented at the 32nd session of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ) in Vienna where it gained the support of more than 20 countries.

As of today, the UAE Ministry of Interior and the UNODC together with I2LEC's other partners will join forces towards the implementation of the 2023-2025 Roadmap. This includes several I2LEC-owned events taking place at COP28 in Dubai later this year, with the aim of driving further international awareness and support for the initiative.

I2LEC is a global initiative, aimed at awareness-raising, capacity-building and research concerning crimes that affect the environment and climate change, as well as the response of law enforcement to the changing climate.

FINSYNC announces open network to connect bankers with businesses and accelerate growth

ATLANTA, July 25, (AP): FINSYNC, Inc. ("FINSYNC"), the all-in-one platform that serves as a financial network to help connect everything and everyone needed to centralize control of cash flow and build a successful business, today announced bankers and companies can enjoy the benefits of its network for free.

To help more businesses go from startup to scale-up with less time and better results, companies can now join the FINSYNC open network and, for no charge, can:

"When it comes to success for businesses, relationships and networks are more important than ever," said Tucker Mathis, CEO and founder of FINSYNC. "Our mission is to help businesses manage cash flow with less time and improved results by working with financial partners who use our software to deliver unmatched services. This no-charge approach will help our bank partners connect with more businesses in a way that will help them both scale more successfully."

Another benefit of FINSYNC's open network is CollectEarly, an industry differentiator exclusively available through FINSYNC and select bank partners, that allows businesses to get paid weeks faster on invoices.

"Being able to connect with and empower local businesses in our community is core to who we are," said Cathy Cooper, EVP and chief consumer banker at WaFd Bank, a FINSYNC partner. "Connecting with businesses for free and offering innovative solutions like CollectEarly are an important part of our own growth strategy moving forward."

Ricky Gudino, the owner of Caked Las Vegas, was banking elsewhere before he met WaFd Bank personal

banker Dianne Pasimiak, who connected with him through FINSYNC. Via CollectEarly, Pasimiak was able to help Gudino go from waiting weeks to get paid on invoices to just hours and move his deposit accounts to WaFd Bank, a testament to the power of FINSYNC's open network.

"When I saw all my finances on FINSYNC's platform, it gave me such peace of mind, and CollectEarly has been huge for the growth of our business," Gudino said.

Of the roughly 32 million businesses in the United States, 78% have only one employee, and less than 1% have 26 employees or more. Building and scaling a successful business is increasingly difficult, and over 80% of companies that try to do so fail along the way as a result of poor cash flow management. FINSYNC's open network - with additional benefits like CollectEarly - can help streamline operations and fast-track payments.

"At Fulton Bank, we are pleased to offer FINSYNC to our business customers," said Michele Richards, EVP and Director of commercial product and strategy at Fulton Bank, another FINSYNC partner. "Simplifying payroll, projects and accounting into one, complete solution for cash flow management has proven valuable for our customers. Continuing to help businesses get started and grow supports our mission of changing lives for the better."

To learn more about FINSYNC and getting started as a business or financial institution partner, please visit www.finsync.com.

FINSYNC is the one platform that serves as a financial network for helping businesses connect everything and everyone needed to centralize control of cash flow and build a successful business.

Lynk demonstrates first-ever two-way standard phone voice calls by satellite

FALLS CHURCH, Va., July 25, (AP): Lynk Global, Inc., the world's leading sat2phone telecoms provider, today released the first-ever video of a series of two-way voice calls between standard-mobile-phones connected via satellite. The video shows multiple voice calls using standard mobile phones connected via Lynk's existing satellite-cell-towers in orbit. This press release features multimedia. View the full release here: <https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20230725806910/en/CharlesMiller>, CEO and co-founder of Lynk, stated, "Carl Sagan once remarked 'Extraordinary claims require

extraordinary evidence.' The video we release today underscores Lynk's commitment to a higher standard." Miller continued, "When Lynk completed the first-ever connection from a satellite to a standard phone on Earth in March 2020, we shared video to demonstrate our results to the world. Today we are doing the same for two-way voice calls." "Today's news goes to the heart of our mission to connect everyone, everywhere," noted Tyghe Speidel, CTO and co-founder at Lynk. "With initial service now underway in Palau for SMS messaging, and with other countries to follow this year, the Lynk team

is thrilled to demonstrate voice call capabilities. While we continue to prioritize SMS texting service for our MNO partners in the near term, these initial voice call results highlight advancements in our technology and move us a step closer to delivering on our mission," he continued.

To watch the video of Lynk's successful two-way voice call, click here. Lynk is the world's only patented, proven, and commercially-licensed satellite-direct-to-standard-mobile-phone system. Our service has been demonstrated, and is currently being deployed, in more than 20 countries with >30

MNO commercial service contracts covering >50 countries. Lynk's network, currently providing cell broadcast (emergency) alerts, and two-way SMS messaging, is compatible with every existing mobile phone on the planet. In the future, Lynk will launch voice and mobile broadband services. By partnering with Lynk via a simple roaming agreement, a mobile network operator opens the door to new revenue in untapped markets, gives subscribers peace of mind with ubiquitous connectivity, and provides a pathway to economic prosperity for billions of the world's citizens.

BUSINESS

UBS fined nearly \$400 million

Swiss banking giant UBS will pay nearly \$400 million in fines to U.S., Swiss and U.K. banking authorities for the management failures of Credit Suisse, which UBS bought in June, related to how Credit Suisse handled its relationship with collapsed hedge fund Arcegos Capital Management. Arcegos failed in 2021, costing Wall Street banks billions of dollars in losses, and Credit Suisse took the brunt of the losses.

The Swiss bank took more than \$5 billion in losses from Arcegos' failure, which over a period of two years, ultimately led to the fire sale of Credit Suisse to UBS in June.

Credit Suisse management was found to give Arcegos special treatment through its prime brokerage division, which caused the bank to take on undue risk when Arcegos purchased a highly concentrated position in

ViacomCBS. The firm's manager, Bill Hwang, is scheduled to face fraud charges for the collapse of Arcegos in October.

Credit Suisse failed to "adequately manage the risk posed by Arcegos despite repeated warnings," the Federal Reserve said in a statement on Monday. The announcement was made by the Fed alongside the Bank of England and the Swiss Financial Market Supervisory Authority. (AP)

China names Pan Gongsheng to lead central bank

Pan Gongsheng was named China's central bank governor Tuesday in the widely anticipated final major appointment of the ruling Communist Party's once-a-decade change of power.

Pan, a deputy central bank governor and veteran of China's state-owned banking industry, succeeds Yi Gang, an American-trained economist who held the post for five years. The endorsement of Pan's promotion by the ceremonial legislature, the

National People's Congress, follows other Cabinet-level appointments announced in March.

The governor of the People's Bank of China is the most prominent Chinese figure in finance circles but the post's powers are limited. The bank is controlled by the ruling Communist Party.

Pan, who turns 60 this month, met July 8 with visiting U.S. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen, indicating he was being promoted. He was widely assumed to be in line for the job af-

ter he was named Communist Party secretary for the central bank.

In 2015, Pan was appointed head of China's foreign exchange regulator, usually a stepping stone to the top central bank job. Earlier, he was a vice president of the Agricultural Bank of China Ltd., one of the country's four major commercial lenders.

Pan earned a Ph.D. in economics from Renmin University in Beijing and did research at Cambridge and Harvard Universities. (AP)

With breakthrough of intelligent cabin, JAECCO 7 leads the trend of intelligent 4WD 'off-road' SUV

KUWAIT CITY, July 25: With the accelerating pace of urban life, the demand of consumers for off-road SUVs is also undergoing a continuous evolution. As consumers' pursuit of technology and convenience continues to grow while traditional SUVs are struggling to meet their needs, the new off-road brand, JAECCO, has become the center of consumers' attention with its outstanding 4WD performance and innovative intelligent cabin, which will be launched in September this year.

JAECCO 7 is the first intelligent off-road SUV developed by the JAECCO brand, which fills the market vacancy with its outstanding off-road performance and intelligent technology. JAECCO7 was born from more than ten years of Chery's cooperation with Jaguar Land Rover, which integrates the wisdom and exquisite skills of master design teams from the UK and Germany.

In terms of exterior design, JAECCO7 inherits the classic elements of traditional off-road SUVs, while introducing the modern aesthetics design concepts, showcasing its unique charm with its elegant and rugged appearance as well as simple and smooth lines. In addition, JAECCO7's off-road performance is uncompromising. Equipped with JAECCO's unique new off-road technology program - ARDIS (All road drive intelligent system), it can easily cope with various road conditions and bring drivers excellent control and safety.

However, the excellence of JAECCO7 lies not only in its off-road performance, but also in its innovative and intelligent cabin experience. The 14.8-inch large screen equipped interior delivers a superior entertainment and audio-visual experience, while the powerful performance of the Qualcomm 8155 chip and the smooth interactive design enable the driver to enjoy the fun of technology. The W-HUD technology empowers drivers with clear access to driving information, while the transparent chassis provides more precise



Left and right: The intelligent off-road SUV.



information on vehicle status and navigation, thus realizing intelligent control of multiple functions.

As the masterpiece of the JAECCO brand, JAECCO 7 continues to attract consumers' attention, and will make its debut in the Eastern European market, followed by its launch in Central and South America, the Middle East, Australia and other regions. Customers in Kuwait will be able to experience the

JAECCO new models soon, with the company reportedly to launch in Kuwait in the last quarter of year 2023. In addition to meeting consumers' needs for off-road and urban life, it also demonstrates to the market the unlimited potential of intelligent off-road SUVs. JAECCO will continue its innovations to bring consumers more surprising products and provide more innovative forces for the off-road SUV market.

General Motors Q2 profit up 52 pct on strong sales

Company confirms new Chevy Bolt EV is coming

DETROIT, July 25, (AP): Despite taking on a huge chunk of an expensive electric vehicle recall, General Motors posted \$2.54 billion in second-quarter net income, a 52% increase over a year ago.

Continued strong vehicle sales and pricing, as well as cost cuts, led to the better-than-expected quarter. The Detroit automaker on Tuesday raised its financial guidance for the full year with one qualification: that it can negotiate union labor contracts without a strike.

Chief Financial Officer Paul Jacobson told reporters that customers paid about \$1,600 more per vehicle last quarter than from January through March - with an average U.S. sale price of \$52,000. Discounts and inventory remained flat as the company sold 19% more vehicles than a year ago in the U.S., its most profitable market.

"We've had an ability and a willingness and a capability to remain disciplined in our pricing and our incentives," Jacobson said.

GM raised its full-year guidance for the second straight quarter, saying it will post net income of between \$9.3 billion and \$10.7 billion. Previously it predicted \$8.4 billion to \$9.9 billion.

Also pushing up the guidance was another \$1 billion in cost savings that Jacobson said GM had found, on top of \$2 billion the company promised earlier for the full year. The savings came through lower salaried employee expenses due to 5,000 workers taking early retirement buyouts, as well as savings in marketing and reductions in administrative costs and vehicle manufacturing complexity.

The company took a one-time charge of \$792 million as it picked up more of the \$1.9 billion cost of recalling Chevrolet Bolt electric vehicles because they could catch fire due to battery manufacturing defects.

Jacobson said GM took extraordinary steps to care for Bolt owners by letting them trade in cars and offering loaner vehicles until replacement batteries were available from the supplier, LG Energy Solution. The recall announced in 2021 covered about 142,000 vehicles.

CEO Mary Barra confirmed Tuesday that a new Bolt is in the works, which she said will be affordable and have great range and technology. No time frame was given for the car, but Barra said GM will bring it to market quickly. GM plans to cease production of the current Bolt, which starts at \$26,500, at the end of this year.

The new version will be constructed on GM's latest electric vehicle underpinnings, which CEO Mary Barra said have a 40% lower cost than the current version of the Bolt. "This is a very capital-efficient, quick way to build on the strong consumer response we have to the Bolt and get an affordable vehicle out into the marketplace," Barra said.

The company continues to experience strong demand for its EVs, and it can't build Bolts fast enough, Barra said.

Excluding one-time items, GM said



Dubai International Chambers new representative office in Vietnam.

Dubai International Chamber strengthens global presence with launch of a new office in Vietnam

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates, July 25, (Business Wire): Dubai International Chamber, one of the three chambers operating under Dubai Chambers, has inaugurated a new international representative office in Vietnam. Located in Ho Chi Minh City, the office further strengthens the chamber's presence in Southeast Asia and is aimed at boosting bilateral trade and investment between Dubai and Vietnam.

This press release features multimedia. View the full release here: <https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20230724517067/en/>

Dubai International Chamber's new representative office in Vietnam was inaugurated recently with a special ribbon-cutting ceremony. From left to right: Abdulla Baqer, Regional Director - Middle East and CIS, Global Markets Sector, Dubai Chambers; Nguyen Van Nga, Chief of the Representative Office of the Ministry of Industry and Trade of Vietnam in South Vietnam; H.E. Dr. Bader Abdullah Al Matrooshi, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the UAE to Vietnam; Salem Al Shamsi, Vice President - Global Markets, Dubai Chambers; and Hus-

sein Al Ansari, Senior Manager - International Operations, Dubai Chambers. (Photo: AETOSWire)

The office will support and guide Dubai-based companies seeking to expand into Vietnam, as well as creating new mechanisms to attract FDI from Vietnam to Dubai by promoting the emirate as a gateway to access emerging markets.

Mohammad Ali Rashed Lootah, President and CEO of Dubai Chambers, said: "We are pleased to take this strategic step that further strengthens the ties between our vibrant business communities, and look forward to building on our shared commitment to innovation to increase bilateral trade."

According to Dubai Customs statistics, the value of non-oil bilateral trade between Dubai and Vietnam reached an impressive \$7.7 billion during 2022, reflecting the depth of joint trade ties between the two markets. More than 170 Vietnamese companies are registered as members of Dubai Chamber of Commerce, 22 of which joined between January and May this year. The launch of the new Ho Chi Minh City

office is set to play a key role in boosting this momentum by attracting more Vietnamese companies to Dubai.

The opening of Dubai International Chamber's 22nd international representative office comes as part of the Dubai Global initiative, which was launched last year to establish a powerful network of 50 representative offices for Dubai across five continents by 2030.

The new office will work to boost bilateral trade across multiple targeted sectors, as well as unlock investment opportunities in Vietnam in promising areas including agribusiness, construction, ecotourism, food processing, and renewable energy.

Dubai International Chamber, one of three chambers operating under the umbrella of Dubai Chambers, was established to promote Dubai as a global business hub, attract multinational companies and expand the emirate's trade ties with promising markets. The Chamber has a mandate to meet His Highness Sheikh Mohammed's ambition to increase Dubai's foreign trade from AED 1.4 trillion to AED 2 trillion by 2026.

it made \$1.91 per share, beating Wall Street's estimate of \$1.87. Revenue of \$44.75 billion soundly beat analysts' estimate of \$42.13 billion, according to data provider FactSet.

Shares of GM fell 2% in Tuesday morning trading to \$38.52.

The company also said it met an internal target of producing 50,000 electric vehicles in North America during the first half of the year. With battery cell production and vehicle assembly increasing, GM now expects to build about 100,000 EVs in the second half of the year.

