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KD 6.4 billion surplus in final account

Non-oil revenue falls 12.8 pct

KUWAIT CITY, July 26, (KUNA): The Ministry of Finance announced on Wednesday recording a surplus in the State final account amounting to KD 6.4 billion (USD 20.8 billion) in the fiscal year 2022-2023, vis a vis actual deficit of KD 4.3 billion (USD 14 billion) in the previous fiscal year.

The Ministry of Finance said in a press release that actual revenues reached KD 28.8 billion (USD 93.8 billion), rising by 54.7 percent, in the fiscal year 2022-2023, noting that oil proceeds stood at 92.7 percent of the achieved income.

Actual oil revenues amounted to KD 26.7 billion (USD 87 billion), rising by 64.7 percent, while actual non-oil proceeds reached KD 2.1 billion (USD 6.8 billion), falling by 12.8 percent).

Total actual expenditures reached KD 22.4 billion (USD 73 billion), with a fall of 2.6 percent, the press release said, also noting that the budget saving was estimated at KD 1.1 billion (USD 3.5 billion) as compared to projections of the budget for the fiscal year 2022-2023.

Average oil price was recorded at USD 97.1 per barrel, rising by 21.4 percent, while daily output of the crude reached 2.693 million barrels a day.

Payments and subsidies constituted 78 percent of the whole expenditures and actual capital spending reached nine percent of the total expenditures.

The press release quoted Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Oil and Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investments and the Acting Minister of Finance, Dr. Saad Al-Barrak, as saying Kuwait enjoys a solid financial status, huge reserves and monetary and financial stability.

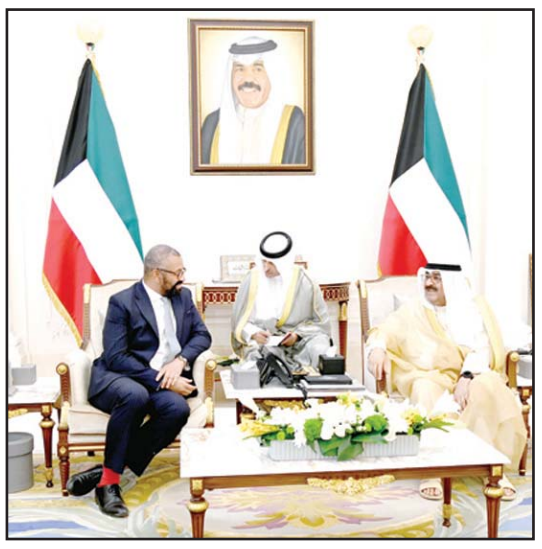
These factors solidify the State vis a vis oil market's jitters in the short term "and enable us to rise above the interim challenges and seize opportunities emanating from these challenges," the minister said.

The government is fully ready to discuss the final account with the legislative authority, he said, expressing gratitude to the cabinet for supporting the ministry of finance and the State financial apparatus.

See Also Page 2

Crown Prince receives UK FM

Visit to build mutually beneficial ties



Crown Prince Diwan photo
His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah receives UK Foreign Secretary James Cleverly.

KUWAIT CITY, July 26, (KUNA): His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received, on Wednesday at Bayan Palace, UK Foreign Secretary James Cleverly.

The meeting was attended by President of the Diwan of Crown Prince Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah, Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Undersecretary of the Amiri Diwan and Director of His Highness the Amir's office Ahmad Fahad Al-Fahad, Director of His Highness the Crown Prince Office Jamal Al-Theyab, Undersecretary of His Highness the Crown Prince Diwan for Foreign Affairs Mazen Al-Issa,

Continued on Page 4

Iran offers UN eyes details on 2 N-sites

DUBAI, July 26, (AP): Iran said Wednesday it gave new details to the United Nations about two sites near Tehran that inspectors say bore traces of man-made uranium, part of a wider probe as tensions remain high over the Islamic Republic's advancing program.

The comments by Mohammad Eslami, the head of Iran's civilian nuclear program, come as Iran's 2015 nuclear deal with world powers remains in tatters and as Tehran enriches uranium closer than ever to weapons-grade levels. Resolving questions from the International Atomic Energy Agency could see Iran avoid further censure as an October deadline approaches that would lift international restrictions on its ballistic missile program as well.

Speaking after a Cabinet meeting, Eslami said Iran had sent "detailed answers" to the International Atomic Energy Agency.

"If those answers are not accepted and there are any ambiguities or doubts, as we have always said, we will clarify and revise the documents," Eslami said in comments carried by state television. "We are now in that phase now, and we have given the IAEA more evidence and documents and will give more so that it can move past this issue."

Continued on Page 4

Opinion

O leadership … end the plunder of public wealth

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

ALMOST everyone is certain that the country is being plundered. Therefore, firm measures must be taken to stop the depletion of national wealth, and start an earthquake that would topple all those who worked and are still working to milk Kuwait either through major projects, or arms deals, or even services, and various other ways and means for tampering with the public money.

Yes, there are good intentions, but they cannot be relied upon if they are not interpreted by holding the seniors accountable before the juniors, because time passes and does not wait for anyone.

Therefore, the statements issued by more than one party stay as words until they go hand-in-hand with actions. These statements can be from the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense Sheikh Ahmed Al-Fahad, who put his finger on the wound and pulled the pus out of it, or the statements of other officials regarding the reform that was expected for several governments but it passed in the history of Kuwait, and nothing was done with regard to its slogans for the advancement of the country.

If the arms deals and warplanes once represented the wonders of wonders, the same saying also applies to other major projects, but with the difference that none of the corrupt went to prison, and the looted money was not recovered. This is a serious indication that accountability is optional.

What the Ministry of Defense was subjected to previously affected the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Public Works, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education, Kuwait Municipality, and other ministries and institutions.

This situation is not healthy at all, as corruption has affected all institutions, causing them to suffer from great paralysis.

That is why it is important to follow the closure of the shops of public relations companies and representative offices in Switzerland and other countries, which award tenders through a game that has become exposed.

A tender, or rather a project, which is worth about KD 300 million is sold at a hundred and fifty million to foreign companies that have to pay fees and guarantees, and secure employment and implementation that does not exist. It will be in accordance with the conditions set in the tender book, and then the journey of executive orders and corruption in the specifications begins.

Well, there is a proposal to cancel the concept of local agent, but according to the data, it will not be on the agenda of the National Assembly in the near future.

This is because the parliamentary priorities differed under the pressure of the desires of the influential, so proposals were submitted that could be postponed, while other important ones were delayed.

That is why it is expected that the systematic looting will continue, and by law, until time comes to pass.

In neighboring countries, all this tampering was stopped by order of the state's leadership, the countries recovered huge sums of money, and the projects were implemented on time. There were no longer arms deals that were more like "Ali Baba's Adventure and the Hundred Thieves," and most of them were influential, sheikhs and princes.

In all of this, the government can agree with foreign companies and factories directly with regard to weapons, equipment and supplies of all security services, as well as through the "B.O.T" (Build-Operate-Transfer) system, and within a period to be agreed upon, whether in housing cities, major projects such as the metro and railway, the development of islands, or the Silk City, and others, while the role of the state is supervision and follow-up.

In all of this, there must be a decision and determination to implement it. An official should not fall under any pressure from an influential person, even if it is an MP or a minister.

The interest of Kuwait and the continuity of its wealth and development are much more important than people, because future generations will hold the present generations accountable for everything they have done. History is a merciless judge.

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Newswatch

KUWAIT CITY: His Highness the Amir **Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah** sent a cable of condolences to Greece's President **Katerina Sakellaropoulou**.

In his cable, His Highness the Amir expressed sincere condolences and sympathy for the victims of the fires that swept through a number of Greek forests and resulted in a number of deaths, injuries and the destruction of several public facilities.

His Highness wished the injured people speedy recovery and for the Greek officials to overcome the effects of this natural disaster. (KUNA)

❑ ❑ ❑

KUWAIT CITY: Kuwait's Ministry of Foreign Affairs condemned the attack on Somali army training center in the capital **Mogadishu**, killing and injuring a number of people.

In a statement on Tuesday, the ministry reaffirmed Kuwait's firm stance against terrorism, extending deep condolences to the Somali government and people on the loss of lives and wishes of speedy recovery for the wounded. (KUNA)

❑ ❑ ❑

KUWAIT CITY: The Foreign Ministry expressed on Tuesday Kuwait's strong condemnation of the killing of three Palestinian youths in **Nablus** city earlier by Israeli occupation forces.

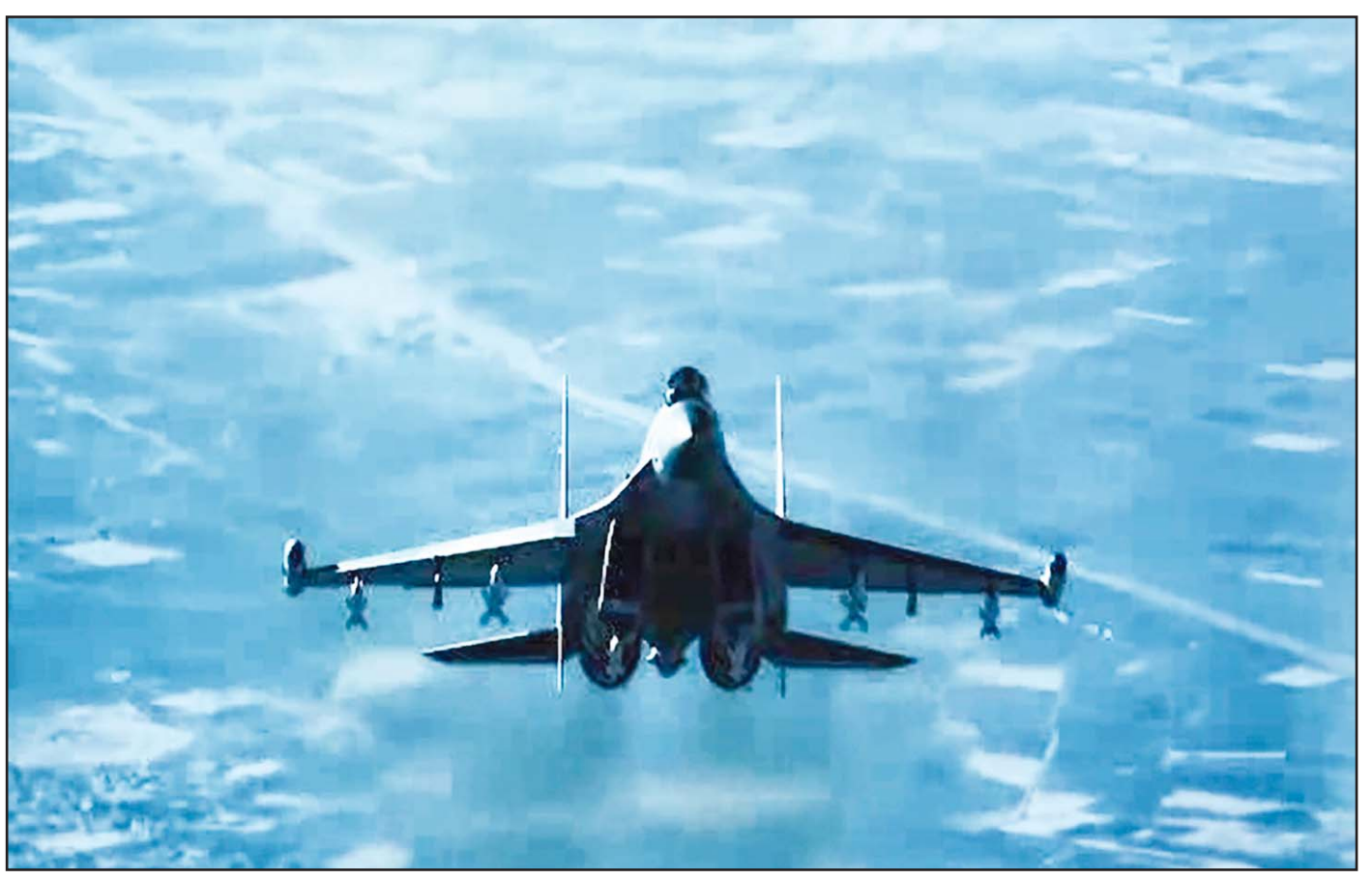
A statement by the ministry said that such criminal act continues to be a blatant violation to international law and resolutions, and it contributes to compromising the peace process and two-state solution.

The ministry called on the international community to put an end to this cruel act by Israeli forces and to protect the Palestinian people. (KUNA)

❑ ❑ ❑

BRUSSELS: The European Union Wednesday condemned the recent desecration of the Holy Quran in **Denmark** and **Sweden** as "disrespectful and provocation."

"Following the recent acts by individuals in **Europe** that have caused offense to many Muslims, the EU reiterates its strong and determined rejection of any form of incitement to religious hatred and intolerance," said EU High Representative **Josep Borrell** in a statement today. (KUNA)



In this image from video released by the U.S. Air Force, a Russian fighter jet flies close to a U.S. drone over Syria, July 23, 2023. A Russian fighter jet flew within a few meters of a U.S. drone over Syria and fired flares at it, striking the American aircraft and damaging it, the U.S. military said Tuesday, the latest in a string of aggressive intercepts by Russia in the region. (AP)

Government keen to support co-op sector

MPs amend Constitutional Court provisions

KUWAIT CITY, July 26, (KUNA): Kuwait's National Assembly Wednesday agreed on amending some provisions of the Law No. 14 of 1973 on establishing the constitutional court.

The amendments, winning 58 votes against one, stipulate that in "all cases the constitutional court may not consider the decrees on dissolving the National Assembly and the call for elections after the result is declared.

Al-Rguba

The court, however, would rule on appeals regarding the MPs election within 30 days after the end of the plea period, according to the amendments.

The modifications also immunize the National Assembly after the voting process and organize the appeals' time and rule on the two decrees: dissolving the parliament and the call for election separately.

Earlier in the day, Minister of Justice and Minister of State for Housing Affairs Faleh Al-Rguba said the Kuwaiti government supports amendments.

During a regular National Assembly session, the minister lauded efforts of the head and members of the parliamentary legal and legislative affairs committee in preparing its report on this matter.

This amendment may end the measures and appeals submitted over the last years, he said.

In other news, the Constitutional Court on Wednesday overruled all appeals presented against the National Assembly elections in 2023 held on June 6.

The tribunal had set July 26 as the date to rule in the case of the nine challenges against the elections.

Meanwhile, National Assembly Speaker Ahmad Al-Sadoun started on Wednesday, the Parliament's complementary session to look into the day's agenda.

The Parliament will continue discussing the Amiri Decree in the first regular session of the 17th legislative term (2023-2027).

MPs kicked off today's agenda by asking for dedicating two hours to discuss the "strategic alternative," control of the increase in product prices, as well as the criteria in appointments of senior positions.

Other topics on the table include forming interim committees regarding solutions for problems suffered by the population in Sabah Al-Ahmad, Al-Wafra, Ali Sabah Al-Salem and Al-Khairan, as well as cybersecurity and artificial intelligence.

The National Assembly during its Wednesday's follow-up session agreed to refer the Amiri Address that marked inauguration of the first regular session of the 17th legislative term to the parliamentary Amiri Speech commission

The referred Amiri Address included MPs remarks. Its submission is a prelude to presenting a report in this respect to the assembly.

The Amiri Address marked the inauguration on June 20.

Minister of Social, Family and Childhood Affairs, Sheikh Feras Al-Sabah, highlighted Wednesday the government's keenness on supporting the cooperative sector in the country.

The Minister, while speaking during the complementary session, affirmed the social affairs ministry's full cooperation with the parliament members to further develop this sector.

Sweden security risk up

STOCKHOLM, July 26, (AP): Sweden's security situation has deteriorated after recent Quran burnings in the country and protests in the Muslim world, both of which have negatively impacted the Nordic nation's image, its domestic security service said Wednesday.

The Swedish Security Service said the burning and desecration of religious books in Sweden, and ongoing disinformation campaigns on social media and elsewhere, have negatively affected Sweden's profile.

The image of Sweden has changed "from a tolerant country to a country hostile to Islam and Muslims, where attacks on Muslims are sanctioned by the state and where Muslim children can be kidnapped by social services," the agency, which is known by the Swedish acronym SAPO, said in a statement.

KFH net up in first half of '23

– Details Page 6 –

Tunisians demonstrate against Tunisian President Kais Saied during the Tunisian Republic Day in Tunis, Tunisia, Tuesday, July 25, 2023. The sign reads in Arabic: 'Freedom for all political prisoners'. (AP)

Day by Day

A WISE quote reminds us that we come in this world empty-handed, and when we depart, we take nothing with us.

Ultimately, we will be answerable for all our actions, so at the end of our journey may God look upon us with favor and grant us peace.

During funerals, people take all their worldly possessions to the grave, but they leave this world with nothing. The burdens and consequences of their deeds remain in the cemeteries, while those who are living continue to enjoy life's offerings.

Therefore, true wisdom lies in making the most of everything before we bid farewell to this earthly existence.

…Yet tomorrow is another day.

Zahed Matar

Diverse economy sought

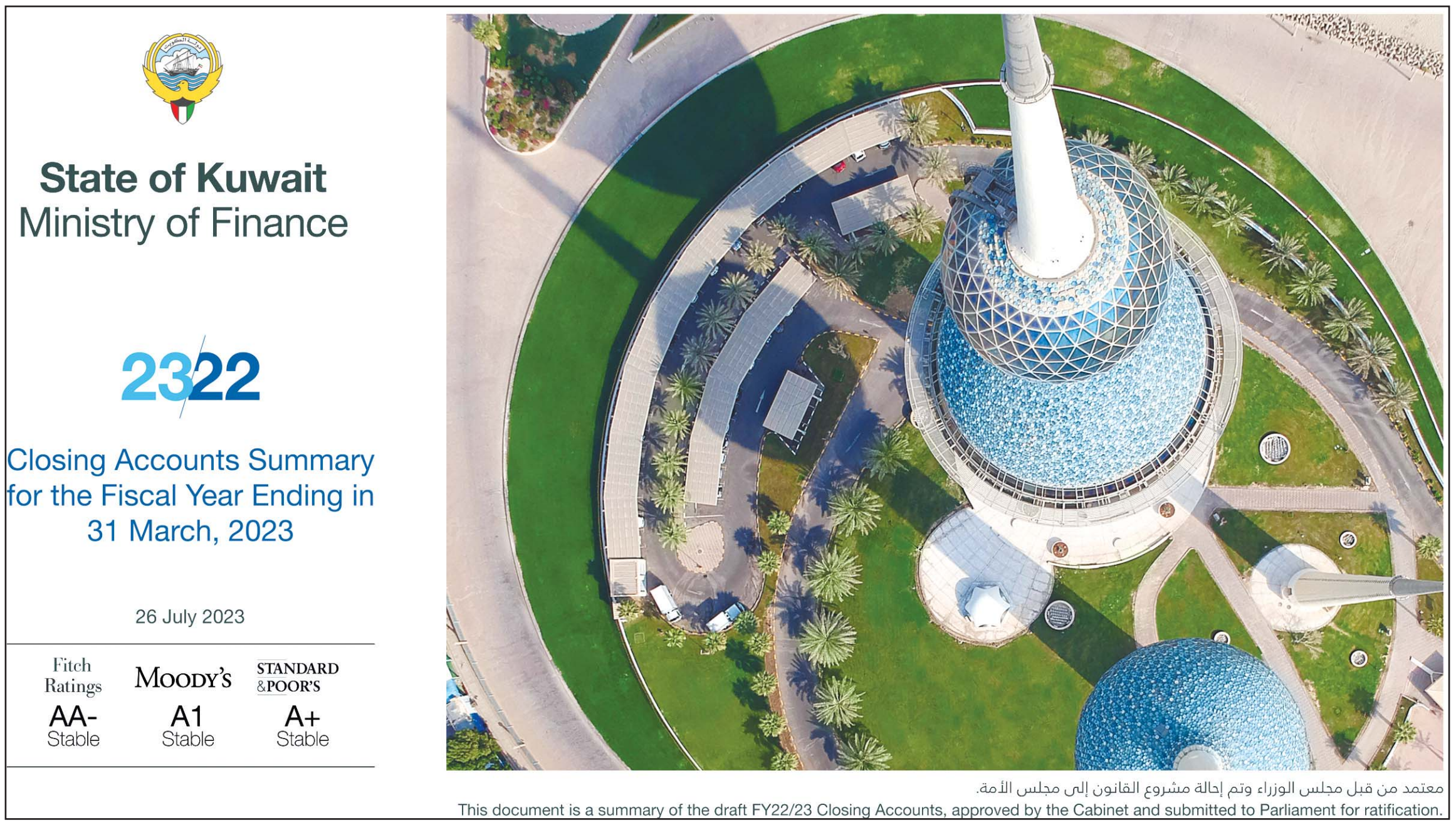
Kuwait SMEs fund urges more cooperation

KUWAIT CITY, July 26, (KUNA): Kuwait's National Fund for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) on Wednesday called for greater cooperation between state bodies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) alike, saying it would be instrumental in supporting aspiring entrepreneurs.