Barra, whose company has been criticized by environmental groups for a slow rollout of new EVs, said GM

has experienced unexpected delays due to an automation supplier having trouble delivering equipment to assemble battery cells into modules. GM manufacturing engineers are working with the supplier and the situation has started to improve, she said.

GM has set a goal of building only electric passenger vehicles by 2035. The company reiterated its goal of making profitable EVs by 2025.

GM also said that cost savings allowed it to reduce the top end of its projection for capital spending this year. The company now expects to spend \$11 billion to \$12 billion, down from \$11 billion to \$13 billion.

Hitting its financial forecast num-

bers may be difficult because the company is in the middle of what are expected to be contentious negotiations with U.S. and Canadian auto workers.

United Auto Workers President Shawn Fain, who represents about 43,000 GM U.S. factory workers, has told members they are poised to make big gains in this year's contract talks, but they have to be prepared to go on strike against the profitable auto companies.

Contracts between the Detroit Three automakers and GM, Stellantis and Ford expire at 11:59 p.m. on Sept. 15.

Barra said the company has a long history of negotiating fair contracts. "Our goal this time is no different," she said.

Investing in human capital

Burgan Bank 'promotes' Fadhel M. Abdullah as Acting CEO - Kwt

KUWAIT CITY, July 25: Burgan Bank announced the promotion of Mr. Fadhel Mahmoud Abdullah to the position of Acting Chief Executive Officer (CEO) - Kuwait, in line with the Bank's strategy to strengthen its leadership team.

Regarded among Burgan's longest-serving and most highly respected strategic leaders, Mr. Fadhel will play an integral role in designing, implementing, and steering the new strategic direction of the Bank over the next five years to enhance its market share in Kuwait and help drive higher profitability. The new vision of the Bank entails a plan to expand its network of branches and increase focus on the Kuwaiti market, while striving to meet the needs of Burgan's customers and reach the largest segment of society.

Furthermore, his appointment comes in line with the Bank's key strategic goal of investing in its human capital and the long-term growth and development of its exceptional talents, especially when it comes to senior leadership roles.

Commenting on this occasion, Sheikh Abdullah Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Chairman of Burgan Bank, said: "I would like to congratulate Mr. Fadhel on assuming his new leadership responsibilities at the Bank. We are confident in his banking and financial experience, as well as his proven track record in the local market, which position him as the ideal person to head the Bank's business in Kuwait during this upcoming period. Under his leadership, we are utterly confident that the Bank will continue on its strong performance path, seizing all business opportunities along the way. On behalf of the Board of Directors, we wish him every success and look forward to continuing to



Fadhel Al Abdullah

work together."

On his part, Mr. Fadhel said: "As I embark on the next chapter in my career, I am grateful for the role entrusted to me by the Chairman and members of Burgan's Board of Directors to lead the Bank to even greater heights. With the overall supervision and guidance of the Board, the support of the Executive Team, and the relentless efforts and commitment of our employees, I am positive that Burgan Bank will continue an upward growth path, creating value for all stakeholders and meeting the aspirations of our valued customers."

It serves to note that Mr. Fadhel is a seasoned veteran of the banking sector and a long-serving member of Burgan's management team, bringing 34 years of finance, investment, and corporate banking experience to his new appointment. He has held multiple key leadership roles during his 25-year long career with Burgan Bank since 1998. He also holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Mathematics from Kuwait University.

A UPS strike could be just around the corner: Here's what you need to know

NEW YORK, July 25, (AP): The clock is ticking. As the deadline to reach a new contract nears, a potential UPS strike feels closer than ever.

Negotiations broke down earlier this month and unionized workers have been holding rallies and practice pickets across the country. The Teamsters, which represent more than half of the company's workforce, will resume talks with UPS on Tuesday.

That leaves less than a week to come to an agreement before the current contract expires at the end of the day Monday. The union has authorized a strike and Sean M. O'Brien, a fiery leader elected last year to lead the union, has vowed to do so if the union's demands aren't met.

"We're sending a message... all 340,000 of our members are united and ready to fight," O'Brien told The Associated Press at a practice picket Friday in Atlanta, where UPS is based.

UPS's unionized workers still seethe about a contract they feel was forced on them in 2018, and say that the company delivers millions more packages every day than it did just five years ago. The Teamsters are calling for better pay, particularly for part-time employees, and improved working conditions.

UPS has maintained that it already offers "industry-leading pay and benefits," but says it's prepared to increase that compensation. In a Friday update, the company said it aimed "quickly to finalize a fair deal that provides certainty for our customers, our employees and businesses across the country."

If negotiations are unsuccessful the deliveries that Americans have come to

rely on, particularly since the pandemic began in 2020, could be vastly disrupted. Such an impasse hasn't been seen since 1997, well before delivery of everyday items from dog food to prescription drugs became the norm, when a walkout by 185,000 workers crippled UPS. Here's what you need to know.

Much on the union's demands comes down to better pay and improved working conditions.

Annual profits at UPS in the past two years are close to three times what they were before the pandemic. The company returned about \$8.6 billion to shareholders in the form of dividends and stock buybacks in 2022, and forecast another \$8.4 billion for shareholders this year.

The Teamsters say frontline UPS workers deserve some of that windfall. A sticking point in negotiations has been wage increases for part-time workers, who make a minimum of \$16.20 an hour.

"People want their packages yesterday with the emergence of the e-commerce. So it's a very demanding job," O'Brien said, pushing back on the salary statistics that UPS shares. "Everybody doesn't realize what it takes to get these packages on the truck. And a lot of our part timers... work for poverty wages."

In addition to addressing part-time pay, the union wants to eliminate a contract provision that created two separate hierarchies of workers with different pay scales, hours and benefits. Driver safety, particularly the lack of air conditioning in delivery trucks, is also in the mix.

BUSINESS

EU approves plan to boost its chip industry

European Union member states gave final approval Tuesday to the bloc's master plan to expand semiconductor production, clearing the path for its massive effort to slash reliance on Asia for computer chips vital for everything from washing machines to cars.

The European Council's ministers signed off on the EU's Chips Act, which will channel 43 billion euros (\$47 billion) in public and private funds and allow state aid for the continent's semiconductor industry. EU leaders want to use the cash

to kick-start massive investments for new chipmaking facilities, doubling the 27-nation bloc's share of global semiconductor production to 20% by 2030.

Asia accounts for most of the global production of semiconductors - a crucial role that was exposed during the COVID-19 pandemic, when supply chain disruptions resulted in extended shortages of autos, smartphones and medical devices.

Western governments are trying to wean themselves off Asia. The U.S. launched its own \$52 billion Chips Act,

and Britain has a smaller \$1.2 billion chip strategy. Companies like Intel have unveiled ambitious investment plans for Europe.

Chips are integrated circuits embedded in a semiconductor, a material - notably silicon - that can manage the flow of electric current. The terms "chip" and "semiconductor" are often used interchangeably.

The EU Chips Act will take effect after it's published in the Official Journal of the European Union. (AP)



A visitor to the 21st China Beijing International High-tech Expo looks at a computer chip through the microscope displayed by the state-controlled Tsinghua Unigroup project which has emerged as a national champion for Beijing's semiconductor ambitions in Beijing, on May 17, 2018. European Union member states gave final approval Tuesday July 25, for the bloc's master plan to expand semiconductor production. (AP)

'Studying in American university keeps us going'

Scholarships help Afghan students find homes on US campuses

DALLAS, July 25, (AP) - As the Taliban swept back into power in Afghanistan in the summer of 2021, Fahima Sultani and her fellow university students tried for days to get into the Kabul airport, only to be turned away by gun-wielding extremists.

"No education, just go back home," she recalled one shouting.

Nearly two years later, Sultani, now 21, is safely in the US and working toward her bachelor's degree in data science at Arizona State University in Tempe on a scholarship. When she's not studying, she likes to hike up nearby Tempe Butte, the kind of outing she enjoyed in her mountainous homeland.

Seeing students like Sultani rush to leave in August 2021 as the US withdrew from Afghanistan after 20 years, colleges, universities and other groups across the US started piecing together the funding for hundreds of scholarships so they could continue their educations outside of their home country.

Women of Sultani's generation, born around the time the US ousted the Taliban after the 9/11 attacks in 2001, grew up attending school and watching as women pursued careers. The Taliban's return upended those freedoms.

"Within minutes of the collapse of the government in Kabul, US universities said, 'We'll take one;' 'We'll take three;' 'We'll take a professor;' 'We'll take a student,'" said Allan Goodman, CEO of the Institute of International



Northeastern University student Mashal Aziz poses on campus, Friday, July 21, 2023, in Boston. Aziz was just months away from graduating from college in Afghanistan when she found herself rushing to the airport to leave the country as the Taliban swept into power. Universities and colleges across the US have scrambled to find ways to help students, like Aziz, to continue their education. (AP)

Education, a global not-for-profit that helps fund such scholarships.

The fears leading the students to quickly board flights were soon justified as the Taliban ushered in a harsh Islamic rule: Girls cannot attend school beyond the sixth grade and women, once again required to wear burqas, have been banned from uni-

versities and are restricted from most employment.

Sultani is one of more than 60 Afghan women who arrived at ASU by December 2021 after fleeing Afghanistan, where she had been studying online through Asian University for Women in Bangladesh during the pandemic.

"These women came out of a cri-

sis, a traumatic experience, boarded a plane not knowing where they were going, ended up in the US," said Susan Edgington, executive director and head of operations of ASU's Global Academic Initiatives.

After making their way to universities and colleges across the US over the last two years, many are nearing graduation and planning their futures.

Mashal Aziz, 22, was a few months from graduating from American University of Afghanistan when Kabul fell and she boarded a plane. After leaving, she scoured the internet, researching which schools were offering scholarships and what organizations might be able to help.

"You've already left everything and you are thinking maybe there are barriers for your higher education," she said.

Refuge

Aziz and three other Afghan students arrived at Northeastern University in Boston in January 2022 after first being taken to Qatar and then a military base in New Jersey. She graduated this spring with a bachelor's degree in finance and accounting management and plans to start work on her master's degree in finance this fall at Northeastern.

Just two days after the fall of Kabul, the University of Tulsa in Oklahoma announced it had created two scholar-

ships for Afghans seeking refuge in the US. Later, the university created five more scholarships that went to some of the young Afghans who had settled in the area. Five more Afghans have received scholarships to study there this fall.

Danielle Macdonald, an associate anthropology professor at the school, has organized a regular meetup between TU students and college-aged Afghans who have settled in the Tulsa area.

Around two dozen young people attend the events, where they've talked about everything from US slang to how to find a job. Their outings have included visiting a museum and going to a basketball game, Macdonald said.

"It's become a really lovely community," she said.

Sultani, like many others who left Afghanistan, often thinks about those who remained behind, including her sister, who had been studying at a university, but now must stay home.

"I can go to universities while millions of girls back in Afghanistan, they do not have this opportunity that I have," Sultani said. "I can dress the way I want and millions of girls now in Afghanistan, they do not have this opportunity."

Since the initial flurry of scholarships, efforts to assist Afghan students have continued, including the creation of the Qatar Scholarship for Afghans

Project, which has helped fund 250 scholarships at dozens of US colleges and universities.

But there are still more young people in need of support to continue their educations in the US or even reach the US from Afghanistan or other countries, explained Jonah Kokodyniak, a senior vice president at the Institute of International Education.

Yasamin Sohrabi, 26, is among those still trying to find a way to the US. Sohrabi, who had been studying at American University of Afghanistan, realized as the withdrawal of US forces neared that she might need to go overseas to continue her studies. The day after the Taliban took Kabul, she learned of her admission to Western Kentucky University in Bowling Green, but wasn't able to get into the airport to leave Afghanistan.

A year later, she and her younger sister, who has also been accepted at the university, got visas to Pakistan. Now they are trying to find a way to get into the US. Their brother, who accompanied them to Pakistan, is applying to the school as well.

Sohrabi said she and her siblings try not to focus on what they have lost, but instead on how to get to WKU, where 20 other Afghans will be studying this fall.

"That's one of the things in these days we think about," she said. "It keeps us going."



Jonica Moore, who's more than a decade into her second career as a wedding photographer, shoots photos as she walks home, Friday, July 21, in the Brooklyn section of New York. Moore said that adding more social content to packages will likely require her to hire another person to help with weddings. (AP)

Pandemic trends remain

Wedding shutterbugs adapt to couples' instant images

NEW YORK, July 25, (AP) - More and more couples are throwing out the playbook for a traditional wedding -- and posing new challenges for the people they hire to create the perfect images of their big day.

Getting married has traditionally involved a large reception, and rituals like cake cutting, multiple toasts and time for dancing. A wedding photographer would capture it all -- and the newly hitched couple would then wait weeks or months for the pictures.

The pandemic and social media have upended those traditions. During the pandemic, many weddings turned into elopements. Social media images and videos took center stage when people couldn't gather for a big ceremony.

Wedding photographers say some of the pandemic trends are sticking around. They're being asked to shoot more elopements and micro weddings - weddings with 50 or fewer guests -- and to provide faster photos and behind-the-scenes videos that can easily be shared on social media. That's on top of the regular wedding photos.

Many photographers also find themselves much more involved in planning the wedding. Nina Larsen Reed of Larsen Photo Co. in Boulder, Colorado, says couples increasingly rely on her local knowledge when planning their big day.

Activities

"Now I'm much more involved in everything from suggesting locations, building out timelines to recommending vendors and activities and really helping my couples plan for the whole day instead of just showing up to take photos of whatever they have planned on their own," she said.

All of this means more work, leaving photographers to ponder whether they can do it all alone.

Kari Bjorn, owner of Kari Bjorn Photography in Fayetteville, Arkansas, said that to keep up with what clients are asking for, he's added some new services to his wedding packages, like wedding-day GIFs. He's also considering hiring a "day-of content creator," a job he's noticed being advertised frequently this year.

"Essentially it's a contractor whose job it is to shoot and publish phone content for the bride and groom on

their wedding day so they don't have to," he said. "I feel like people really want to post things instantly as their event is happening."

Jonica Moore, owner of Jonica Moore Photography in Brooklyn, New York, said adding more social content to packages will likely require her to hire another person to help with weddings.

"If you're a photographer, you don't really have time to do that," she said.

Adding help would mean more costs for photographers at a time when many have already raised their rates due to inflation.

After a plunge in 2020 and modest increase in 2021, the number of weddings jumped to 2.5 million in 2022 due to pent up demand, according to the trade group Wedding Report. This year they're expected to total 2.2 million as the U.S. returns to a more normal wedding cadence.

The cost of a wedding has gone up, according to data from wedding website The Knot, but not dramatically. The national average cost of a wedding in 2022 was \$30,000, up \$2,000 from 2021. In 2019, before the pandemic, that figure stood at \$28,000.

Meanwhile, the average cost of a wedding photographer in 2022 was \$2,600, up only \$100 from 2021, although rates vary by location, time of year and the level of service. For instance, the mid-range cost in New York City is \$5,000 to \$7,500, Moore said.

Bjorn raised his rates after the boom year of 2022 but had to scale back a bit when he received fewer inquiries than he was expecting.

"It's been a rollercoaster," Bjorn said. "(Rates) are a little bit lower now than they were at the start of the year, but still higher than last year."