State support for SMEs ranges from funding these endeavors to advisory aid, the fund's chief Adel Al-Hasawi said amid a signing ceremony to clinch a deal with the Federation of Kuwaiti Professionals and Business Associates for Small and Medium Enterprises (BPW), most of whom were hit hard by the ramifications of the COVID pandemic.

SMEs form an integral component of the national economy's growth and development, he underlined, saying it would help create a "multidimensional and diverse" economy that would place on the nation firmly on the road towards prosperity.

Echoing his sentiments, BPW chief Sheikha Hessa Al-Sabah emphasized that the body fully backs owners of SMEs and would-be entrepreneurs, helping translate their ambitions into national success stories.



KUWAIT CITY, July 26: The Kuwait Ministry of Finance today announced the State of Kuwait's closing accounts for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2023. The State's accounts recorded KD28.8 billion in revenue, KD22.4 billion in expenditure, and closed with a fiscal surplus of KD6.4 billion.

The State of Kuwait's fiscal year starts on April 1st and ends on March 31st. (By law, the Closing Accounts do not include revenue from the Future Generations Fund (FGF, also known as the Kuwait Sovereign Wealth Fund), which is managed by the Kuwait Investment Authority. All investment gains from FGF activities are reinvested into the FGF as mandated by its governing law.)

H.E. the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Oil, Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investment, and Minister of Finance (Acting) H.E. Saad H. Al-Barrak said:

"The State's accounts have experienced a healthy recovery in terms of liquidity, driven mostly by rebounding crude oil prices during the fiscal year and aided by controlled expenditure. Today, Kuwait has one of the strongest sovereign balance sheets in the world, with one of lowest sovereign debt to GDP levels globally, and a strong rebounding economy".

22/23 Revenue Highlights:

■ Total Revenue: KD28.8 billion, up 54.7% from closing 21/22

❍ Oil revenue: KD26.7 billion, up 64.7% from closing 21/22

❍ Non-oil revenue: KD2.1 billion, down 12.8% from closing 21/22

■ Average Kuwaiti crude selling price for the fiscal year: USD 97.1 per barrel, up 21.4% from closing 21/22

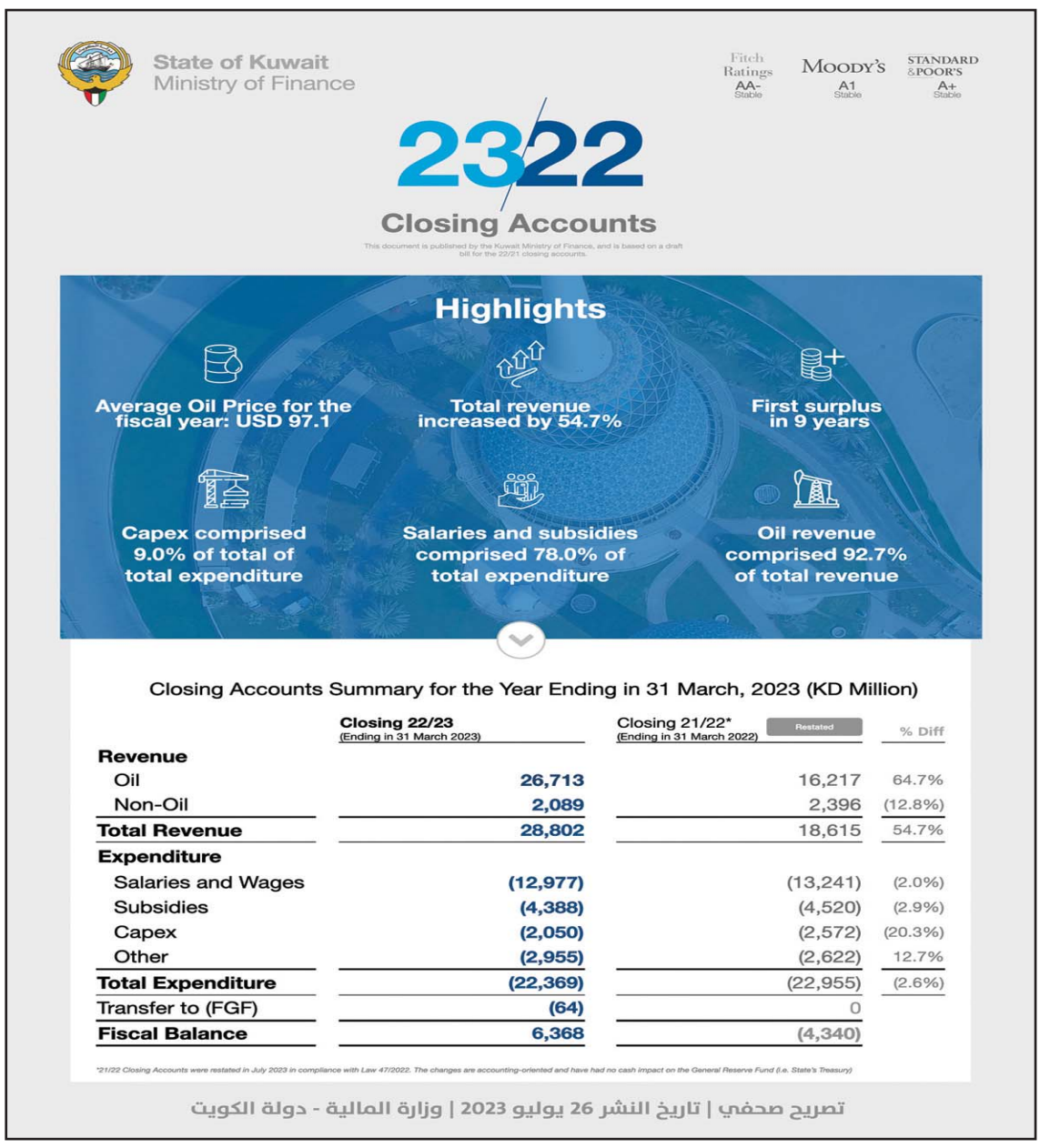
■ Average oil production: 2.693 million barrels per day.

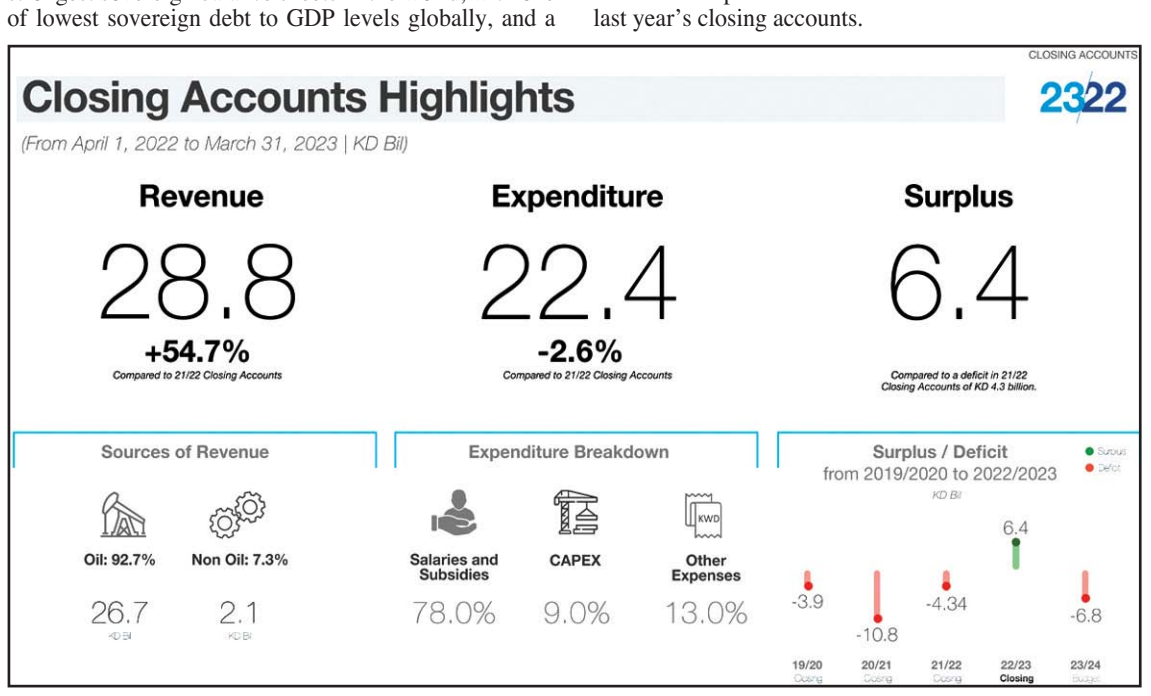
22/23 Expenditure Highlights:

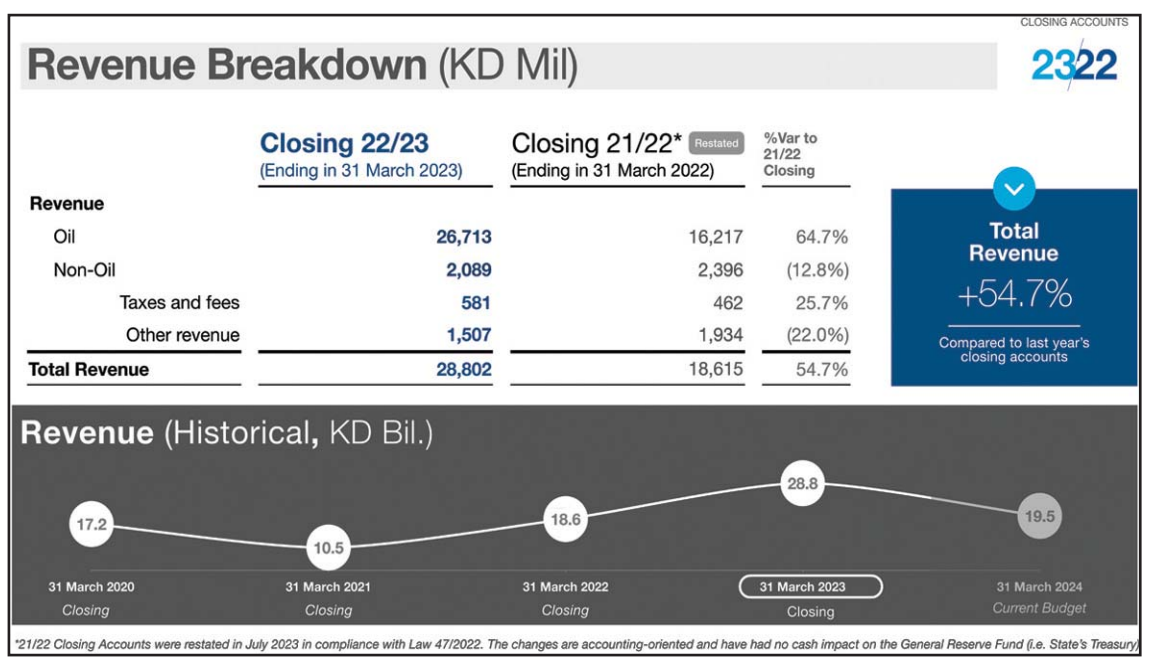
■ Wages and subsidies: KD17.4 billion, comprising 78.0% of all expenditure.

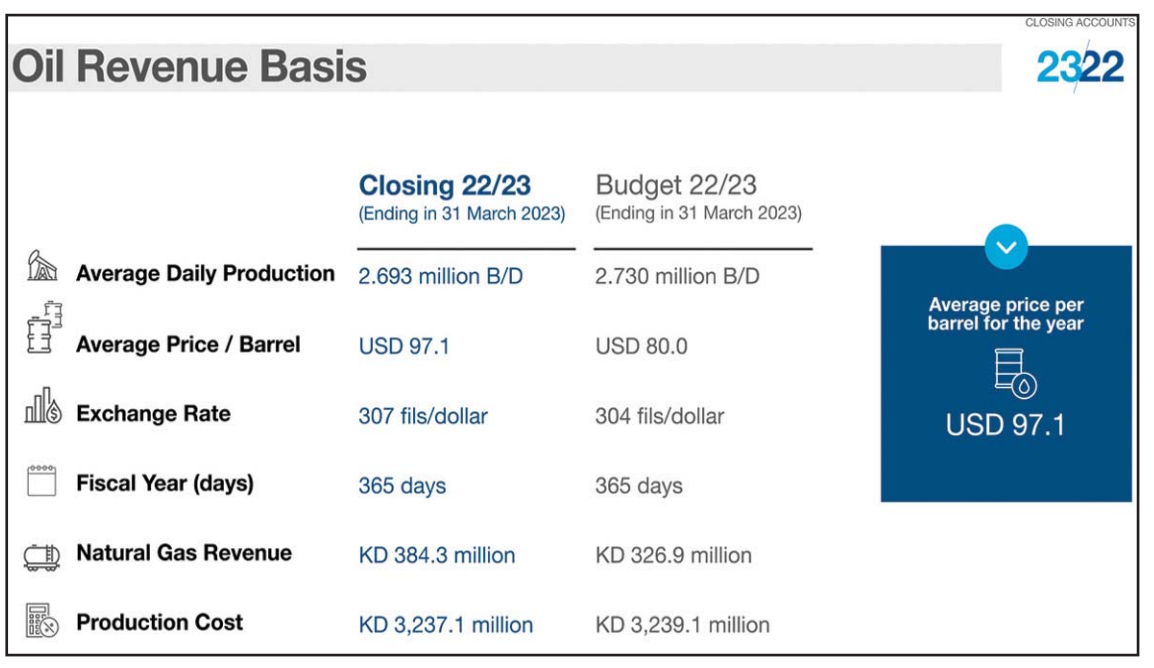
■ Capital Expenditure: KD2.1 billion, comprising 9.0% of all expenditure.

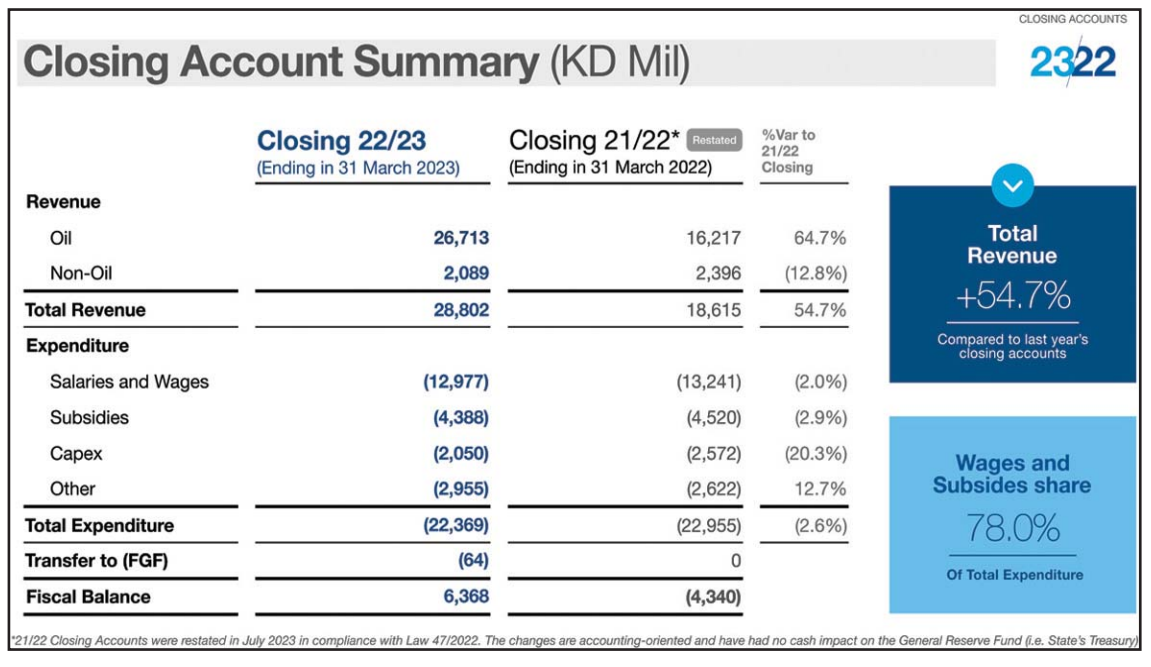
■ Total Expenditure: KD22.4 billion down 2.6% from last year's closing accounts.

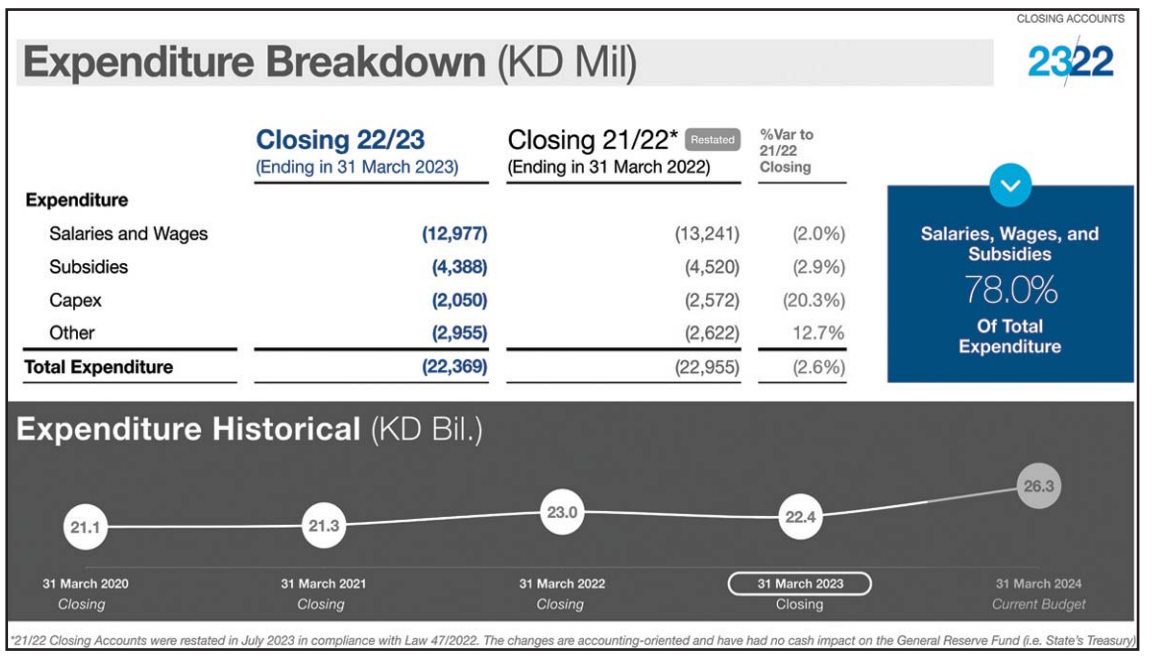












Prayer Timings

Fajr	03:34	Asr	15:30
Sunrise	05:04	Maghrib	18:44
Zohr	11:54	Isha	20:13

Local

Weather

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.

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 Rec	Min Exp
Kuwait City	46	37
Kuwait Airport	50	30
Abdaly	50	31
Jahra	51	32
Salmiyah	41	37
Ahmadi	44	36
Nuwaisib	47	32
Wafra	49	29

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

'Social media reports on high temp unreliable'

Kuwait temp to peak last week July, first week August: Dr. Dashti

KUWAIT CITY, July 26: Head of the Meteorology Department at the Directorate General for Civil Aviation (DGCA) Dr. Hassan Dashti says, "The temperatures in Kuwait will hit the peak during the last week of July and continue until the first week of August. July is usually the hottest month in Kuwait and the rest of the world," reports Al-Rai daily.

Dr. Dashti

Regarding the video being circulated about the temperatures exceeding 56 degrees Celsius, Dashti said in a press statement that, "This method of measuring temperatures is not reliable, and does not reflect the official temperatures that have conditions and specifications for their measurement. Measuring temperatures in such an unapproved and non-conforming way may make us record degrees such as 60, 70, or even 80."