Sarah and Peter Olson, a husband-and-wife team who run CityLux Studios in Boston, are spending much more time creating social media content than they did in years past, and are hiring an assistant to "specifically grab content we can use for social media and behind-the-scenes type content," they said. They recently started to take videos vertically in short clips so their clients can use them for social media Reels on Instagram.

"We try to deliver teasers on social media in 24 to 48 hours," Peter Olson said.

WASHINGTON, July 25: Goodbye, Twitter. Hello, X.

Elon Musk has unveiled a new "X" logo to replace Twitter's famous blue bird as he follows through with a major rebranding of the social media platform he bought for \$44 billion last year.

The X started appearing at the top of the desktop version of Twitter on Monday, but the bird was still dominant across the smartphone app. At Twitter's headquarters in San Francisco, meanwhile, workers were seen removing the iconic bird and logo Monday until police showed up and stopped them because they didn't have the proper permits and didn't tape off the sidewalk to keep pedestrians safe if anything fell.

As of early afternoon, the "er" at the end of Twitter remained visible.

The haphazard erasure of both the physical and virtual remnants of Twitter's past were in many ways typical of the chaotic way Musk has run the company since his reluctant purchase.

"It's the end of an era, and a clear signal that the Twitter of the past 17 years is gone and not coming back," said Jasmine Enberg, an analyst with Insider Intelligence. "But the writing was on the wall: Musk has been vocal about transforming Twitter into platform X from the start, and Twitter was already a shell of its former self."

Alienated

It's yet another change that Musk has made since acquiring Twitter that has alienated users and turned off advertisers, leaving the microblogging site vulnerable to new threats, including rival Meta's new text-based app Threads that directly targets Twitter users.

Musk had asked fans for logo ideas and chose one, which he described as minimalist Art Deco, saying it "certainly will be refined." He replaced his own Twitter icon with a white X on a black background and posted a picture of the design projected on Twitter's San Francisco headquarters.

"And soon we shall bid adieu to the twitter brand and, gradually, all the birds," Musk tweeted Sunday.

The X.com web domain now redirects users to Twitter.com, Musk said. "I can't say I'm surprised, but I think it's a very selfish decision," said Hannah Thoreson of Baltimore, Maryland, who's used Twitter since 2009 for work and personal posts.

"There are so many small businesses and so many nonprofits and so many government agencies and things like that all around the world that have relied on Twitter for many years to push their message and reach people," she said. "And they all have the Twitter icon on everything from their website to their business cards."

Changing all this costs time and money, she added, not to mention the confusion that comes with a previously unknown brand name.

"I mean, do you want to get rid of the Coca-Cola brand if you're Coca-Cola? Why would you do that?" said Thoreson, who now primarily uses Mastodon.

Goodbye, Twitter. Hello, X.

Elon Musk unveils new 'X' logo to replace Twitter's blue bird



This screen shot taken on July 24, in New York, shows Elon Musk's Twitter page with the new 'X' logo that he introduced a day before. (AP)

DQ promotes 'human-centered technology'

Unleashing the power of Digital-ESG: transforming sustainability in AI age

SINGAPORE, July 25: DQ Institute, a renowned global organization dedicated to setting global standards for digital intelligence, has announced the launch of the Digital-ESG Assessment and Reporting Standards in collaboration with Taejea Future Consensus Institute, a leading think-tank in Korea. The "Digital Age. A Pathway to Sustainability" Forum was held at The Korean Foundation of Advanced Studies on July 13th, with the participation of Ban Ki-moon, the 8th UN Secretary-General, Irina Bokova, the former Director General of UNESCO, Kim Yong-Hak, the former President of Yonsei University, and Dr. Yuhyun Park, the founder of DQ Institute.

In response to escalating concerns surrounding the existential threats posed by AI, the DQ Institute aims to ensure the mitigation of AI risks and other digital-related risks, including child online safety issues, fake news,

cyber-attacks, manipulation, and privacy invasions while also addressing environment, social and governance issues. Hence, the introduction of the Digital-ESG Assessment and Reporting Standards marks a significant milestone in setting a new global agenda. The guidelines provide a comprehensive checklist and framework for companies or investment communities to address digital-related risks while fostering "human-centered technology" in the AI age.

The rapid advancement and widespread implementation of AI, big data, analytics, and other emerging technologies have triggered a seismic digital transformation of companies across all industries. However, this transformation has also given rise to various digital-related risks. While the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and existing ESG frameworks primarily focus on climate-related is-

suess, digital-related concerns have not been adequately addressed. The loophole has allowed businesses with potential or existing negative impacts on the digital environment to evade their ESG responsibilities, without facing significant risks to their investment portfolio or reputations. By incorporating Digital-ESG into sustainability strategies, a balance can be struck between harnessing the potential of technology and protecting citizens, digital and physical planets, and global society.

Mr. Ban Ki-moon, the 8th UN Secretary-General, commented: "The private sector plays a crucial role in achieving sustainability and needs to be held accountable from an Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) perspective. Digital components need to be incorporated into ESG as we try to update our sustainability goals, with the global race for AI dominance raging on."

Musk, CEO of Tesla, has long been fascinated with the letter X and had already renamed Twitter's corporate name to X Corp. after he bought it in October. In response to questions about what tweets would be called when the rebranding is done, Musk said they would be called Xs.

The billionaire is also CEO of rocket company Space Exploration Technologies Corp., commonly known

as SpaceX. And he started an artificial intelligence company this month called xAI to compete with ChatGPT. In 1999, he founded a startup called X.com, an online financial services company now known as PayPal.

Additionally, he calls one of his sons, whose mother is singer Grimes, "X." The child's actual name is a collection of letters and symbols.

Musk's Twitter purchase and re-

branding are part of his strategy to create what he's dubbed an "everything app" similar to China's WeChat, which combines video chats, messaging, streaming and payments. Musk has made a number of drastic changes since taking over Twitter, including a shift to focusing on paid subscriptions, but he doesn't always follow through on his attention-grabbing new policy pronouncements.



Flora-scent Organics launches innovative, Citronella-free, 5-times more effective mosquito incense sticks.

Flora-scent launches innovative mosquito incense sticks

Flora-scent Organics has announced the launch of an innovative, best-in-class mosquito-repellent incense stick. This all-natural product is made using a blend of organic plant oils well-known for their insect-repellent qualities, but it contains no citronella. Rather than rely on a single botanical, Flora-scent Organics infuses its incense sticks with a mixture of oils consciously crafted in the USA. That mixture includes rosemary, cedarwood, peppermint, and geraniol, the primary ingredient in geranium oil. Geraniol is five times more effective at repelling mosquitoes than citronella.

To boost that effectiveness, Flora-scent Organics regularly updates its formula to prevent the different mosquito species common to North America from building up resistance to its incense. "Although most people think of summer as mosquito season, they can be a nuisance year-round, especially in the American South," says Chris Lowry, Flora-scent Organics' Director of Research and Development. "By regularly updating our formula, we've created a mosquito repellent that works for every season." In addition to being one of the best mos-

quito repellents on the market, Flora-scent Organics' incense sticks smell more pleasant than sticks made with citronella oil. The blend of essential plant oils produces a refreshing and invigorating scent that makes all your favorite outdoor activities, from patio dining to gardening to backyard games, even more enjoyable. Each Flora-scent Organics mosquito-repellent incense stick lasts up to 3 hours. The sticks ship in boxes of 12, meaning each box offers more than a full day's worth of personal protection from mosquitoes. (AP)

The Conversation

WHO expert cancer group raises health concerns

Sweetener aspartame a possible carcinogen, but evidence limited

By Paul D. Terry, Jianguang Chen and Ling Zhao
University of Tennessee

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

The World Health Organization declared on July 14, 2023, that the widely used synthetic sweetener aspartame could be a "possible" carcinogen, or cancer-causing agent, on the basis of "limited evidence for cancer in humans."

But the agency also concluded that the currently available data does not warrant a change of the acceptable daily intake of aspartame at this time.

The Conversation asked chronic disease epidemiologist Paul D. Terry, public health scholar Jianguang Chen and nutrition expert Ling Zhao, all from the University of Tennessee, to put these seemingly contradictory findings into perspective based on the available scientific evidence.

Aspartame is an artificial sweetener that is added to many foods, candies, gums and beverages, such as diet soda. Because it is approximately 200 times sweeter than table sugar, smaller amounts of aspartame are added to foods, and they contribute considerably fewer calories. NutraSweet and Equal are well-known brand names for aspartame sold in packages for individual use.

The International Agency for Research on Cancer, an entity within the WHO, evaluated findings from both human and animal studies of aspartame and cancer. The group noted some positive associations between aspartame consumption and hepatocellular carcinoma, a form of liver cancer.

Sufficient

This WHO group classifies degrees of evidence that an agent has cancer-causing potential as being "sufficient," "limited," "inadequate" or "suggesting lack of carcinogenicity." "Limited" evidence, as it pertains to the WHO's new announcement on aspartame, means that although there is some evidence for an association, that evidence cannot be considered "sufficient" to infer a causal relationship.

Ultimately, the group concluded that several limiting factors could possibly explain the positive associations in those studies. These include the small number of human studies available, the complexity of studying people's dietary behaviors and possible bias from factors such as higher-risk people - for example, those with diabetes - selecting diet products more often and ingesting higher quantities of aspartame than the average consumer. Therefore, the classification of "limited evidence" implies the need for additional studies.

The Food and Agriculture Organization's Joint Expert Committee on Food Additives, an international committee of science experts that is operated by both the WHO and the United Nations, currently recommends a daily maxi-

mum of 40 milligrams per kilogram of body weight for aspartame.

This amount of aspartame per day translates to approximately eight to 12 cans of soda, or approximately 60 packets of aspartame, for a person weighing 132 pounds (60 kilograms). For a child weighing 33 pounds (15 kg), it translates to between two to three cans of aspartame-sweetened soda per day, or approximately 15 packets of aspartame. Some individuals may consume more aspartame than this, but such high intake is not typical.

Independently of the expert panel on cancer, the food safety group also evaluated the available evidence and concluded that there was no "convincing evidence" from either animal or human studies that aspartame consumption causes adverse effects within the currently established daily limits.

Investigated

Based on assessments of the findings of both groups, the director of the Department of Nutrition and Food Safety of the WHO stated that, "while safety is not a major concern" at the doses in which aspartame are commonly used, "potential effects have been described that need to be investigated by more and better studies." The American Cancer Society has also stated that it supports further research into possible health concerns related to aspartame.

It is important to note that people with the rare inherited disorder called phenylketonuria, or PKU, should avoid or restrict aspartame intake.

It is not uncommon for scientific consensus groups to differ in how they classify risk based on the results of published studies, even if more than one of those consensus groups is affiliated with the same agency or parent organization.

Whereas the WHO's expert cancer group's stance may appear to be more worrisome than that of the committee on food safety, in fact, the latter's "no convincing evidence" is consistent with the cancer group's "limited evidence" classification. Because, unlike the cancer group, the food safety committee considers risk of aspartame at specific consumption levels, the WHO as a whole continues to support the food safety committee's existing recommendations for allowable daily aspartame intake of up to 40 milligrams per kilogram of body weight.

Of note, the committee's recommended maximum daily intake is still more conservative than the current US Food and Drug Administration's recommended maximum daily allowance of 50 milligrams of aspartame per kilogram of body weight.

Alternatives to aspartame include other artificial sweeteners such as saccharin and sucralose, sugar alcohols like sorbitol and xylitol, naturally derived sugar-free sweeteners like Stevia and simple sugars, such as those in sugar cane, sugar beets and honey. (AP)

PrintRoll to develop tubular solutions for vascular, respiratory and other channels

'First-of-its-kind bioprinting tool'

BOSTON, July 25: Desktop Health - the trusted production-grade medical 3D printing brand of Desktop Metal, Inc. (NYSE: DM) - has announced a breakthrough in bioprinting with the launch of PrintRoll™, an innovative rotating build platform that can produce intelligent tubular solutions for the body's vascular, digestive, respiratory, and reproductive channels on the 3D-Bioplotter premier bioprinting system.

The 3D-Bioplotter is a highly sophisticated extrusion-based 3D printer that processes liquids, melts, pastes, gels, or other materials, including cells, through a needle tip on a Swiss-made, 3-axis gantry system with high accuracy and temperature, sterility, and design controls. 3D-Bioplotter offers eight printheads with the widest range of temperatures in bioprinting - from 2°C to 500°C (35.6°F to 932°F) - enabling complex, multi-material medical parts.

Development

The PrintRoll add-on feature has been in development since 2019 as part of a collaboration with Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz, a public research university in Mainz, Germany.

"We are proud to offer the first bioprinting tool specifically designed to develop medical solutions for the thousands of miles of channels found in the human body," said Ric Fulop, Founder and CEO of Desktop Metal. "Desktop Health exists to deliver 3D printing solutions that improve patient lives, and we are confident that PrintRoll, offered exclusively on the 3D-Bioplotter, will enable all-new regenerative innovations. We look forward to seeing what our customers will create next with this exciting new tool."

The PrintRoll platform attaches

Vaccine to prevent other coronaviruses

LinKinVax produces 'PanCov,' a next generation multi-variant COVID shot

PARIS, July 25: LinKinVax, a clinical-stage biotechnology company, announced the manufacture and bottling of a GMP batch of its next generation pan-sarbecovirus vaccines, known as PanCov, designed to prevent COVID-19 and other known coronavirus diseases.

This new protein-based vaccine is unique because it targets sequences of SARS-CoV-2 and its variants, as well as sequences common to other coronaviruses. Its aim is to induce broad and long-lasting immune responses.

PanCov falls within the WHO's booster vaccination strategy for the world's health systems. The objective of this health policy is to avoid a resurgence of the pandemic and its medico-economic consequences on world population. This strategy led to the creation by the US of the NextGen programme defining the requirements of next generation COVID-19 vaccines. These vaccines must be multi-variant, long-lasting, and both easy and cheaper to manufacture and store, and PanCov meets all these criteria.

André-Jacques Auberton-Hervé, President and Co-Founder of LinKinVax, declared: "Our ambition is to develop a robust and long-lasting vaccine with a booster effect, effective on the multiple variants of SARS-CoV-2, as well as on other coronaviruses to prevent the emergence of new pandemics."

Production

The data collected during the production process with GTP Bioways will help us accelerate the production of new vaccines generated by our innovative platform. The use and training of the latest artificial intelligence (AI) tools on these databases, which we will continue to enrich, form an integral part of LinKinVax's differentiation strategy to accelerate the production of effective vaccine solutions in the event of a pandemic."

Alain Sainot, President of GTP Bioways, added: "Our teams in Toulouse and Saint-Julien-en-Genevois are delighted to have concluded in a timely and efficient manner the collaboration with LinKinVax announced in March 2022, that led to the produc-

tion of the first GMP batch of this next generation COVID-19 vaccine. This partnership highlights the ability of the French industry to provide solutions to unmet global health needs. André-Jacques Auberton-Hervé, CEO of LinKinVax, has also personally helped our digital strategy by putting us in touch with global AI leaders, to boost our biomufacturing offer and position GTP Bioways at the cutting edge of innovation."

"Fareva is proud of its contribution to the production of a next generation COVID-19 vaccine, in partnership with key players. The achievement of this first milestone illustrates the industry's excellence in the development and production of highly innovative healthcare products, and confirms its international standing," added Alexandre Bastit, CEO of Business Unit Pharma and API at FAREVA.