Commenting on the heat waves that affected Europe, Dashti stated that, "Europe is affected by the heat dome due to the atmospheric heights that cause heat waves. Temperature that reaches, for example, 35 degrees Celsius is felt as if it is 45 degree Celsius, due to the high degree of humidity and the descent of hot air currents."

Regarding his explanation for the high temperatures this year, Dashti explained that, "The matter is due in part to global warming, in addition to the El Niño phenomenon (a climatic pattern affecting the Pacific Ocean), which usually lasts from two to seven years, and may make the next year hotter than the current one."

He said, "There are general tips that must be adhered to in the event of high temperatures, including avoiding direct exposure to sunlight, especially for those who suffer from health problems, and drinking plenty of water."

In the same context, meteorologist Issa Ramadan affirmed that people's reading of temperatures in their cars, on the street, or in buildings is scientifically inaccurate and incorrect.

He said, "In all countries of the world, it is well known that temperatures are the temperature of the air, not the bodies. If the air temperature reaches 60 degrees Celsius, I do not think we can afford to go out into the streets."

In addition, Head of the Kuwaiti Astronomical Society and Astronomer Adel Al-Saadoun, said, "Temperatures can reach 60, 70 and 80 degrees Celsius under the sun."

Huge spike in expat licenses

Minister acts to curb fraud, forgery

KUWAIT CITY, July 26: According to the Head of the Kuwait Society for Traffic Safety, Bader Al-Matar, the decision of the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled to use the driving license and the vehicle registration on the "My Identity" application in all transactions is considered an important step to detect fraud and forgery, as there has been a terrifying increase in the number of those who obtained driving licenses in Kuwait, reports Al-Rai daily.

In a press statement, Al-Matar affirmed that Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled's decision contributes to limiting the unjustified increase in the number of driving licenses, which has negatively affected the traffic situation in Kuwait globally.

Increase

He indicated that the terrifying increase in the number of those who obtained driving licenses, some of which do not commensurate with the size of the need granted to him or those who were not entitled to it, is not hidden from anyone.

Al-Matar highlighted the importance of continuing the campaigns carried out by the Ministry of Interior's General Traffic Department in line with the ministerial decision to prosecute violators who drive vehicles despite the suspension of their licenses for violating the law, and those who obtained them fraudulently.

He revealed that there are more than one and a half million driving licenses, which are not in line with the population, stressing that the increase in driving licenses for expatriates more than citizens has caused confusion on the road network, which confirms that the application of this procedure is heading towards the right path to limit the imposed increase in the number of unjustified driving licenses and thus reduce traffic congestion.

KUNA photo

First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Talal Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah holds talks with the British Foreign Minister.

First Deputy PM, UK FM discuss ties

Kuwaiti First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Talal Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and UK Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs James Cleverly, discussed topics of mutual concern on Wednesday.

During the meeting, attended by UK Ambassador to Kuwait Belinda Lewis, Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled affirmed the strong and historic Kuwaiti-British ties, said the Ministry of Interior's department of media and relations in a statement.

On his part, Cleverly thanked Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled for the reception, adding that the topics discussed are of importance to develop cooperation between the two countries.

The meeting was also attended by senior officials of the Ministry of Information.

Meanwhile, Kuwaiti Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Ahmad Fahad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah tackled Wednesday relations with the visiting UK Foreign Secretary James Cleverly.

A ministry statement said military and defensive issues, in addition to latest regional and international developments were dicussed.

Sheikh Ahmad Al-Fahad praised depth of historic relations between the two countries, said the statement, adding that the meeting was attended by Britain's Ambassador to Kuwait Belinda Lewis and Assistant Foreign Minister for Europe Sadeq Marafi. (KUNA)

MoE shortlists beneficiaries

Rewards for outstanding teachers

KUWAIT CITY, July 26: Education authorities are in the process of finalizing rewards for outstanding teachers for the fiscal year 2022-2023. The evaluation of their performance was completed by the educational regions, and the names of beneficiaries were entered into the integrated systems register. Once a ministerial decision is issued, the regions will receive the list of eligible teachers on special flash cards for verification, reports Al-Rai daily.

The verification process includes checking eligibility, ensuring records are free of penalties, and takes at least a month. After this, the administrative sector will transfer the information to the financial counterpart, which will further scrutinize it. This procedure, including auditing, is expected to be completed by the end of August or early September.

Regarding the upcoming academic year, the general education sector plans to form external contracting committees from Jordan and Palestine to recruit the necessary teaching staff in specific disciplines.

These disciplines are likely to be similar to the previous year's requirements. The ministry has available job grades for non-Kuwaiti members of the educational staff, and the Civil Service Bureau will allow contracting with teachers in fields where there is a shortage of national candidates.

Meanwhile, the Public Authority for Manpower (PAM) has announced the start of registration for those applying for supervisory positions and other jobs in cooperative societies through the 'Our Pride' platform, reports Al-Anba daily.

In a press statement, PAM confirmed this is in line with the decision of the Supreme Committee for Demographics on the Kuwaitiization of the cooperative sector and as per the instruction of First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled to activate the 'Kuwaitization' policy in accordance with the government's directive in this regard.

Call for independent election commission

KUWAIT CITY, July 26: The Chairperson of Kuwait Transparency Society (KTS) Majed Al-Mutairi says, "Amending the election laws and electoral constituencies, and approving the appointment law for leadership positions is the necessary base for establishing an independent election commission. This commission must be managed by specialists with knowledge of international experiences and the required international standards. This requirement can be in line with some government agencies, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs", reports Al-Rai daily.

In a press statement, Al-Mutairi said, "The assembly has a written vision about the proposed amendment of the election law. We presented it to the Council of Ministers, and we are in the process of presenting it to the National Assembly. We contacted the National Assembly about the need for the Kuwait Transparency Society's meeting with the Legislative Committee prior to its issuance.

We want this body to be empowered. The head of the commission cannot be creative in light of the existence of an election law that has many flaws. It did not cover many issues such as electoral propaganda, cyberspace, and electoral rumors. It also has many loopholes, which must be amended before establishment of the commission.

Approved

The second important law to be approved is the electoral constituency law and the voting system. We have problems in the distribution of constituencies and the voting system. There is almost unanimity on the unfair distribution of electoral constituencies and the voting system. The approval of the leadership appointment law guarantees the independence and impartiality of the commission before its creation.

The approval of the Election Commission will raise Kuwait's level in international indicators, since this commission is the real gateway to democratic reform.

The Independent Electoral Commission cannot work in isolation from the civil society sector or the private sector. The Tunisian experience in this regard is worth contemplating and studying."

Regarding the role of the commission after the elections, Al-Mutairi stated that, "Its role after the elections is to raise awareness and educate. All Arab countries have an independent commission for elections in accordance with international standards, except for Kuwait."

In response to a question about whether the commission requires a large number of employees, he said, "The Independent Electoral Commission in the Netherlands has only 12 employees and everything is done through electronic communication. In many countries of the world, the commission is the one that sets standards and is responsible for municipal and cooperative elections."

Al-Mutairi said he is expecting the approval of the Election Commission before August, adding, "I hope that it will not be born dead, and it will emulate international standards. We have an excellent experience, which is the Capital Markets Authority, which enjoys complete independence. I hope to benefit from its experience."

KUNA photo

One of the management technicians monitors the temperature and relative humidity by a scientific device.

'Accurate, reliable info provided'

'27 weather stations in country'

KUWAIT CITY, July 26, (KUNA): Although Kuwait is one of the countries that witnesses the most noticeable rise in temperatures, even exceeding the 50-degree mark in the Jahra station, the forecasts for these days as well as the upcoming days remain open for other regions.

In an interview with KUNA Wednesday, climate observer at the Meteorology Department of the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) Dr. Hassan Dashti said that the department is keen to provide all accurate and reliable information on weather conditions and temperatures with internationally accredited scientific measuring devices through 27 land and sea surface monitoring stations in various regions of the country.

These stations measure temperatures transparently and in a scientific way, according to the standards approved by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), and through monitoring stations that are followed up 24 hours a day, monitoring their readings and analyzing them using advanced computers in a scientific way, Dashti added.

He pointed out the administration's keenness to provide all accurate and reliable information and data on weather phenomena and its elements such as temperatures, atmospheric pressure, wind speeds and direction, and rainfall amounts through internationally accredited scientific measurement devices through these stations, noting that all these centers and stations are subject to international standards that must be met so that the desired degree can be calculated and based on it.

Other Voices

IICO not devoid of corruption

By Ahmad alsarraf

The International Islamic Charitable Organization (IICO) is one of the largest organizations working in the humanitarian field in the Islamic world, and it is an independent organization. Its website says that it provides its services and assistance without discrimination or intolerance, away from interference in politics or ethnic conflicts, and this is not entirely accurate.

alsarraf

The establishment of the commission dates back to 1984, and had it not been for the support of Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad, it would not have seen the light, and attributing credit to others is also incorrect.

Although it was the Kuwaiti National Assembly that approved the authority's law, it was lax, as it reduced supervision over it to the lowest levels, and therefore its biography was not devoid of administrative corruption, theft of its property by some members of its board of directors, and the issuance of prison sentences against them, and against employees working for it!

In the end, the authority is a charity organization that owns a lot of money, and it is run by someone who represents the State of Kuwait. The rest of the members of its board of directors, who belong to several countries, have no choice but to attend a few of its meetings, and Kuwait is the most generous with it!

Due to the loss of prior or immediate control over its work, the greed of some of those in charge of it, and its recent endeavor to collect the largest possible collection of donations, despite its great wealth, it was not difficult recently for representatives of the Department of Charitable Societies and Foundations, in the Ministry of Social Affairs, to monitor the establishment of the International Islamic Charitable Organization by publishing fundraising advertisements on its official website and various social media, without submitting an official request from the Ministry, nor obtaining its prior approval before publishing, the last of which was announcing the collection of donations for the benefit of the "urgent relief for Jenin camp - Palestine" project.

According to the Social Affairs sources such advertisements are considered an explicit violation of the laws, decisions, controls and requirements for regulating charity work in the country, as individuals or groups may not collect donations from the public by any means for the purpose of spending them, or helping the afflicted, except after obtaining a prior license from the Ministry, at least one month before the start of the collection campaign, provided that the duration, method and purpose of the collection are determined by the project organizer.