The release of the PanCov GMP batch with compliance validation and toxicology results is expected in Q3 2023, and the clinical trials are due to start early 2024.

to the modular build plate of the 3D-Bioplotter and features a motor-driven rotating mandrel with spring-loaded,

easily exchangeable drums of different sizes. Rotating speed is tightly controlled by the 3D-Bioplotter's easy-to-use software.

Design

As the PrintRoll tool rotates, the printhead moves back and forth depositing material on the surface in the desired design. For example, polycaprolactone (PCL), a medical-grade, biodegradable plastic used in many FDA-cleared implants and devices, hardens quickly on the drum after the melted material is printed. In bioprinting, users typically produce a structure or scaffold in a stiff or flexible biocompatible material that is designed to repair and integrate with cells of the body, sometimes degrading after a certain period of time.

The PrintRoll comes with a 10 mm diameter drum - with 20 mm and 40 mm sizes available - designed to accommodate the development of solutions for a variety of human channels, which vary based on age and gender. Standard diameter sizes generally correspond to the diameters of the femoral artery (~10 mm), trachea (~10-20 mm), fallopian tube (~5-15 mm), aorta (~25 mm) esophagus (~30 mm), and a range of intestine segments (~40-100 mm).

The PrintRoll system supports printing hollow cylindrical structures up to 140 mm in length, depending on the printhead used. Custom sizes may also be available.

The PrintRoll comes with a library of honeycomb designs and standard printing parameters for common materials.



Nicole Black, Ph.D., VP of Biomaterials and Innovation at Desktop Health, examines two tubular medical devices printed on the new 3D-Bioplotter® PrintRoll™ rotating build platform in medical-grade materials.

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Japanese mystery writer Seiichi Morimura dies at 90

TOKYO, July 25, (AP): Renowned Japanese mystery writer Seiichi Morimura, whose nonfiction trilogy "The Devil's Gluttony" exposed human medical experiments conducted by a secret Japanese army unit during World War II, died Monday. He was 90.

His official website and publisher, Kadokawa, said Morimura died of pneumonia at a Tokyo hospital.

"Akuma no Hoshoku," or "The Devil's Gluttony," which began as a newspaper series in 1981, became a bestseller and created a sensation across the country over atrocities committed by Japanese Imperial Army Unit 731 in China.

From its base in Japanese-controlled Harbin in China, Unit 731 and related units injected war prisoners with typhus, cholera and other diseases as research into germ warfare, according to historians and former unit members. Unit 731 is also believed to have performed vivisections and frozen prisoners to death in tests of endurance.

Morimura began contributing articles to magazines while working in hotels. He won the prestigious Edogawa Rampo Prize for his mystery fiction in 1969 and the Mystery Writers of Japan Award in 1973.

Born in 1933 in Saitama, just north of Tokyo, Morimura survived harsh US bombings of the Tokyo region toward the end of World War II and developed pacifist principles. He wrote a book about his commitment to defending Japan's postwar pacifist Constitution and opposing

nuclear weapons. He joined protests against a 2015 reinterpretation of the constitution by then-Prime Minister Shinzo Abe allowing greater military activity.



Morimura

His 1976 novel "Ningen no Shomei" ("Proof of the Man"), a mystery about a young Black man who is murdered, revealed the dark side of postwar Japan and was made into a movie.

Another popular novel, "Yasei no Shomei" ("Proof of the Wild"), published a year later depicts a conspiracy over genocide in a remote village.



Kevin Mitnick, whose pioneering antics tricking employees in the 1980s and 1990s into helping him steal software and services from big phone and tech companies made him the most celebrated US hacker, has died at age 59.

Mitnick died Sunday in Las Vegas after a 14-month battle with pancreatic cancer, said **Stu Sjouwerman**, CEO of the security training firm KnowBe4, where Mitnick was chief hacking officer.

His colorful career - from student tinkerer to FBI-hunted fugitive, imprisoned felon and finally respected cybersecurity professional, pub-

lic speaker and author tapped for advice by U.S. lawmakers and global corporations - mirrors the evolution of society's grasp of the nuances of computer hacking.

Through Mitnick's professional trajectory, and what many consider the misplaced prosecutorial zeal that put him behind bars for nearly five years until 2000, the public has learned how to better distinguish serious computer crime from the mischievous troublemaking of youths hellbent on proving their hacking prowess.

"He never hacked for money," said Sjouwerman, who became Mitnick's business partner in 2011. He was mostly after trophies, chiefly cellphone code, he said.

Much fanfare accompanied Mitnick's high-profile arrest in 1995, three years after he'd skipped probation on a previous computer break-in charge. The government accused him of causing millions of dollars in damages to companies including Motorola, Novell, Nokia and Sun Microsystems by stealing software and altering computer code.

But federal prosecutors had difficulty gathering evidence of major crimes, and after being jailed for nearly four years, Mitnick reached a plea agreement in 1999 that credited him for time served.

Upon his January 2000 release from prison, Mitnick told reporters his "were simple crimes of trespass." He said "I wanted to know as much as I could find out about how phone networks worked."

Obituaries

Variety



This combination of images shows Margot Robbie in a scene from 'Barbie,' (left), and Cillian Murphy in a scene from 'Oppenheimer.' (AP)

Film

In films smash success, a message to Hollywood

Originality triumphs in 'Barbenheimer'

NEW YORK, July 25, (AP): In the massive movie weekend of "Barbie" and "Oppenheimer," there were many winners. Greta Gerwig, who made history for female directors. Christopher Nolan, who set a non-Batman career high. Movie theaters, more crowded than anytime post-pandemic. Lovers of unlikely double features. The color pink. Matchbox Twenty.

But one of the most important triumphs in the moviegoing monsoon of "Barbenheimer" was originality. Here are two movies that are neither sequels nor reboots pushing the box office to highs not seen in years. "Barbie" and "Oppenheimer" became a meme because of their worlds-apart differences but they're each indelibly the work of those filmmakers.

"Barbie," based on the Mattel doll, had some extremely well-known intellectual property going for it. And the story of J. Robert Oppenheimer and the atomic bomb comes from no small moment in history. Nolan is himself a brand, too.

But Hollywood's biggest zeitgeist in years was propelled by a pair of movies without a roman numeral, a Jedi or a superhero in sight. At the same time, some of the most dependable franchises in movies, from Marvel to "Fast and the Furious," are no longer leading the pack.

The movie business may be shifting. Audiences are showing a renewed taste for something fresh. "Barbenheimer" could, just maybe, be a turning point.

"I've always joked that if there's a tornado movie that works that the next year there will be three tornado movies. There's an internal prejudice to doing what works," says Richard Gelfond, IMAX chief executive. "I'm hopeful that these movies were original by noted filmmakers will convince studios to lean into that direction rather than doing what's safe."

"The numbers don't lie," added Gelfond. And the numbers are eyeopening. The total box office in U.S. and Canadian theaters on the weekend was more than \$300 million, the fourth highest ever.

Warner Bros.' "Barbie" grossed \$162 million domestically, the best opening of the year. Universal's "Oppenheimer" took in \$82.4 million. Those results, riding critical acclaim and months of a viral double-feature drum beat, nearly doubled expectations and astonished Hollywood.

In the wake of "Barbenheimer," many are hoping Hollywood will draw a lesson other than greenlighting more toy adaptations and the inevitable "Barbie" sequel.

"Everyone came out this weekend for two original, smart, quality movies," wrote Clare Binns, managing director of indie distributor Picturehouse, on Twitter. "It's what audiences want. Reboots, superheroes and films with bloated budgets that often cover a lack of ideas -- time to take stock. No algorithms this weekend."

Nostalgia

Lately, some of the movies' biggest franchises have shown signs of wear and tear.

"Indiana Jones and the Dial of Destiny," coming 42 years after "Raiders of the Lost Ark," has failed to ignite in theaters. It's made \$335 million worldwide with a budget more than double that of "Barbie," which cost \$145 million.

The 10th "Fast and the Furious" movie, "Fast X," was a dud domestically, though international sales have been robust. In three days, "Barbie" already surpassed its total North American haul of \$145.9 million.

The seventh "Mission: Impossible" film, "Dead Reckoning Part One," fell shy of expectations before getting blown away by "Barbenheimer." It declined 64% in its second weekend.

Meanwhile, recent Marvel films and DC movies haven't approached the kinds of grosses once assured of comic-book adaptations. Marvel's "Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 3," with \$843 million worldwide, has been a big seller but movies like "Ant-Man and the Wasp:

Quantumania" and "The Flash" have fallen well shy of expectations.

The nostalgia business isn't going anywhere, nor is Hollywood's dependence on remakes and sequels. In last year's top 10 films at the box office, one movie was a reboot ("The Batman") and the rest were sequels.

But such overdependence on more-of-the-same was sure to run out of steam one day - and this year's best performers are coming from some new places.

"The Super Mario Bros. Movie" (\$1.3 billion worldwide) isn't anyone's idea of cutting-edge cinema but it reflects Hollywood's new embrace of the giant gaming industry.

The year's second-biggest hit, "Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse" (\$375.2 million domestically) is yet one more "Spider-Man" movie. But it and its predecessor, "Into the Spider-Verse," are hellbent on upending comic-book convention and expanding the notion of who can be a superhero.

Originality can be riskier for studios, but the payoff can be immense - just ask James Cameron. His reigning franchise goliath, "Avatar," reached \$2.3 billion with "Avatar: The Way of Water," a futuristic, sci-fi epic that essentially created its own IP.

What else is working? Movies that appeal to audiences that have historically been underserved. "Creed III," starring Michael B. Jordan, blew past expectations in March and ended up with more than \$275 million globally on a \$75 million budget. "Sound of Freedom," from the faith-based distributor Angel Studios, has made \$124 million in three weeks - though its distributor is using an unusual "Pay it Forward" purchasing program.

And of course, horror remains the easiest money. "Insidious: The Red Door" is just the latest in long, bloody line of low-budget, high-performance Blumhouse titles. It's made \$156 million worldwide on a \$16 million budget.

will not change our ability to do this work, but rather give us more flexibility to tell different stories and meet our audiences where they are across our many platforms." (AP)



LONDON: Jurors in the sexual assault trial of Kevin Spacey



Albert



Spacey

adjourned Monday after deliberating for 2.5 hours without reaching a verdict on allegations by four men that date back two decades.

Spacey, 63, has pleaded not guilty to nine charges, including multiple counts of sexual assault and one count of causing a person to engage in activity without

consent.

The jury of nine men and three women heard testimony over three weeks in Southwark Crown Court before starting their deliberations, which were scheduled to resume Tuesday morning.

Spacey's defense lawyer said during closing arguments last

week that three of the men are liars and he suggested jurors should not convict the Oscar winner for making a "clumsy pass" at a fourth man.

The prosecutor called Spacey a "sexual bully" who took advantage of his power as a major celebrity and took what he wanted when he wanted it. (AP)

Features

ARABO TIMES

WEDNESDAY, JULY 26, 2023

NEW YORK: The familiar yellow-bordered cover of the monthly National Geographic will no longer be for sale on newsstands starting next year, part of cutbacks affecting the venerable magazine.

The company's focus is turning to its digital product and it will offer special editions on newsstands, a spokesman said on Thursday. Subscribers will still get a printed copy each month.

Newsstand sales account for a small percentage of the magazine's monthly circulation of just below 1.8 million copies, the magazine said.

Even a magazine that started publishing in 1888 isn't immune to financial headwinds affecting the media. Known best for its colorful photography from around the world, the magazine was started more than a century ago by the National Geographic Society, which supports science and exploration.

Control of National Geographic has changed twice in the past decade, first in a sale to 20th Century Fox before being acquired by the Walt Disney Corp. in 2019. It has been hit by a series of layoffs.

Craig Welch posted on Twitter on Wednesday that his new issue of the magazine just arrived, featuring his 16th and last feature as a senior writer for the magazine.

"NatGeo is laying off all of its staff writers," he wrote.

The magazine said while it's accurate it no longer has anyone with the title of "writer" anymore, it has people who both write and edit. Instead, it will turn to non-staffers to author stories. The changes occurred as the result of a reorganization in April.

The company would not discuss how many people lost their jobs.

"National Geographic will continue to publish a monthly magazine that is dedicated to exceptional multi-platform storytelling with cultural impact," spokesman Chris Albert said. "Staffing changes

People & Places

People

'Feels a little surreal'

Molly Gordon having a moment in film, TV

LOS ANGELES, July 25, (AP): **Molly Gordon** is having a good summer, professionally speaking. Her directorial debut "Theater Camp," which she made with some of her best friends, is in theaters. On the small screen, fans of "The Bear" are falling for her in the popular Hulu show's second season, too. It's a moment, by any definition, but for her it still feels a little surreal.

"I think I'm still kind of catching up on sleep," Gordon, 27, told the Associated Press in an interview conducted before SAG-AFTRA joined the WGA to strike for a fair deal.

The writer-actor-director has been on a break-neck schedule for about a year. Last summer, she and some of her oldest friends, including Ben Platt, got together in upstate New York to make their loving mockumentary "Theater Camp," a comedy about a charming but crumbling kids musical theater camp that's based on many of their own experiences. She'd spend the next several months rushing to edit their many hours of largely improvised scenes into a coherent and enjoyable



Gordon

film in time for the Sundance Film Festival deadline.

"We had just finished the movie, like, just before Sundance. And we hadn't shown it to many people," Gordon said. "The reaction was overwhelming. And then all of us stayed up until 6 a.m. 'till we knew who was going to buy it. It was a very special experience."

"Theater Camp" was one of the splashier acquisitions at the festival, going to Searchlight Pictures with a rare theatrical release attached to it. Gordon is thrilled about it being the shop that bought "Little Miss Sunshine" out of Sundance years ago, but mainly she just feels lucky knowing how many "incredible movies still haven't sold."

"It's such a strange time in our business," Gordon said.

Illusions

She doesn't have any illusions about how difficult it is to make a living in the industry, either, as she's been watching it from the inside her whole life. Both of Gordon's parents are in the business. Her father, Bryan Gordon, is a veteran director and producer who works primarily in television, from "The Wonder Years" up through "Grace and Frankie." Her mom is a film producer, writer and director behind "Corrina Corrina" and "I Am Sam."

"I grew up in such a creative household and I had so much energy," Gordon said of her Los Angeles childhood. "I was this kind of wacky, annoying, Shirley Temple-esque young girl, and they didn't tell me to stop that. They were like, let's put all this energy into creativity. We had a dress-up box and I went to dance class and I went to art class. I was brought to films at such a young age. And I would see my parents breaking down stories at the dinner table and realizing, oh, they're making these stories that I see at the movie theater."

One memorable early movie experience was watching "The Graduate" with her dad at age 11, which she calls "a bizarre move" but one she's grateful for.

"I just loved it so much," Gordon said. "I didn't understand that at all but I still remember seeing those images for the first time, the shot of the tank and the fish and the shot of him underwater and my dad telling me why they were so important to him."

For as long as she can remember, it's been her dream to be part of it all. She was fascinated to go onto sets and see just how many people worked to create the things she loved: Hairstylists, makeup artists, costumers, the art department. A bunch of artists working together creatively? She was in.

New York was always the goal for Gordon, who made the move at 18 to go to NYU, but soon she realized that college wasn't the right path for her and she dropped out, got a job at a restaurant and continued working, both auditioning and creating things with friends. One of her most famous breaks came in Olivia Wilde's "Booksmart," where she stole scenes as "Triple A." That experience introduced her to producer Jessica Elbaum, who saw in Gordon sparks of a writer-director and encouraged her to pursue those. She'd go on to produce "Theater Camp" for Gordon, too.

Options

After "Theater Camp" sold at Sundance, Gordon got to work on what she likes to call a "glow-up" of the movie. She got to test it with audiences, learn what worked, what didn't and tweak the many other options she had. Often this would be at night on her computer since she'd also gotten an impossible-to-pass-up call to be in the second season of "The Bear," where she joined on as Chef Carmy's love interest, Claire.

"We just found a way to do everything," she laughed. "I felt rather free because I was just so tired and kind of more honest, which was I think was good for me because going into being on a show that's so successful is a very nerve-racking thing."

Gordon is happy bouncing around between acting, writing and directing. She wants to do it all and feels lucky that she got to nurture both sides of that this year, regardless of the toll on her sleeping hours.

"Directing is such a huge responsibility. So after doing that, you kind of want to go into an acting job where you don't have to do the schedule at the end of the night and you can just hang out with the cast and the crew," she said. "And when that's over you're like, I want to go back and direct."

She has a film and a show that she'd like to do next, but she won't be working on anything until a fair deal is reached.

"It's so upsetting that people can't just get paid for their work," she said. "And I can support the strike in every way, but I also still hope that people show up to the theaters and see movies."



Jason Aldean performs during CMA Fest 2022 in Nashville, Tenn., on June 9, 2022. Aldean released the single 'Try That in a Small Town' this month debuted at No. 2 on the Billboard Hot 100 this week just behind BTS's Jung Kook solo single 'Seven,' featuring Latto. (AP)

Music

Aldean's 'Try That' rockets to No. 2

Bowie inspires Young's new song

LOS ANGELES, July 25, (AP): Country star **Chris Young's** latest single, "Young Love & Saturday Nights," is a vivid love letter to summertime weekends, old trucks, dive bar bands, and crushes. And it might sound immediately familiar: The guitar lick that opens the track is lifted directly from David Bowie's 1974 hit "Rebel Rebel."

Bowie is credited posthumously as a songwriter on the track, making it one of the genre-melding icon's few forays into country music - noteworthy, because Bowie himself was not quite a fan of the genre.

"I think the only music I didn't listen to was country and western, and that holds to this day," Bowie told NPR's Terry Gross in 2002. "It's much easier for me to say that, the kind of music I didn't listen to was pretty much that."

So how did Bowie, who died in 2016, end up on the track?

Warner Chappell Music became the custodian of Bowie's musical legacy - acquiring the worldwide rights to over 400 of his songs, including "Rebel Rebel" - when the company purchased his extensive music catalog in 2022.

Ben Vaughn, president and chief executive officer of Warner Chappell Music Nashville, says his team asked songwriter Jesse Frasure to "get creative using elements from Bowie's catalog to write a new country song. He ended up doing an interpolation of 'Rebel Rebel' and the demo he turned in was an instant smash."

"Getting the call from Bowie's estate and Warner Chappell to creatively explore his catalog was an exciting day," Frasure said in a statement. "Interpolations to me are a way of tipping a hat to my heroes and maybe even introducing their music to a new audience."

He added that it is an honor to have Bowie's music "be heard in the country genre."

WCM A&R executive Spencer Nohe then pitched the song to Young's

team while their legal counsel, Steve Butler, negotiated the deal.

Young writes many of his own songs, but when he first heard the demo written by Ashley Gorley, Josh Thompson and Frasure, he knew he wanted to record it.

"It tackles universal themes that a lot of people can relate to. That's the end goal of the song: to make you feel like you're in it," Young told The Associated Press. "And the fact that David Bowie's catalog got picked up and they decided to do something special like this, and list him as a songwriter on the song, is a really cool thing."

But how would Bowie himself feel about the posthumous collaboration?

Genre

"Hate is a strong word," said Tiffany Naiman, UCLA's director of music industry programs and an expert on Bowie, of the icon's feelings toward the genre. "I think he had a very difficult relationship with certain parts of America including country music."

It might have not been his thing, she said, but that didn't mean he never listened to country music. She urges listeners to consider Bowie's documented love of Elvis Presley, who began his career as a country star, and Bowie's cover of the country track "It Ain't Easy" by Ron Davis, recorded during his 1971 "Hunky Dory" sessions and released on 1972's "The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders from Mars."

Young himself told the AP that he doesn't think his song is "introducing David Bowie to a new genre."

Bowie might not have leaned into country music, Young says, but "if you asked country fans, 'Hey, do you know who David Bowie is?' they're going to name a song. And even if they don't, they're going to recognize the weight of the name."



Jason Aldean's "Try That in a

Small Town" is experiencing exponential growth following controversy over its music video.

"Try That in a Small Town," which was released in May, debuted at No. 2 on the Billboard Hot 100 this week just behind BTS's Jung Kook solo single "Seven," featuring Latto. The track experienced the biggest sales week for a country song in over 10 years.

According to Luminate, the song hit 11.7 million on-demand audio and video streams between July 14 and 20, marking a 1,000% increase from the previous week. Prior to the music video release on July 14, the track accounted for 987,000 streams in the U.S.

Digital song sales increased from 1,000 to 228,000, in those same weeks, respectively.

The music video for the song lasted just one weekend on Country Music Television before the network pulled it in response to an outcry over its setting and lyrics. When the network removed the video from its rotation, it had 350,000 views on YouTube. Now that number is now over 16 million, and it is the No. 1 trending video under the "music" category.

In the visual, Aldean - who has been awarded country music artist of the decade by the Academy of Country Music - performs in front of the Maury County Courthouse in Columbia, Tennessee. It is the site of the 1946 Columbia race riot and the 1927 mob lynching of an 18-year-old Black teenager named **Henry Choate**.

Aldean's video received fervent criticism online, with some claiming the visual is a "dog whistle" and others labeling it "pro-lynching."

"There is not a single lyric in the song that references race or points to it - and there isn't a single video clip that isn't real news footage - and while I can try and respect others to have their own interpretation of a song with music - this one goes too far," Aldean wrote in a tweet posted Tuesday.



a Jeep. Williams and Thomas were both part of the YNW collective, known respectively as YNW Sakchaser and YNW Juvy. (AP)



ALBUQUERQUE, NM: A man accused in a deadly movie theater shooting in New Mexico's largest city is a danger to the community and should be held pending trial, prosecutors said in a motion.

They outlined their arguments for keeping **Enrique Padilla** jailed as the 19-year-old made his first court appearance on charges that include first-degree murder, shooting at an occupied building, conspiracy and tampering with evidence.

Authorities have said that an argument over seating at an Albuquerque movie theater escalated into a shooting that left one man dead and sent frightened filmgoers scrambling.

"The defendant opened fire inside a crowded movie theater, putting the lives of everyone in the room in danger. He shot and killed the victim over seating arrangements," the motion stated. "It is clear that the defendant has no regard for the safety of others, and that he is willing to kill over the minor inconvenience of switching seats to watch a movie." (AP)



Chris Young performs at the 56th annual Academy of Country Music Awards in Nashville, Tenn., on April 16, 2021. Young's latest single, "Young Love & Saturday Nights," samples David Bowie's 1974 hit "Rebel Rebel." Bowie, whose extensive music catalog was sold to Warner Chappell Music last year, is credited posthumously as a songwriter on the track, making it one of the genre-melding icon's few forays into country music. (AP)



Campbell



YNW Melly

Variety

EDGERTOWN, Mass: Former US president **Barack Obama's** personal chef has drowned near the family's home on Martha's Vineyard.

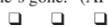
Massachusetts State Police confirmed that the paddleboarder whose body was recovered from Edgartown Great Pond on Monday was **Tafari Campbell**, 45, of **Dumfries, Virginia**.

Campbell was employed by the Obamas and was visiting Martha's Vineyard. The Obamas were not present at the home at the time of the accident.

In a statement, the former president and his wife, **Michelle Obama**, called Campbell a "beloved part of our family."

"When we first met him, he was a talented sous chef at the White House - creative and passionate about food, and its ability to bring people together," the couple said. "In the years that followed, we got to know him as a warm, fun, extraordinarily kind person who made all of our lives a little brighter."

"That's why, when we were getting ready to leave the White House, we asked Tafari to stay with us, and he generously agreed. He's been part of our lives ever since, and our hearts are broken that he's gone." (AP)

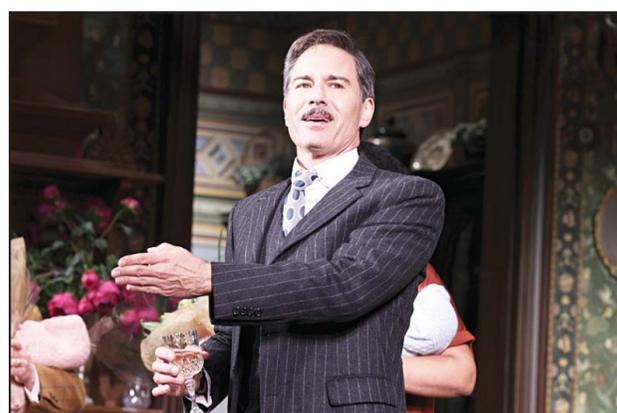


FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla: A deadlocked jury prompted a mistrial Saturday in the South Florida trial of rapper **YNW Melly** on charges that he murdered two of his friends five years ago.

The 12-member panel could not reach a unanimous verdict after three days of deliberations. **Broward County** prosecutors, who had been seeking the death penalty, will likely choose to retry the case with a new jury. A unanimous verdict is required to convict or acquit a defendant.

Broward Circuit Judge **John Murphy** twice asked the jurors to keep deliberating after they said they were deadlocked, but relented after they came back a third time.

Prosecutors say **YNW Melly**, whose legal name is **Jamell Demons**, shot **Anthony Williams** and **Christopher Thomas Jr.** while they were all inside



Actor **Eric McCormack** participates in the curtain call during the opening night of "The Cottage" at The Hayes Theater on Monday, July 24, 2023, in New York. (AP)

Climate

Coral reefs bleaching

Fingerprints of climate change on heat waves

NEW YORK, July 25, (AP) — The fingerprints of climate change are all over the intense heat waves gripping the globe this month, a new study finds. Researchers say the deadly hot spells in the American Southwest and Southern Europe could not have happened without the continuing buildup of warming gases in the air.

These unusually strong heat waves are becoming more common, Tuesday's study said. The same research found the increase in heat-trapping gases, largely from the burning of coal, oil and natural gas has made another heat wave - the one in China - 50 times more likely with the potential to occur every five years or so.



Zachariah

A stagnant atmosphere, warmed by carbon dioxide and other gases, also made the European heat wave 4.5 degrees Fahrenheit (2.5 degrees Celsius) hotter, the one in the United States and Mexico 3.6 degrees Fahrenheit (2 degrees Celsius) warmer and the one in China one 1.8 degrees Fahrenheit (1 degree Celsius) toastier, the study found.

Several climate scientists, using tree rings and other stand-ins for temperature records, say this month's heat is likely the hottest Earth has

been in about 120,000 years, easily the hottest of human civilization.

"Had there been no climate change, such an event would almost never have occurred," said study lead author **Mariam Zachariah**, a climate scientist at Imperial College of London. She called heat waves in Europe and North America "virtually impossible" without the increase in heat from the mid 1800s. Statistically, the one in China could have happened without global warming.

Since the advent of industrial-scale burning, the world has warmed 2.2 degrees Fahrenheit (1.2 degrees Celsius), so "they are not rare in today's climate and the role of climate change is absolutely overwhelming," said Imperial College climate scientist Friederike Otto, who leads the team of volunteer international scientists at World Weather Attribution who do these studies.

Study

The particularly intense heat waves that Texas, California, Arizona, New Mexico, Nevada, Baja California, Sonora, Chihuahua and Coahuila are now roasting through are likely to happen about once every 15 years in the current climate, the study said.

But the climate is not stabilized, even at this level. If it warms a few more tenths of a degree, this month's heat will become even more common, Otto said. Phoenix has had a record-shattering 25 straight days of temperatures at or above 110 degrees Fahrenheit (43.3 degrees Celsius) and more than a week when the nighttime temperature never dropped below 90 degrees Fahrenheit (32.2 Celsius).

The heat in Spain, Italy, Greece and some Balkan states is likely to reoccur every decade in the current climate, the study said.

Because the weather attribution researchers started their analysis of three simultaneous heat waves on July 17, the results are not yet peer reviewed, which is the gold standard for science. But it used scientifically valid techniques, the team's research regularly gets published and several outside experts told The Associated Press it makes sense.

The way scientists do these rapid analyses is by comparing observations of current weather in the three regions to repeated computer simulations of "a world that might have been without climate change," said study co-author Izidine Pinto, a climate scientist at the Royal Netherlands Meteorological Institute.

In Europe and North America, the study doesn't claim human-caused climate change is the sole cause of the heat waves, but it is a necessary ingredient because natural causes and random chance couldn't produce this alone.

Texas state climatologist John Nielsen-Gammon said the study was reasonable, but looks at a broad area of the U.S. Southwest, so it may not be applicable to every single place in the area.

"In the United States, it's clear that the entire southern tier is going to see the worst of the ever-worsening heat and this summer should be considered a serious wake-up call," said University of Michigan environment dean Jonathan Overpeck.

With heat waves, "the most important thing is that they kill people and they particularly kill and hurt and destroy lives and livelihoods of those most vulnerable," Otto said.

Also:

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla.: Some Florida Keys coral reefs are losing their color weeks earlier than normal this summer because of record-high water temperatures, meaning they are under stress and their health is potentially endangered, federal scientists said.

The corals should be vibrant and colorful this time of year, but are swiftly going white, said **Katey Lesneski**, research and monitoring coordinator for Mission: Iconic Reefs, which the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration launched to protect Florida coral reefs.

"The corals are pale, it looks like the color's draining out," said Lesneski, who has spent several days on the reefs over the last two weeks. "And some individuals are stark white. And we still have more to come."

Scientists with NOAA this week raised their coral bleaching warning system to Alert Level 2 for the Keys, their highest heat stress level out of five. That level is reached when the average water surface temperature is about 1.8 degrees Fahrenheit (1 degree Celsius) above the normal maximum for eight straight weeks.

Surface temperatures around the Keys have been averaging about 91 degrees (33 Celsius), well above the normal mid-July average of 85 degrees (29.5 Celsius), said Jacqueline De La Cour, operations manager for NOAA's Coral Reef Watch program. Previous Alert Level 2s were reached in August, she said.

Coral reefs are made up of tiny organisms that link together. The reefs get their color from the algae that live inside them and are the corals' food. When temperatures get too high, the coral expels the algae, making the reefs appear white or bleached. That doesn't mean they are dead, but the corals can starve and are more susceptible to disease.

Andrew Bruckner, research coordinator at the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, said some coral reefs began showing the first signs of bleaching two weeks ago. Then in the last few days, some reefs lost all their color. That had never been recorded before Aug. 1. The peak for bleaching typically happens in late August or September.