It was stated by the Ministry of Social Affairs that it will take the necessary and speedy legal measures against unauthorized individuals or entities, who announce the collection of donations, or launch charity projects without its prior approval, and away from the eyes and oversight of the state, in order to preserve charitable work, and to ensure that it is not exposed to any impurity.

The ministry had also warned, and it is well known who you mean, that some are taking advantage of the instinct of Kuwaiti society and its love for helping the needy to reach private goals that are completely far from charity work. Therefore, we urge donors, citizens and residents, to be careful when donating, not to succumb to such invitations, and to direct their donations to well-known parties in the country, especially since these funds may fall into the hands of those who misuse them and distort Kuwaiti charity work!

I am really baffled by this association that is full of money, and which operates with absolute freedom, especially outside Kuwait, without any "actual" control over its activities, and the "temptations" that this activity usually includes. There is an authority that monitors its work, as even some of the ministries concerned with the matter, which have been entrusted with the task of monitoring the bodies, may themselves need, before others, someone to monitor their work!

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CITRA initiates pathway for int'l firms to obtain licenses

Effort to establish undersea or land cables

KUWAIT CITY, July 26: In an effort to promote data transmission and internet infrastructure investment, the Communications and Information Technology Regulatory Authority (CITRA) has initiated a pathway for international companies specialized in communications and the internet to obtain administrative licenses for establishing undersea or land cables in the country, reports Al-Qabas daily.

According to a document, a copy of which has been obtained by the daily, the authority outlined that cable landing points in the country would be granted through administrative licensing contracts between CITRA and the licensee, adhering to all relevant laws and conditions governing the establishment of sea or land cable points.

Commitment

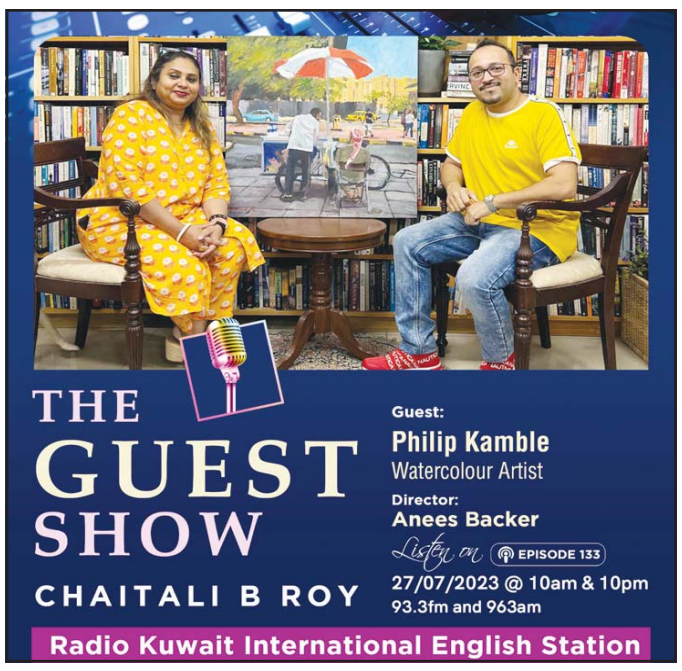
CITRA emphasized its commitment to fostering investment in capacities and international landing stations. The introduction of multiple international cables and stations connected within the country is expected to significantly enhance data volume and local network connectivity to the internet and global networks.

Addressing the needs of the local market, CITRA stressed the importance of expanding Kuwait's capacity to connect with the world, facilitating the exchange of communication traffic and seamless data transfer through main exits via land and sea fiber optic cables.

Sources revealed to Al-Qabas that due to technical issues, two licenses to establish, operate, and manage international access structures – one on land and the other at sea – were canceled. However, CITRA is now proposing the establishment of a new international communications access structure through the implementation of both marine and land cables, following the specific requirements outlined in the administrative license document concerning the landing of sea or land cable points.

Presently, Kuwait is connected to two marine cables that facilitate international communications traffic. Unfortunately, one of these cables is damaged and ineffective due to its age, while the country also relies on three other land cables.

For companies seeking an administrative license to establish cables in Kuwait, CITRA has defined five essential requirements – a clear plan for the company's participation and involvement in the country's telecommunications market; market forecasts covering the first five years of operation, including proposed services and associated pricing; a comprehensive plan for customer care, after-sales support services, and service levels; a continuous service quality improvement plan and submission of a detailed technical proposal, encompassing engineering descriptions and an annual maintenance plan.



The Guest Show poster

TGS presents Phillip Kamble

Our guest this week is the very gifted artist - Phillip Kamble.

The soft-spoken Phillip has a long association with Kuwait. His parents lived and worked in Kuwait for a long time, and he grew up absorbing the rhythm, topography and the assimilation of culture in Kuwait.

Covid was a turning point in his life. It forced him to acknowledge and accept his gift for colours and since then, Phillip Kamble has embraced art as a profession. What had been a passion for so long became his calling.

A self-taught artist, Phillip Kamble dabbles in different techniques, but he loves to look for new ways to incorporate watercolour techniques into calligraphy.

As an artist, Phillip Kamble is very much connected to his environment. He paints life as he sees it around him.

He is also deeply connected to community work. Starting from Covid, until now, he has offered his work for different deserving causes. The Guest Show (TGS) on Radio Kuwait is very happy to present him.

Huawei makes offer

Kuwait intends to exploit sovereign cloud services

KUWAIT CITY, July 26: Informed sources confirmed Kuwait's intention to benefit from the technologies of sovereign cloud services designed on advanced security bases to protect data, in agreement with the Chinese company Huawei, reports Al-Qabas daily.

On the sidelines of a recent tour of a number of Kuwaiti media outlets at the headquarters of the giant Chinese company, and its main exhibition in Beijing , the sources explained that this trend comes in line with the Kuwaiti government's endeavor to complete its plans aimed at digital transformation in government agencies in all its sectors and data protection according to strict principles and standards.

Sovereign cloud services will give these government agencies greater ability to control and preserve their data and the data of their customers, and meet the highest standards of information security. Huawei made an offer, and hopes to reach an agreement regarding it with Kuwait, especially since the company has a deeper understanding of Kuwaiti needs in this regard than its competitors.

These modern technologies include providing practical solutions for cloud storage and other services in artificial intelligence.

The sources stressed the company's aspiration to implement this huge strategic project, affirming that the company believes it has high chances of reaching an agreement on it with Kuwait.

Meanwhile, the sources revealed that Huawei has formed a team that is currently working on completing a project to provide the new Kuwait Airport Terminal "T2" with the required technological networks and means.

In its statement, the company explained that talks in this regard are ongoing and on the verge of conclusion. It referred to a number of other projects that the company is working on implementing in Kuwait with various entities, including the Ministry of Interior, the National Guard and the Ministry of Health.

The sources said Huawei is working on developing the 5G network that currently covers Kuwait, into a 5.5G network, in coordination with the Communications Authority, affirming Huawei's aspiration to proceed with the implementation of the project to transform Mubarak Port into a smart port.

World Aquatics 're-elects' Al-Musallam as President

KUWAIT CITY, July 26, (KUNA): The World Aquatics organization re-elected Hussain Al-Musallam of Kuwait as its president to a new eight-year term during its General Congress in the Japanese city of Fukuoka Tuesday.

"I feel very proud and also very humbled that you have shown your confidence in me to continue leading you as your President," Al-Musallam said following his unopposed election.

Al-Musallam

"It has been the privilege of my life to serve as the President for the past two years."

He pointed that he had worked as hard as he can to serve the organizations and athletes.

"We have achieved so much together but we still have much more to do. Today, I am extremely happy because you have given me the opportunity to continue all the good work we have started together."

The World Aquatics organizations elected Al-Musallam to four-year term during its General Congress in Doha in 2021, to be the first-ever president of the global organization from Asia.

Though Al-Musallam's original 4-year term has not expired, a new election was held after the approval of a new constitution.

Under the new constitution, he will still be allowed the 4-year re-election term at the end of his eight years.

Center boasts of a dedicated medical team that handles dermatological consultations

KUWAIT CITY, July 26: The Asaad Al-Hamad Center receives approximately 74,300 patients across various general and specialized departments, making it a significant referral destination for dermatology cases. Dr. Atlal Al-Lafi, the head of the dermatology department, shared this information with Al-Qabas daily, emphasizing the center's commitment to providing excellent medical care.

The center boasts a dedicated medical team that handles dermatological consultations for 21 centers and hospitals in the Al-Sabah region daily.

Dr. Al-Lafi mentioned that the Ministry of Health continuously introduces advanced treatments for skin diseases, while the medical staff educates patients and their families on disease management.

Chronic skin conditions make up 3 to 5% of the total population, with around 30% of cases at the center requiring periodic follow-up for conditions like psoriasis, bullous diseases, eczema, hidradenitis suppurativa, and vitiligo.

During the summer, certain skin diseases become more prevalent due to increased outdoor activities and swimming in public pools and the sea. Conditions like sunburn, fungal infections, skin exfoliation, rosacea, viral warts, and molluscum contagiosum require treatment and preventive measures to avoid recurrence.

The Asaad Al-Hamad Center specializes in diagnosing stubborn skin cases using the latest methods. In the future, the center plans to expand collaboration with other medical specialties like rheumatology, pediatrics, dentistry, plastic surgery, and gastroenterology, aiming to offer high-quality multidisciplinary medical services under one roof.

The center is well-equipped with outpatient and specialized clinics, phototherapy and skin correction units, and high-accuracy laboratory services, including immunology, fungi, biochemistry tests, and contact sensitivity assessments using a patch.

Dr. Atlal Al-Lafi mentioned that the center holds extensive and periodic scientific meetings every three months, where dermatologists from the Ministry of Health and the private sector gather to review and discuss difficult and rare cases.

The center's pharmacy is fully stocked with medicines for skin diseases, including some that are available in Kuwait before other developed countries.

Established in 1996 with a generous donation from the late Khaled Al-Hamad and inaugurated under the auspices of former Minister of Health Dr. Abdul Rahman Al-Muhailan on Sept 30,1996, the Asaad Al-Hamad Center provides diagnostic and treatment services for referred skin patients from all regions through its outpatient clinics.