"We are at least a month ahead of time, if not two months," Bruckner said. "We're not yet at the point where we are seeing any mortality ... from bleaching. It is still a minor number that are completely white, certain species, but it is much sooner than we expected."

Still, forecasting what will happen the rest of the summer is hard, De La Cour and Bruckner said. While water temperatures could continue to spike — which could be devastating — a tropical storm or hurricane could churn the water and cool it down. Dusty air from the Sahara Desert moving across the Atlantic and settling over Florida could dampen the sun's rays, lowering temperatures.



A woman fans herself in Madrid, Spain, July 10. A new study Tuesday, July 25, finds these intense and deadly hot spells gripping much of the globe in the American Southwest and Southern Europe could not have occurred without climate change. (AP)

The Conversation

Agency has had a profound influence in sciences

NASA at 65: Expert traces its legacy

By **Stephen G. Alexander**
Miami University

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

Sixty-five years ago, in 1958, several government programs that had been pursuing spaceflight combined to form NASA. At the time, I was only 3 years old.

I've now been a professor of physics and astronomy for nearly 30 years, and I realize that, like countless others who came of age in the 1960s and '70s, NASA's missions have had a profound effect on my life and career path. From John Glenn's first flight into orbit to the Hubble telescope, the agency's legacy has inspired generations of scientists.

The date was Feb. 20, 1962. My first grade teacher, Ms. Ochs, told the class that we would be doing something different on that day. She went to the blackboard and wrote in large block letters "John Glenn" and "NASA."

She asked if any of us knew what those words meant. None of us did, so she grabbed a globe, and using a pen with a plastic cap, she demonstrated that John Glenn, an astronaut, would soon be launched on a rocket - the pen - from Florida. When the rocket got high enough, Glenn in the Mercury capsule - the cap - would separate from the rocket and go into orbit around the Earth. She demonstrated this by moving the pen cap around the globe.

My class then sat and listened to the historic launch of Friendship 7 carrying Glenn, which was the first US mission to send a man into orbit around the Earth.

There would be three more missions in the one-man Mercury program, culminating in Gordon Cooper's Faith 7 mission, which completed 22 Earth orbits. The program proved that NASA could put a manned spacecraft in orbit and bring it back safely to Earth. Next, NASA was ready to move on to a more maneuverable two-person spacecraft.

In 1965, NASA planned to launch the two-person Gemini spacecraft, and I moved on to the fifth grade where my teacher, Mrs. Wein, was also a space enthusiast. In December, NASA launched the joint missions of Gemini 6 and 7, and Mrs. Wein gave me permission to stay home from school to watch the TV coverage.

This was the first time that two pilot-ed spacecraft performed what is called

a rendezvous maneuver, where they meet up in orbit. Orbital maneuvers like this require very precise calculations and a spacecraft in which astronauts can make path changes in orbit - which is what the Gemini capsule was designed to do.

The Gemini 6A and 7 spacecrafts practiced a rendezvous maneuver in Earth's orbit. At the time, I didn't understand the importance of this mission, until Mrs. Wein directed me to the "S" volume of the World Book Encyclopedia. There, under "Spaceflight," was a full-page diagram of the lunar orbit rendezvous plan that a NASA engineer, John Houbolt, had developed to get the astronauts to the Moon and back.

The central feature of the lunar orbit rendezvous was that two spacecraft, the Apollo Command Module and the Lunar Excursion Module, would rendezvous in orbit around the Moon using the same technique the Gemini 6 and 7 missions had demonstrated. The technology of this maneuver, used in Apollo missions, would later help land Neil Armstrong on the Moon.

Aspirations

In December 1968, when I was in eighth grade, I watched the Apollo 8 mission orbit the Earth on TV. It was the first time that anyone, whether US astronaut or Soviet cosmonaut, had left low Earth orbit. This mission gave us "Earthrise," the first look at our home planet as seen from afar.

The Apollo 11 Moon landing happened in July 1969. I will never forget sitting in my living room as Armstrong stepped off the Lunar Excursion Module onto the lunar surface. With Armstrong's steps, the aspirations of a lost president, thousands of NASA scientists and engineers and millions of public followers were fulfilled.

In December 1972, when I was a senior in high school, Gene Cernan became the last person to walk on the Moon during the Apollo 17 mission. Like many of us who witnessed the Apollo missions, I listened to Cernan's final words from the Moon, where he challenged young people to continue what NASA had begun.

Inspired by Cernan's words, I went on to earn degrees in aerospace engineering and worked on both the reentry of the Skylab Space Station and the early mission planning for the Magellan spacecraft that visited Venus.

At this point, I made a career change - I returned to school to study physics and ultimately ended up in theoretical astrophysics.

NASA has had a profound influence in the sciences. For one, the ability to guide unmanned robotic spacecraft anywhere in the solar system was a byproduct of the technologies necessary for the manned Apollo missions. Using this technology, NASA has sent probes to all of the planets - and some non-planets - in the solar system, revolutionizing scientists' knowledge of our cosmic backyard.

Perhaps the most ambitious of these is the Mars Perseverance Rover, which looks for chemical evidence of past or present life on Mars. It also collects and leaves samples for a potential return mission sometime in the 2030s.

In terms of pure astronomy, NASA's space-based observatories span the electromagnetic spectrum. The Hubble Space Telescope and its newly launched cousin, the James Webb Space Telescope, have allowed astronomers to get large telescopes above Earth's optically hazy atmosphere. With these instruments, we can see almost to the beginning of time, since looking deeper into space also means looking back in time.

The James Webb Space Telescope is revolutionizing our view of the cosmos - there has not been an equal revolution in observational astronomy since Galileo first pointed a telescope at the heavens in 1609.

What will the future hold for NASA? It's hard to say. Recently, private enterprise has driven advances in both launch vehicles and satellite design, although NASA will likely continue to have a leading role, not only in the spaceflight but the scientific research as well.

I hope that today there are elementary teachers like Ms. Ochs and Mrs. Wein who will nurture the wonder and excitement of spaceflight in their students. But they won't have to just listen on the radio. They can watch livestreams, like those of launches of SpaceX's Falcon Heavy in 2018 and NASA's Artemis I in November 2022.

NASA's first 65 years have been an amazing record of accomplishments. When the students I teach today near my age, I wonder what amazing things - about which we can only dream - they will look back on. (AP)



A SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket with a payload of Starlink V2 Mini internet satellites lifts off from Launch Complex 40 at the Cape Canaveral Space Force Station in Cape Canaveral, Fla., Sunday, July 23. (AP)



Thunberg



Kjelström

Discovery

Activist Thunberg defiant: A Swedish court on Monday fined climate activist **Greta Thunberg** for disobeying police during an environmental protest at an oil facility last month.

Thunberg, 20, admitted to the facts but denied guilt, saying the fight against the fossil fuel industry was a form of self-defense due to the existential and global threat of the climate crisis.

"We cannot save the world by playing by the rules," she told journalists after hearing the verdict, vowing she would "definitely not" back down.

The court rejected her argument and fined her 2,500 kronor (about \$240).

Charges were brought against Thunberg and several other youth activists from the Reclaim the Future movement for refusing a police order to disperse after blocking road access to an oil terminal in the southern Swedish city of Malmö on June 19.

"If the court sees our actions of self-defense as a crime, that's how it is," said **Irma Kjelström**, a spokesperson for Reclaim the Future who was also present at the June protest. She added that activists "have to be exactly where the harm is being done."

The sentencing appeared to have little effect on the youths' determination - just a few hours later, Thunberg and Reclaim the Future activists returned to the oil terminal to stage to another roadblock. (AP)

Bear traps set for grizzly bear:

Wildlife workers put out bear traps for a third night Monday as they try to capture a grizzly bear that killed a woman who was traveling alone on a forest trail near Yellowstone National Park.

Amie Adamson, 48, Derby, Kansas, died in Saturday's fatal mauling near the Montana-Idaho border, the Gallatin County Coroner's Office said. The victim was a marathon runner, and officials said she was likely running or walking at the time of the attack.

Officials ruled out a rare predatory attack, which suggests Adamson instead died following a chance bear encounter as she traveled by herself in a wooded area frequented by grizzly and black bears.

She was killed a few hundred yards (meters) from a trailhead and a private campground and RV park, said Morgan Jacobsen with Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks. The bear was traveling with one or more cubs, and there were no indications that it tried to eat the victim.

Authorities have not decided whether they would kill the adult bear if it's cap-

tured or whether they would relocate it, Jacobsen said.

Adamson is a former English teacher

who left the classroom in 2015 to backpack across much of the US and later wrote a book, "Walking Out," about her



This photo provided by the University of Miami Coral Reef Futures Lab, shows fire coral and staghorn corals with bleaching, tissue loss, and recent mortality on Thursday, July 20, 2023, in the North Dry Rocks Reef off the coast of Key Largo, Fla. Some Florida Keys corals are losing their color weeks earlier in the summer than has been documented before, meaning they are under stress and their health is potentially endangered, federal scientists said. (AP)

career and experiences.

The victim's mother described her as a hiker, marathon runner and "just a beautiful free spirit." KWCH-TV in Wichita reported.

"She lived for experiences," Janet Adamson said, adding that her daughter did not care about material possessions and died "doing what she loved."

A hiker found her body around 8 a.m. Saturday. The cause of death was excessive blood loss caused by a bear mauling, the coroner's office said.

Adamson was wearing running shoes and did not have bear spray, a deterrent that wildlife experts recommend people carry in areas frequented by bears, Jacobsen said.

She had been working nearby and often ran or walked on the trail in the early morning, according to officials and local residents.

"This person was likely out for a morning jog along the trail, and that's when this happened," said Jacobsen.

Tracks of a grizzly bear and at least one cub were found at the scene of the attack, which occurred near the Buttermill Trailhead 8 miles (13 kilometers) west of West Yellowstone, a busy summer tourist town and gateway to the national park.

The trail is used by hikers, horseback riders and people in off-road vehicles. (AP)

Cowser lifts Orioles to win over Phillies

Astros move within two games of Rangers

PHILADELPHIA, July 25, (AP): Baltimore rookie Colton Cowser hit a tie-breaking double in the ninth inning after helping to throw out the potential go-ahead run in the eighth, lifting the surging Orioles to a 3-2 victory over the Philadelphia Phillies on Monday night.

Ryan Mountcastle and Jordan Westburg homered for the AL-East leading Orioles, who have won 13 of 16 games and moved 2 1/2 games ahead of idle Tampa Bay.

Nick Castellanos and Kyle Schwarber drove in runs for the defending NL champion Phillies. Philadelphia has lost five of six.

Cowser entered as a defensive replacement for Aaron Hicks in the third inning after Hicks was hurt making a diving catch. In the ninth, he lofted a flyball to left against Craig Kimbrel (6-2) that went off the glove of diving left fielder Schwarber.

Bryan Baker (4-3) got the win in relief of Dean Kremer, who allowed one run on three hits in seven innings. Cionel Pérez pitched out of trouble in the ninth for his first save.

Astros 10, Rangers 9
In Houston, Chas McCormick homered and drove in a career-high six runs, and Yanier Díaz's game-ending RBI single in the ninth lifted Houston over AL West rival Texas.

The Astros moved within two games of the division-leading Rangers.

Rookie Alex Speas (0-2) walked Kyle Tucker to start the ninth. McCormick walked with one out. Díaz then lined his single to right field and Tucker slid in just before the tag. The play was upheld after a video review.

Ryan Pressly (3-2) pitched a scoreless ninth. The Rangers led 9-6 when Aroldis Chapman walked consecutive batters with one out in the seventh. McCormick tied it with a three-run shot to left-center.

Brewers 3, Reds 2
In Milwaukee, Christian Yelich hit a game-ending single, Sal Frelick launched his first major league home run and Milwaukee beat Cincinnati.

Milwaukee overcame a 456-foot, 1 two-run homer by Elly De La Cruz, who was robbed of a home run earlier on a leaping catch by center fielder Joey Wiemer.

Despite going 2 for 16 with runners in scoring position, the first-place Brewers moved 1 1/2 games ahead of Cincinnati, which had won five straight.

BASEBALL

All-Star closer Alexis Díaz (3-2) entered in the bottom of the ninth inning and didn't get an out. He walked Blake Perkins and allowed a single to pinch-hitter Jesse Winker before Yelich drove in Perkins with a grounder into right field.

Devin Williams (5-2) pitched a perfect ninth for Milwaukee.

Blue Jays 6, Dodgers 3, 11 innings
In Los Angeles, Daulton Varsho hit a tiebreaking two-run double in Toronto's three-run 11th inning against Los Angeles.

Matt Chapman homered in the eighth for the Blue Jays, who earned their 11th win in 16 games.

Toronto loaded the bases in the 11th on third baseman Chris Taylor's throwing error and Whit Merrifield's single before Varsho's low line drive to right was misplayed by Jason Heyward, who wasn't charged with an error. Bo Bichette drew a bases-loaded walk from Phil Bickford (2-3) to make it 6-3.

Jay Jackson (3-0) pitched two hitless innings of relief and Jordan Romano finished for his 28th save, tying Baltimore's Félix Bautista for the AL lead.

Cardinals 10, Diamondbacks 6
In Phoenix, Paul Goldschmidt hit a two-run homer and then a tying single in the ninth inning against his former team, leading St. Louis over skidding Arizona.

Diamondbacks closer Andrew Chafin (2-3) walked Lars Nootbaar with the bases loaded and two outs, which forced home Willson Contreras for a 7-6 lead. Tyler O'Neill followed with a three-run double off Kevin Ginkel.

St. Louis snapped a three-game losing streak and improved to 7-4 since the All-Star break.

Arizona has dropped five straight and is 5-13 in July.

Cardinals right-hander Adam Wainwright returned to the mound after three weeks on the shelf with a right shoulder strain. The 41-year-old went five innings and left with a 5-2 lead.

Royals 5, Guardians 3

In Cleveland, Salvador Pérez became the 10th player in major league history to hit 200 homers as a catcher and Ryan Yarbrough allowed one run



San Francisco Giants second baseman David Villar tags Detroit Tigers' Akil Baddoo for the out on an attempted steal during the second inning of a baseball game in Detroit. (AP)

MLB Results/Standings

WASHINGTON, July 25, (AP): Results and standings from the MLB games on Monday.				
Detroit	5	San Francisco	1	
Baltimore	3	Philadelphia	3	
Kansas City	5	Cleveland	3	
Minnesota	4	Seattle 10 inn	3	
Houston	10	Texas	9	
Toronto	6	LA Dodgers 11 inn	3	
Colorado	10	Washington	6	
Milwaukee	3	Cincinnati	2	
Pittsburgh	8	San Diego	4	
St Louis	10	Arizona	6	
American League				
East Division				
W	L	Pct	GB	
Baltimore	62	38	.620	—
Tampa Bay	61	42	.592	2-1/2
Toronto	56	45	.554	6-1/2
Boston	53	47	.530	9
New York	53	47	.530	9
Central Division				
W	L	Pct	GB	
Minnesota	54	48	.529	—
Cleveland	49	51	.490	4
Detroit	46	54	.460	7
Chicago	41	60	.406	12-1/2
Kansas City	29	73	.284	25
West Division				
W	L	Pct	GB	
Texas	59	42	.584	—
Houston	57	44	.564	2
Los Angeles	51	49	.510	7-1/2
Seattle	50	50	.500	8-1/2
Oakland	28	74	.275	31-1/2
National League				
East Division				
W	L	Pct	GB	
Atlanta	64	34	.653	—
Miami	54	47	.535	11-1/2
Philadelphia	53	47	.530	12
New York	46	53	.465	18-1/2
Washington	41	59	.410	24
Central Division				
W	L	Pct	GB	
Milwaukee	56	45	.554	—
Cincinnati	55	47	.539	1-1/2
Chicago	48	51	.485	7
St Louis	45	56	.446	11
Pittsburgh	44	56	.440	11-1/2
West Division				
W	L	Pct	GB	
Los Angeles	57	42	.576	—
Arizona	54	47	.535	4
San Francisco	54	47	.535	4
San Diego	48	53	.475	10
Colorado	40	60	.400	17-1/2

in six innings, lifting Kansas City over Cleveland.

Perez hit a two-run shot in the sixth off Logan Allen (4-3) to put Kansas City ahead 4-0. He has 240 homers overall in 12 seasons. Hall of Famer Mike Piazza holds the big league record for homers as a catcher with 396.

Yarbrough (3-5) won at Cleveland for the second time in 15 days. Scott Barlow gave up two hits in the ninth before picking up his 12th save.

Kansas City ended a five-game skid while Cleveland fell four games behind first-place Minnesota in the AL Central.

Twins 4, Mariners 3, 10 innings
In Minneapolis, Carlos Correa's flare to right field evaded a sliding Teoscar Hernández and scored automatic runner Donovan Solano in the 10th as Minnesota won its second straight game in extra innings.

Solano moved to third on a sacrifice bunt by Christian Vázquez against Paul Sewald (3-1), and Ryan Jeffers reached when no Seattle player covered first base on another bunt. Correa then sent a soft liner to right that Hernández couldn't catch.

Jorge Lopez (4-2) retired all three batters he faced in the top of the 10th for Minnesota, which is 9-2 since the All-Star break.

Max Kepler had an RBI double in the bottom of the ninth to tie the

game for the Twins. Kolten Wong hit a pinch-hit, two-run homer with two outs in the top of the inning for the Mariners.

Rockies 10, Nationals 6
In Washington, Nolan Jones hit a two-run homer, Alan Trejo had a double and three singles, and Colorado beat Washington.

Karl Kauffman (1-3) pitched four-plus innings of one-run relief for his first major league win as last-place Colorado (40-60) improved to 6-3 since the All-Star break.

Jeimer Candelario had a three-run homer and a double for the Nationals, who were looking for their first four-game winning streak of the season.

Patrick Corbin (6-11) gave up six runs - five earned - and 10 hits over 6 1/3 innings.

Tigers 5, Giants 1
In Detroit, Tarik Skubal struck out nine while recording his first victory in over a year and Detroit handed San Francisco its season-worst sixth straight loss.

Skubal (1-1) held the Giants scoreless on two hits in five innings in a game that was a makeup of an April 16 postponement. His previous victory came against Oakland on July 21 last season. He had flexor tendon surgery in August.

Zack Short hit a two-run homer and Kerry Carpenter also drove in two runs for Detroit.

Ross Stripling (0-4) gave up three runs and 10 hits in six-plus innings.

Pirates 8, Padres 4
In San Diego, Carlos Santana hit a pair of two-run homers and Pittsburgh went deep four times against Yu Darvish to beat San Diego.

Liover Peguero also had a two-run drive and Jack Suwinski added a solo shot. Darvish (7-7) gave up seven runs and eight hits in 4 1/3 innings.

Ha-Seong Kim homered twice for the Padres, his first career multi-homer game.



India's captain Rohit Sharma holds the trophy for winning the two-match Test series against West Indies after the second Test was drawn with no play possible due to rain at Queen's Park in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago. (AP)

Osasuna announce deal to overturn expulsion

PAMPLONA, Spain, July 25, (AP): Spanish soccer club Osasuna said Tuesday it has overturned expulsion from the Europa Conference League after reaching an agreement with UEFA which was signed off by the Court of Arbitration for Sport.

UEFA did not immediately confirm the agreement with Osasuna.

UEFA removed Osasuna from the third-tier European competition three weeks ago because former club officials were implicated in fixing matches a decade ago.

Osasuna argued its current management was not involved in wrongdoing. The club filed an appeal at CAS trying to save its first European qualification for 17 years which it earned by placing seventh in the Spanish league last season.

In a statement Tuesday, Osasuna said a so-called "consent

award" was reached with UEFA and ratified by CAS.

□ □ □

Nottingham Forest signed Sweden forward Anthony Elanga from Manchester United on Tuesday in a deal worth a reported 15 million pounds (\$19 million).

The 21-year-old Elanga, who made 55 appearances in all competitions for Man United, has agreed a five-year deal.

"It's the perfect next step for me in my career, it's a big step and I'm really looking forward to playing in front of the Forest fans at The City Ground," Elanga told Forest's official website.

Elanga made 39 Premier League appearances for United, including 21 starts, scoring three goals.

Pakistan take 12-run lead over Sri Lanka

India win series after last day of 2nd Test washed out

PORT OF SPAIN, Trinidad, July 25, (AP): The West Indies and India drew the second test at Queen's Park Oval after the fifth and last day Monday was washed out.

India won the series 1-0 after an innings win in Dominica.

India secured a fifth successive series win in the Caribbean. It hasn't lost a test to West Indies in 21 years.

West Indies was 76-2 in the second innings, trailing India by 289 runs. The odds heavily favored India, which was far keener for play to get underway. On Sunday, India wrapped up the West Indies first innings in the first eight overs, taking five wickets for 26 runs.

Play on Monday was scheduled to start earlier to make up for previous rain delays but despite breaks in the showers and the covers being removed, another heavy downpour forced the umpires to call it in mid-afternoon after nearly five hours of inaction.

CRICKET

India scored 438 with 121 from Virat Kohli and 181-2 declared, and West Indies made 255 with a career-best 5-60 by seamer Mohammed Siraj.

The teams turn to white-ball cricket starting in Barbados with three one-day internationals from Thursday.

Pakistan took a 12-run lead over Sri Lanka in the second test on Tuesday with eight first-innings wickets left after only 10 overs were bowled on the rain-hit second day.

Pakistan was 178-2 at stumps at the Sinhalese Sports Club.

All the play was in the morning session with an early lunch taken because of heavy rain. The rain had stopped by the afternoon but the outfield was wet and, after tea, the umpires decided to call off play for the day and resume 15 minutes early on Wednesday.

Resuming on the overnight score of 145-2, Pakistan moved past Sri Lanka's first-innings total of 166 before a downpour forced the players off the field.

Pakistan scored 33 runs during the 43 minutes of play. Opener **Abdullah Shafique** has reached 87 while captain **Babar Azam** is 28 not out in a 57-run unbroken partnership for the third wicket.

Pakistan needed only 48.4 overs to dismiss Sri Lanka on Monday's opening day after the visitors opted to bat first having won the toss. Leg-spinner **Abrar Ahmed** claimed four wickets while **Naseem Shah** and **Shaheen Afridi** shared four wickets between them.

Pakistan won the first test in Galle by four wickets and needs only a draw to clinch the two-match series.



Pakistan's Babar Azam plays a shot during the second day of the second cricket Test match between Sri Lanka and Pakistan in Colombo, Sri Lanka. (AP)



Naoya Inoue, (left), of Japan throws a punch against Stephen Fulton of the U.S., during the round four of a boxing match for the unified WBC and WBO super-bantamweight world titles in Tokyo. (AP)

Inoue stops Fulton, wins world titles in his fourth weight class

TOKYO, July 25, (AP): Naoya Inoue became a world champion in his fourth weight class Tuesday night when he stopped Stephen Fulton in the eighth round to claim the WBC and WBO super bantamweight titles.

Inoue (25-0, 22 KOs) made an impressive debut at 122 pounds with a dominant performance against the previously unbeaten Fulton (21-1) at Ariake Arena. Fulton had held both of his belts since 2021 and was considered the top fighter in the division.

The Japanese star knocked down Fulton in the opening minute of the eighth round with a big left hand after stunning him with a body jab and a punishing right. Inoue finished moments later, pummeling Fulton with punches in the corner to force the referee to halt the bout.

The 30-year-old Inoue improved to 20-0 in world title fights with a

whopping 18 stoppages, improving his standing as one of the world's top pound-for-pound boxers.

Inoue held all four major belts at 118 pounds after beating Paul Butler last December, prompting him to move up to challenge Fulton. Their bout initially was scheduled for May 7, but Inoue injured his hand in training camp, forcing a 2 1/2-month delay.

BOXING

"Everything I was thinking about was to fight him this year," Inoue said through an interpreter. "However, unfortunately, I got injured, and I had to postpone this fight. I am sorry to my team and Fulton's team, but thank you so much for accepting this fight once again. I am so happy right now."

SPORTS

Ledecky wins gold in 1,500 to tie mark set by Phelps

Murphy holds off Ceccon for title

FUKUOKA, Japan, July 25, (AP): Katie Ledecky won the 1,500-meter freestyle with ease on Tuesday at the World Aquatics Championships in a landmark victory which made her the most decorated female swimmer at the worlds with 20 golds overall, 15 of which have come in individual events.

That ties Michael Phelps' record at the worlds for individual gold medals.

SWIMMING

American Ryan Murphy added the second American gold medal on Tuesday, winning the 100-meter backstroke. But as usual when the 26-year-old Ledecky swims, she's the story.

Ledecky has won seven Olympic golds, the first coming more than a decade ago in London. And she's talking about racing not just in next year's Paris Olympics, but perhaps also in Los Angeles in 2028.

That cake is getting bigger for one of the greatest freestylers the sport has ever seen. She won Tuesday in 15 minutes, 26.27 seconds, the third quickest time of her career. Italy's Simona Quadarella finished 17 seconds behind Ledecky in 15:43.31, with Li Bingjie of China third in 15:45.71.

Ledecky will compete in the 800 on Saturday - her favorite race - and is set to become the only person to win six titles at the worlds in the same event.

Murphy, a four-time Olympic gold medalist and the defending world



Katie Ledecky of United States reacts after the women's 1500m freestyle finals at the World Swimming Championships in Fukuoka, Japan. (AP)

champion in the 200 backstroke, edged Italian Thomas Ceccon by .05 seconds. Murphy clocked 52.22 and Ceccon 52.27, with bronze for American Hunter Armstrong in 52.58.

The big shock was 18-year-old Romanian David Popovici, who was a

clear favorite in the 200 free. He finished fourth behind two British swimmers -- Matthew Richards in 1:44.30, and Tom Dean in 1:44.32. South Korean Hwang Sunwoo took bronze (1:44.42) with Popovici finishing fourth in 1:44.90.

Ruta Meilutyte of Lithuania captured gold in the women's 100 breaststroke in 1:04.62, ahead of Tatjana Schoenmaker of South Africa and third-place Lydia Jacoby of the U.S.

Kaylee McKeown of Australia won the women's 100 backstroke in 57.53,

edging Regan Smith of the United States by 0.25. American Katharine Berkoff took third in 58.25.

McKeown was disqualified earlier in the 200 IM for a violation on the backstroke leg, infuriating her and her team.

"If you're not learning you're not growing," she said. "So I had to find a positive in a negative and that's what I did. I channeled it and I managed to make it work. Being up against the Americans, they bring out the best."



Ruta Meilutyte of Lithuania competes during the women's 100m breaststroke final at the World Swimming Championships in Fukuoka, Japan. (AP)

Rematch time

USA and Netherlands to meet at Women's WCup

AUCKLAND, New Zealand, July 25, (AP): Now that the United States women have won equal pay with their male counterparts, there's no need for their supporters to again chant for fairness when the Americans play the Netherlands on Thursday in their rematch of the 2019 Women's World Cup final.

The Americans defeated the Netherlands 2-0 in France for their second straight World Cup trophy, and fourth overall. They were in the midst of a lawsuit and a contract battle at the time over pay with U.S. Soccer, and the players were feted with shouts of "Equal Pay!" from the fans.

The team's pursuit for equal pay was finally resolved last year, when a deal was struck that paid the women the same as the U.S. men's team and, importantly, evenly split the tournament prize money earned by both teams.

"Everything where we were in 2019 to where we are now is almost the same but couldn't be more different," Alex Morgan said. "We were fighting a legal battle off the field and trying to also win over the world on the field."

So the crowd at Wellington on Thursday doesn't need to fight for the Americans to receive equal treatment. They can instead focus on the rematch and cheer for another win over the Dutch.

The game is the second Group E match for both teams, and both the U.S. and the Netherlands opened the tournament with wins.

The trophy isn't on the line for this match as it was in 2019, and both teams are already in good position to advance to the knockout round. But the game remains important for the final group standings: the winner has an easier path to advance in the next stage.

The Netherlands has won just one of its 10 matches against the United States, although only one of those matches was in a World Cup - that 2019 final. The only Dutch victory in the series came in the first meeting in 1991.

The two teams also met in the quarterfinals at the Tokyo Olympics, with the Americans advancing on penalties after a 2-2 game.

"Super excited for that game," forward Megan Rapinoe said in



Netherlands' Stefanie Van der Graagt celebrates after scoring her side's first goal during the Women's World Cup Group E soccer match between the Netherlands and Portugal in Dunedin, New Zealand. (AP)

looking ahead to the matchup. "Obviously we've seen them a number of times in big tournaments over the last few years. Ready for a good one."

The United States is coming off a 3-0 victory over Vietnam in the team's tournament opener in Auckland. Sophia Smith scored a pair of goals, with captain Lindsey Horan contributing the other.

U.S. coach Vlatko Andonovski rolled out a somewhat surprising

SOCCER

lineup for the first match, moving midfielder Julie Ertz to center back and starting Savannah DeMelo at midfield. She made her first start in just her second appearance with the team.

Ertz returned to the team earlier this year after the birth of her son. She had not played for the United States for more than 600 days but was able to ramp up while playing for her club team, Angel City.

While Ertz has some experience on the backline from earlier in her national team career, the recent move was prompted by the loss of captain Becky Sauerbrunn, who injured her foot and could not play in the World Cup.

SOCCER

among the oldest players at the World Cup, uncharacteristically missed a penalty in the 50th minute against the Nigerians. Sinclair is the top international scorer of all time, men or women, with 190 career goals.

"Of course the team and I are devastated we didn't get three points. But at the end of the day, we got one (point) and we took two from another team," Priestman said.

The Canadians have seen penalty heartbreak before.

At the 2019 World Cup in France, Janine Beckie's attempt was stopped by Sweden goalkeeper Hedvig Lindahl in the 52nd minute that secured Australia's win in front of a record crowd.

The game against Ireland is crucial for the Canadians to advance.

Australia, which is playing without injured star Sam Kerr, leads the group after a 1-0 victory over Ireland in Sydney. Steph Catley scored on a penalty in the 52nd minute that secured Australia's win in front of a record crowd.

With the loss, Ireland tumbled to the bottom of the group. But coach Vera Pauw was encouraged with her team's play and believes the Irish can hang with anybody.

"The next one is against Canada, the Olympic champion," Pauw said. "We do not fear anyone and these players adapt so quickly."