Visit to build

Continued from Page 1

Assistant Foreign Minister for Europe Sadeq Marafi, and Britain's Ambassador to Kuwait Belinda Lewis.

Kuwait Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah also met Wednesday with visiting UK Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs James Cleverly.

The meeting touched upon the bilateral and historic ties between the two friendly countries and ways to boost cooperation in various fields.

The two sides also discussed the latest political regional and global developments.

Moreover, the meeting stressed the importance of continuing the joint dialogue in the technical and legal aspects of demarcating the maritime borders beyond mark (162) between the State of Kuwait and the Republic of Iraq, emphasizing the need to resolve this issue in a manner that is consistent with the rules of international law.

They also discussed enhancing cooperation within the framework of resolving crises by peaceful means, with all neutrality, in order to maintain the international order and respect for the sovereignty of states over their lands and maritime borders.

The talks also tackled the current developments of the Palestinian cause, the repeated Israeli attacks on Al-Aqsa Mosque and Muslim sanctities, and the ongoing systematic and serious Israeli violations and crimes against the Palestinian people.

The repeated crimes and reprehensible practices of burning copies of the Holy Qur'an in Sweden and Denmark were also discussed, and those totally rejected practices were condemned.

Cleverly is on a 3-day visit Tuesday to Qatar, Kuwait, and Jordan, which will emphasize the UK's growing partnership with the region, Foreign office statement said.

"I am delighted to be back in the Middle East. The UK's mutually beneficial relationships with the Gulf and Jordan continue to thrive. We have a bright future together," Foreign Secretary James Cleverly said.

"From working together on shared goals like developing stronger trade ties and security, I am proud of how we are collaborating for the benefit of us all."

The UK also remains committed to supporting refugees and host communities, collaborating with partners to help the most vulnerable in the region.

Iran offers

Continued from Page 1

The Vienna-based IAEA did not immediately respond to a request for comment from The Associated Press. However, Eslami's comments mark a change in tone as Iran has limited inspections, held surveillance footage and taken years to respond to the IAEA after then-President Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew the United States from the nuclear deal in 2018.

Eslami did not name the sites, though the IAEA has identified them as Turquzabad and Varamin just outside of Tehran. At Varamin, the IAEA in a March report said that inspectors believe Iran used the site from 1999 until 2003 as a pilot project to process uranium ore and convert it into a gas form, which then can be enriched through spinning in a centrifuge. The IAEA said buildings at the site had been demolished in 2004.

Tehran insists its program is peaceful, though the West and the IAEA say Iran had an organized military nuclear program until 2003.

Turquzabad is where the IAEA believes Iran took some of the material at Varamin amid the demolition, though it said that alone cannot "explain the presence of the multiple types of isotopically altered particles" found there.

In 2018, the site became known publicly after Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu revealed it at the United Nations and called it a clandestine nuclear warehouse hidden at a rug-cleaning plant. Iran denied that, though IAEA inspectors later found the man-made uranium particles there.

diwaniya ديوانية

A DIGEST OF PUBLIC OPINION

‘Focus attention on genuine issues, not on plastic surgeries & tattoos’

“REGRETTABLY, the reformist deputy, who possesses a visionary perspective for the country’s best interests, realism in his proposals, and a selfless dedication to public service, finds himself facing a challenge. Despite his noble intentions, a significant portion of the populace views him as an ineffectual figure in the “plastic surgeries and tattoos” council. Sadly, it seems that many are more receptive to frivolous proposals that do not address the pressing issues of our nation’s development, economic crisis, and financial challenges,” columnist **Iqbal Al-Ahmad** wrote for **Al-Qabas** daily.

Iqbal Al-Ahmad

“These ungrounded proposals, which lack scientific rigor and long-term planning, lead to the depletion of budgets on unnecessary expenditures, solely aimed at gaining popularity and applause from certain factions. Consequently, it becomes difficult to retract the unwarranted financial favors once bestowed, as individuals grow accustomed to increased expenses and luxuries.

“The expansion of the “Afia Insurance” system to include individuals, who never contributed during their working years, and the generous ration card offerings from essential foods to luxurious delicacies, raise concerns about fairness and accountability.

“Similarly, providing salaries to women who choose not to work may be applauded by some, but it disregards the efforts of hardworking women who balance their careers with familial responsibilities and have earned their wages.

“Deputies who focus on extravagant spending under the “Is there any more?” principle receive praise, while those with a genuine long-term vision for the nation’s future, who prioritize the welfare of the people, are unjustly accused of neglecting citizens’ interests. The idea of saving for the future and being fiscally responsible seems overshadowed by the allure of immediate gifts and expenditures.

“Some deputies promote proposals unrelated to urgent issues, such as plastic surgery and book censorship, diverting attention from the genuine concerns of the Kuwaiti people about their grandchildren’s and future generations’ prospects.

“The citizens of Kuwait are responsible, educated, and capable of making their own choices without unnecessary interference.

“It is heartening to see certain deputies firmly rejecting such proposals as they represent a departure from intellectual and cultural integrity. However, silence from others on these matters raises doubts about their commitment to genuine progress.

“Civil society institutions, including the Kuwait Writers’ Association and the Kuwait Economic Society, should unite in their opposition to such proposals to prevent their revival through our silence. Emphasis should be placed on education and intellectual growth to empower society to handle the challenges of absolute freedoms, rather than imposing restrictions on tattoos and plastic surgeries.

“In conclusion, it is disheartening to witness some deputies prioritize superficial matters over the nation’s pressing issues. While the future of our homeland remains uncertain, we must focus on real solutions and foster an intellectually resilient society, capable of facing the realities of an open and uncontrolled media space. The pursuit of short-term gains and neglecting our nation’s long-term welfare is indeed a cause for concern.”

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I liked a comment on Twitter about this reality, to which the saying “the evil of calamity is laughable” applies.

Also:

“As per international agreements, state sovereignty is recognized as an inherent right for independent and internationally recognized states,” columnist **Alia Faisal Al-Khaled** wrote for **Al-Anba** daily.

“This means that a state has the right to safeguard its security, territory, people, and governing system. Kuwait, like other countries, has the right to protect its sovereignty and take necessary actions to achieve this objective.

“However, the current situation seems to indicate a different reality, where individuals who do not genuinely deserve nationality are challenging the state and its institutions. They do so either under the pretext of rights or by accusing state institutions of manipulation and forgery. Some even threaten the state by submitting complaints to international organizations.

“The state’s failure to uphold its role in preserving sovereignty and yielding to baseless demands poses a significant threat to its system and continuity. The Central Apparatus for Resolving the Status of Illegal Residents possesses evidence that discredits the claims of many individuals who are attacking the state and its sovereignty.

“What is astonishing is the officials’ reluctance to make decisive and stringent decisions to resolve this issue, despite being aware that some of these claimants have ulterior motives and may be working for foreign agendas.

“This situation is unique and has not been witnessed in other countries. No other nation gives up its sovereignty under the guise of vague and ambiguous terms such as civil rights, human rights, racism, discrimination, and others.

“These terms are framed by international agreements. Throughout its history, Kuwait has been built on coexistence and brotherhood and is innocent of these accusations. The underlying motives behind these fabrications are likely unrelated to any of these false allegations.

“Today, it is imperative for the government to take serious and decisive actions to address the issue of illegal residents and resolve the longstanding problem of illegal citizenship. Continuing to remain silent and procrastinating will only exacerbate the complexity of the matter and pose a greater threat to the state and its future.”

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“Last Tuesday, the National Assembly held a special session, during which it discussed the government’s work program. I will neither delve into details nor criticize. Today, I would rather look at the positive side. Nevertheless, the negative aspects will hold us back unless the program is amended,” columnist **Asrar Jawhar Hayat** wrote for **Al-Qabas** daily.

“The government included an ambitious cybersecurity project in its program. We hope this will continue within the normal period of four years. The program is under the axis of a productive government project entitled, ‘Launch the Comprehensive Cybersecurity System’. This is part of the strategies of the National Center for Cybersecurity and it is scheduled for launching in the first year of the lifespan of the program.

“Here, I take the opportunity to salute the government for having thought of this project and including it in the work program. Despite our position on it — ignoring other important projects like landscaping for example, the existence of a comprehensive system for cybersecurity is one of the long overdue priorities of the country.

“According to the program, this step comes with a number of digitization and automation projects in government agencies.

“Although we applaud the government‘s launching of this project, we have to give it advice. Perhaps, the first and most important advice is to launch the system only after covering all the vital aspects of cybersecurity, especially since we recently sensed the government’s desire to quickly announce the project while neglecting several aspects — the same manner it announced its program.

“This kind of security system needs experts and a strong and solid information structure. This system is related to information security and it is not less important than national security. It is rather part of national security, especially after we witnessed numerous breaches of our databases, which were then sold in the black market.

“We are still suffering the consequences of receiving messages that allegedly came from government agencies. Undoubtedly, this requires us to build an integrated system that is robust, impenetrable, strong and secure.”

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“His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishaal Al-Ahmad attended the first meeting of the leaders of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and Central Asian countries, representing His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad,” columnist **Abdulmohsen Al-Hussaini** wrote for **Al-Anba** daily.

“His Highness the Crown Prince expressed happiness over Kuwait’s participation in the first meeting, which is a new building block and a great addition to the path of relations between the two sides. It reflects the common desire to move forward to develop relations between the GCC and Central Asian countries.

“His Highness the Crown Prince affirmed Kuwait’s desire to strengthen and consolidate the strategic partnership between us and look forward to stronger cooperation in the political, security, economic, cultural, scientific and commercial fields. He stressed the importance of continuous consultation with our partners in order to further strengthen cooperation in all fields, enhance security and stability, and achieve prosperity for our countries.

“In another context, His Highness indicated that the GCC countries have a firm belief that the current circumstances require more work and coordination of efforts at the regional level. This requires us to work together in facing challenges surrounding our region through cooperation between the GCC and Central Asian countries.

“The current circumstances and the international situation necessitate that we join international groups to maintain the security and stability of our countries. Today, the world has become a world of international groups, which we must join to keep pace with international developments.”

— Compiled by Mai Elsoukary

Early preparation for next Hajj season vital: Ministry of Awqaf

‘Number of mechanisms to be adopted’

KUWAIT CITY, July 26: The Ministry of Awqaf, represented by the Department of Hajj and Umrah Affairs, circulated to approved Hajj expeditions the need for early preparation for the next Hajj season, based on recommendations from the concerned Saudi authorities, reports Al-Qabas daily.