Spain continued its recent roll by extending its streak to six consecutive victories with an easy 3-0 win over Costa Rica in its opening Group C match. Now a spot in the knockout rounds is within reach in a Wednesday game against Zambia in Auckland.

Spain looked sensational in its opening match by pouncing for three goals in the first 30 minutes, and the Zambia victory could have been more lopsided. La Roja had 46 shots, with 12 attempts on goal.

Now a win over Zambia - and just a draw in Japan's game against Costa Rica - would put Spain in the round of 16 with a game to spare.

"Our top objective is to win the game, to have six points, which would almost guarantee our progression to the next round," coach Jorge Vilda said. "Whether we score one, two or three goals, it is more important that we score more goals than the opponents to win the game. And if we can have that advantage before playing our final group match, that would be great."

Spain has not conceded a goal in its

Japan and Spain eye quarters

Canada aiming for Tokyo-style run to title at WC

Morocco shift focus to next game after 'big' loss in Women's World Cup debut

MELBOURNE, Australia, July 25, (AP): Morocco's debut game at the Women's World Cup ended in a 6-0 loss to two-time champion Germany in what head coach Reynald Pedros described as a "David versus Goliath" contest.

Germany is ranked No. 2 and the Atlas Lionesses are No. 72 and the first Arab or North African team to qualify.

The margin of defeat on Monday was the biggest so far at the tournament where Morocco is one of eight teams on debut.

Pedros has made it clear the opening game is now history, and Morocco's focus must shift swiftly to the next game against South Korea.

"Our objective is obviously to as quickly as possible get back to work," he said. "We're still going to stay positive, that's extremely important."

A large contingent of Morocco fans, many gathered in the southwest corner of the stadium in Melbourne, cheered vocally for the recent Africa

Cup of Nations finalists.

"We were coming up against a team that's extremely high level,"

Pedros said. "We could have avoid-



Morocco's Zineb Redouani heads the ball during the Women's World Cup Group H soccer match between Germany and Morocco in Melbourne, Australia. (AP)

ed some of the goals we conceded, but I think we gave it our all, and we're in a competition that's a high-level competition."

Throughout the match, Morocco struggled defending crosses and corner kicks. Germany opened its scoring with captain Alexandra Popp finding the back of the net with two first-half headers serviced from out wide. In the second half, Klara Buhl and Lea Schuller added to Ger-

SOCCER

many's tally, bookending two own goals that bounced off Morocco's Hanane Ait El Haj and Yasmin Mrabet after German corners.

Pedros described the third goal - coming from Buhl just 23 seconds into the second half - as a "hard blow," noting that if the team could have scored after Popp's opening wo goals, the end result may have been different.

last five matches.

Zambia needs to step up its defensive play to avoid early elimination. The Copper Queens have given up at least three goals in each of its last four international matches, and a loss to Spain would seal their fate with a game to go in group play.

Adding to Zambia's issues: the team is down to its third goaltender through one game of the tournament.

Japan can potentially advance to the knockout stage of the Women's World Cup with a game to spare in its Wednesday match against Costa Rica in Dunedin, New Zealand.

A 5-0 win over Zambia in its opening match has put Japan in control of its own fate. The Nadeshiko have advanced to the knockout round the last three World Cups - and won the tournament in 2011 - and a victory

over Costa Rica coupled with anything but a Spain loss to Zambia in the other Group C game would make it four straight. Spain already rolled to a 3-0 win over Costa Rica in the first set of group games, but Japan coach Futoshi Ikeda has cautioned his squad against underestimating their next opponent.

"We're getting used to the World Cup. I think we can bring out more, but we don't want to be too complacent where (Costa Rica) can hit us where we're not looking," Ikeda said. "I think they are a very good defensive team. They have the power to do a lot of plays, so we need to pay attention to various things when we're planning our side of things."

Japan has won four of its last five matches, beating both Australia and Canada along the way, and Costa Rica

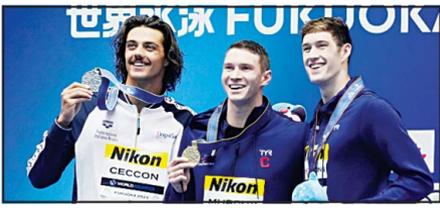
has won only one of its past 12 matches. Japan is feeling a lot more confident headed into its second game than it was in the opener - despite the ease in which the Nadeshiko got past Zambia.

"The first match was tough. We did it as a team. It was wonderful," forward Minami Tanaka said. "Compared to the first match, we're less nervous. I think we can play better, that's what I believe. And personally, I'm happy we got the points, but I want to be more relaxed."

Costa Rica, playing in its second Women's World Cup, understands it can be eliminated by Japan. Las Ticas has never won a game on this stage, and the loss to Spain could have been even worse if not for 10 saves from goalkeeper Daniela Solera against Spain.



Philippines supporters arrive at the stadium ahead of the Women's World Cup Group A soccer match between New Zealand and the Philippines in Wellington, New Zealand. (AP)



Gold medalist Ryan Murphy (center), silver medalist Thomas Ceccon (left), of Italy and bronze medalist Hunter Armstrong of the United States pose during ceremonies of the Men's 100m backstroke finals at the World Swimming Championships in Fukuoka, Japan. (AP) — See Page 15

Sports

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Philippines shock NZ for first win at WC



Left: Philippines' Sarina Bolden, (right), heads the ball past New Zealand's Ria Percival during the Women's World Cup Group A soccer match between New Zealand and the Philippines in Wellington, New Zealand. Right: Colombia's supporters cheer before the start of the Women's World Cup Group H soccer match between Colombia and South Korea at the Sydney Football Stadium in Sydney, Australia. (AP) (AP)



Switzerland's goalkeeper Gaelle Thalmann dives for the ball to make a save during the Women's World Cup Group A soccer match between Switzerland and Norway in Hamilton, New Zealand. (AP)



Bolden scores historic match-winner

WELLINGTON, New Zealand, July 25, (AP): Philippines made history at its first Women's World Cup with its first goal and first win Tuesday, holding on under pressure to upset co-host New Zealand.

The New Zealanders only five days earlier had celebrated their first win in six trips to the Women's World Cup.

Sarina Bolden scored the historic match-winner in the 24th minute and goalkeeper Olivia McDaniel - one of 18 U.S.-born or based players in the Philippines squad - produced a tireless performance to frustrate New Zealand as it desperately tried to rally.

For the tournament co-hosts, the jubilation that surrounded their 1-0 win over Norway in the tournament opener and transformed a rugby-mad nation into one suddenly besotted by soccer, melted away too soon.

A victory over Philippines would have meant New Zealand was the first of 32 teams at this World Cup to advance beyond the group stage.

But after conceding Bolden's goal against the run of play, New Zealand was unable to recover. It had enjoyed 80% of possession before Santa Clara-born Bolden scored from the Philippines' first shot on goal.

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New Zealand ended with 67% of possession and 14 shots on goal to the Philippines' three, but couldn't find an equalizer, let alone a winner.

Hannah Wilkinson went close on a couple of occasions and Jacqui Hand hit the post in the 64th. In the cruelest blow for the home team, Wilkinson crossed in the 68th to Hand, who headed into the net for what appeared to be goal.

But a review showed Wilkinson was a fraction offside and the goal was disallowed. For the rest of the match, McDaniel was a sentinel in front of the Philippines' goal.

"I've got everyone else's tears all over my eyes, it's so emotional," Philippines coach Alen Stajcic said. "You saw how long New Zealand had to wait for its first win - six World Cups - and (for Philippines) to get it today was incredible."

"We made our own luck but we also had a lot of luck. New Zealand were on the front foot the whole game and deserved something. But football is cruel sometimes."

When the final whistle sounded after five minutes of added time in which McDaniel pulled off two outstanding saves, there was only joy and celebration for the Philippines. Their fans were numerous - New Zealand has a substantial Philippines population - but apart from Bolden's goal when they gave full voice to their support, they had been subdued; afraid it seemed to tempt fate.

Switzerland, Norway draw, leaving Group A up for grabs

Cancer survivor Caicedo scores in Colombia win

SYDNEY, July 25, (AP): A cancer survivor, a Real Madrid star and now a scorer on her debut at the Women's World Cup, Linda Caicedo is an inspirational figure already at the age of 18.

Her broad smile at the end of Colombia's 2-0 win over South Korea on Tuesday lit up Sydney Football Stadium almost as much as her skills on the field.

Having feared this moment would never come when diagnosed with ovarian cancer aged 15, she made the most of being on the biggest stage in women's soccer.

"It is my first World Cup with the senior team and therefore I have to enjoy this tournament," Caicedo said. "No pressure. I know how young I am, everything that I (still) have to learn, the experience that I have to get."

Caicedo talks and plays with a maturity beyond her teenage years.

As a child prodigy, she made her senior team debut aged just 14. Then came the cancer diagnosis which threw such a promising career into doubt.

Now, here she was, lighting up the World Cup with a performance that justified her status as one of the rising stars of the sport.

"I just try to enjoy this moment," she said, cautious not to over-think things or lose sight of the bigger picture. "A football player has to be focused."

South Korea could not contain Caicedo, whose speed and footwork constantly forced her opponents to retreat.

That was the case as she burst forward from the halfway line in the first half before doubling Colombia's lead and effectively putting the result beyond doubt.

Cutting in from the left wing, she beat a number of Korean players before curling in a shot from the edge of the box. While her effort appeared too central to trouble South Korea's Yoon Young-geul, the goalkeeper got her positioning wrong and instead fumbled the ball into the net.

Caicedo certainly didn't mind getting the helping hand as she raced toward Colombia's fans in celebration.

South Korea coach Colin Bell was less impressed with his team's defensive marking.

"Obviously Linda is a really big talent, but we just gave her too much space," he said, adding that his defenders should have gone in for firm but fair

slide tackles. "We had the options to do that also before the second goal. You cannot just shadow a player. You need that physicality but obviously Linda is capable and very strong in one-v-one."

Bell's frustration was evident at the end of the game, but stopping a player of Caicedo's qualities is easier said than done.

"This was a football exhibition and also a confidence exhibition. She brings joy to everyone," Colombia's assistant coach Mario Abadia said. "It's great to see such players, how they evolve and how they take ownership of such a game like she did."

In a moment for the history books for talented teens, 16-year-old Casey Phair became the youngest-ever player at a senior soccer World Cup when she went on as a second-half substitute for South Korea.

By then, it was too late. The Colombians took the lead from a penalty in the 30th minute after Shim Seo-yeon handled a goal-bound effort from Manuela Vanegas in the area. Catalina Usme converted from the spot.

Caicedo's goal gave the Colombians a bigger buffer.

Lee Geum-min was close to pulling a goal back at the end of the half with a powerful header, but was denied by the flying save of Catalina Perez.

These were the last two teams to begin their campaigns in the tournament

co-hosted by Australia and New Zealand, and it was the 300th game in Women's World Cup history.

The win could be crucial to Colombia's chances of advancing to the round of 16 after Germany delivered a statement of intent in Group H with a 6-0 rout of Morocco on Monday.

Goalkeeper Gaelle Thalmann shielded Switzerland to a 0-0 draw against Norway as the Norwegians played without star striker Ada Hegerberg because of injury.

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Hegerberg was initially listed to start, but the team announced during the match that the former Ballon d'Or winner was unable to play after experiencing "a feeling in the groin" toward the end of her pre-match warmups.

The Norwegians could have used her to break open a scoreless game. In her place, Sophie Roman Haug started the match as a striker. But Roman Haug's Women's World Cup debut proved to be a fruitless one.

She was substituted in the 73rd minute for Karina Saevik.

Switzerland and Norway each had their share of opportunities to score a decisive opener throughout the match, but it was Norway that forced Thalmann to come up with four saves.



South Korea's Shim Seo-yeon (left), and Colombia's Marcela Restrepo compete for the ball during the Women's World Cup Group H soccer match between Colombia and South Korea at the Sydney Football Stadium in Sydney, Australia. (AP)

the win over Norway, were briefly shaken, silent but at last the saluted their team. A loss was unexpected but not terminal. Switzerland and Norway had a 0-0 draw later Tuesday in Hamilton in a result that leaves all four teams in Group A still able to advance.

The Swiss lead with four points, New Zealand and the Philippines each have three and Norway has one.

New Zealand will play Switzerland and Philippines is against Norway on Sunday.

New Zealand's match in Dunedin is sold out, making it a third consecutive capacity crowd as New Zealanders embrace soccer and the Ferns in unprecedented numbers.

Australians confident in squad depth despite Sam Kerr injury

BRISBANE, Australia, July 25, (AP): Having the Women's World Cup on home soil has given Australia's team the confidence it can contend for the title even without star striker Sam Kerr on the field.

The Chelsea forward and Australian captain missed the Matildas' opening game last week because of a calf muscle injury that will also keep her sidelined for Thursday's Group B game against Nigeria. And perhaps longer than that.

The Matildas are pitching it as a chance to show the depth of their squad.

"I think we could play any one of us right now in the starting 11 and it would be the same as what we do on the training pitch," midfielder Tameka Yallop said from Australia's team camp in Brisbane. "So I think everyone has that ability and capability to step up and be a star at any point."

Steph Catley, wearing the captain's armband in place of Kerr, converted a penalty kick for co-host Australia's 1-0 opening win over Ireland. Despite the win, the Matildas' offense struggled to create scoring opportunities, with only two shots on target.

Against a Nigeria team that held Canada to a scoreless draw in its Group B opener, Australia will need to prove that it has players throughout the team that can be difference-makers in Kerr's absence.

"I think we've got the best squad that we've had," Yallop said. Building depth has been a priority for Tony Gustavsson throughout his first three years in charge of the Matildas. Shortly after he was hired, a December 2020 performance report released by Foot-

ball Australia showed the program had the least overall depth of the 12 leading nations analyzed. The Matildas' struggles to replace injured defender Clare Polkinghorne during the 2019 Women's World Cup contributed to their exit in the round of 16, their worst finish since 2003.

To prepare for the 2023 Women's World Cup, the Matildas emphasized the development of young players. Gustavsson's team has come a long way, and the growth of Cortnee Vine, Mary Fowler, Clare Hunt, Mackenzie Arnold, Charlotte Grant and Kyra

Conney-Cross into starting 11-caliber talents gives the team confidence moving forward. The team knew it had the depth necessary to contend on the world stage in April when it beat European champion England 2-0 in a friendly.

"That's the game where we all felt like it really clicked," Grant said. "It's amazing that we've built so much depth over the past one to two years."

Australia's win over England featured a goal from 21-year-old Grant and saw Australia use nine players who did not play in the 2019 Women's World Cup. Gustavsson's willingness to give young players minutes in big games fueled the team's belief in the ability of each member of the squad.

Fowler and Vine are among the players being thrust into key roles in attack. The return of Yallop and Grant from injury and illness for the Nigeria game provides a boost against an opponent that frustrated Olympic champion Canada.

During the Cup of Nations in February, seven different Australian players scored in three games.

"I think that's why we're so dangerous," midfielder Katrina Gorry said. "You never know where the goals are going to come from."

New Zealanders will keep hoping. The win over Norway was a transformative for women's soccer, women's sport in New Zealand. Another win could be revolutionary.

The revolution was delayed Tuesday, but not cancelled.

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