According to reliable sources, a number of mechanisms and procedures will be adopted, most notably the completion of housing contracts and holy sites on February 25. The issuance of Hajj visas will begin on March 1. The electronic track and the issuance of visas will be closed on April 29. The arrival of pilgrims to the holy land will begin on May 9. Electronic registration through the designated platform will open on September 1 for a period of two months.

The sorting process will be according to three proposals, which will be submitted to the Higher Committee for Hajj to approve one of them. Priority will be given to those who have not performed Hajj previously.

The three proposals are:

• The first proposal - according to the lottery system.

• The second proposal - according to the age ratios, which are -

- From the age of 50 years and over - by 25 percent of the 8,000 pilgrims

- From the age of 30 to 49 years - by 50 percent

- From the age of 18 to 30 years - by 25 percent.

• The third proposal - according to the oldest.

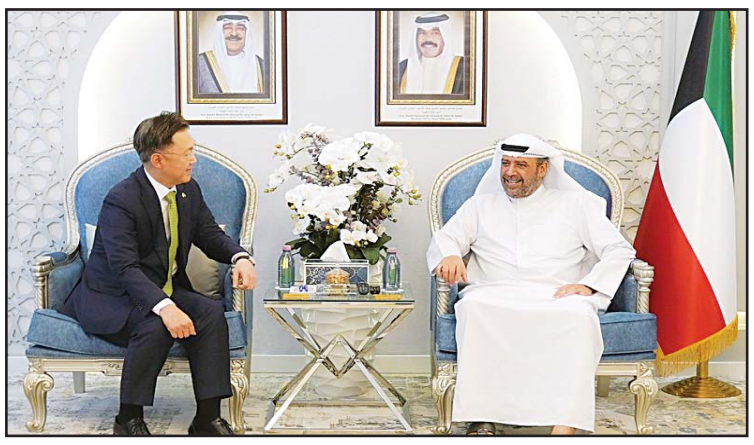
Another proposal will be presented to the Higher Committee for Hajj, which is to divide the campaigns into three categories, namely:

1. The golden category - five percent of the pilgrims, as it will be required to provide five-star services, most notably modern cars of no less than 2024 model, and hotels overlooking the Haram and close to the central area, in addition to all VIP services.

2. The silver category - it is obligated to provide services such as housing near the sanctuary and not overlooking it, or in the central area, and cars of no less than 2021 model to pilgrims of this category.

3. The bronze category - it is obligated to provide four-star services only.

The sources stressed that the Ministry of Religious Endowments will adopt a new mechanism to address any rise in Hajj prices and reduce costs for pilgrims, which will be announced soon after discussion.



KUNA photo

Deputy PM and Minister of Defense Sheikh Ahmad Fahad while receiving the South Korean ambassador.

DM discusses ties with S. Korean envoy

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Ahmad Fahad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah discussed Tuesday relations with South Korean Ambassador to the country Chung Byung-ha.

A ministry statement said defense-related issues; including exchange of education and training expertise were discussed.

The Defense Ministry’s “direct contracting policy” in all upcoming transactions and dealings within the country’s rules and regulations was another key issue discussed, said the statement of the meeting attended by Deputy Premier, Oil Minister, Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investment, and Acting Minister of Finance Dr. Saad Al-Barrak. (KUNA)

Amir congratulates Liberia, Maldives on national days

KUWAIT CITY, July 26, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent on Wednesday a cable of congratulations to Liberian President George Weah on his country’s National Day, wishing him everlasting health and wellness, and further progress and prosperity to his country.

His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a cable of congratulations to President George Weah on his country’s National Day.

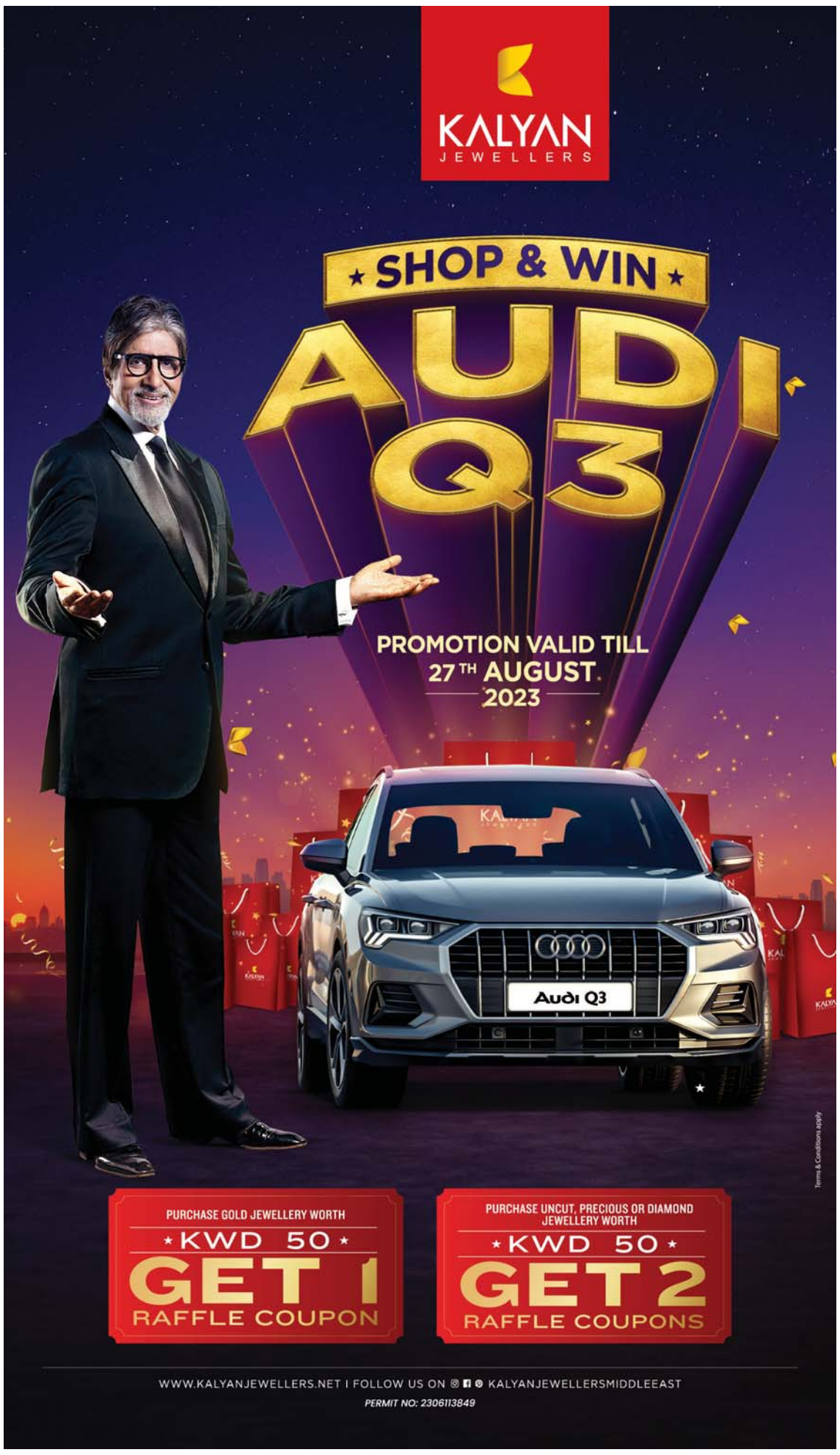
His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah also sent a cable of congratulations to President George Weah.

Meanwhile, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad sent on Wednesday a cable of congratulations to the President of Maldives Ibrahim Mohammad Solih on his country’s National Day.

His Highness the Amir wished the president lasting good health and his country and its people more progress and prosperity.

His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad also sent a cable of congratulations to President Ibrahim Mohammad Solih on his country’s National Day.

Also, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf sent a cable of congratulations to President Ibrahim Mohammad Solih on his country’s National Day.



Al-Mojaddi stresses the importance of innovative technology for the development of the beekeeping industry

Beekeeping expert Mohamed Al-Majdadi has revealed new technologies in the beekeeping industry that aim to help stabilize food sources for bees and change the way beekeepers manage their hives to become more efficient and stable, according to Ikroyd Inc., Inc., which was founded in April 2015 as a merger between Aykroyd and Bee. tack.

And I review what was mentioned by Apis Protect, a leading Irish company in beekeeping technology, using a combination of Internet technologies and artificial intelligence, as it extracts data from beehives and interprets it remotely,

He emphasized that this technology helps beekeepers maintain their hives efficiently, with fewer inspections, which means they can manage more hives with the same numbers of employees and bring in more honey.

‘Based on eligibility’

Promotion of Guard officers

KUWAIT CITY, July 26: A total of 39 officers in the National Guard will be promoted from colonel to brigadier general, while one brigadier general will be promoted to major general, reports Al-Rai daily.

This promotion is based on the abovementioned officers’ eligibility for occupying higher positions, their competence and experience, and for completing the specified period in military service.

Deputy Chief of the National Guard retired Lieutenant General Sheikh Faisal Al-Nawaf is expected to announce the promoted officers soon, in the presence of National Guard Undersecretary Lieutenant General Hashim Al-Rifai.

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Acting on information firefighters rushed to the outer yard of Central Prison No. 2 and put out limited fire which destroyed a number of trees and plants, reports Al-Anba daily.

The daily said as a precautionary measure ambulances were rushed to the area.

The source mentioned the fire coincided with members of the National Assembly’s Human Rights Committee inspecting the Central Prison No. 1 and listening to prisoners’ complaints.

Unsold 2023 Gladiator pickup trucks, (left), sit on display with Wrangler sports-utility vehicles at a Jeep dealership Sunday, June 18, 2023, in Englewood, Colo. On Tuesday, the Conference Board reports on U.S. consumer confidence for July. (AP)

US consumer confidence jumps to two-year high

U.S. consumer confidence shot to the highest level in two years this month as inflationary pressures eased and the American economy continued to show resilience in the face of dramatically higher interest rates.

The Conference Board, a business research group, said its consumer confidence index rose to 117 in July from a revised 110.1 in June. The gauge beat the 110.5 that economists had expected and was the highest since July 2021.

The index measures both Americans' assessment of current economic conditions and their outlook for the next six months. Both improved in July. The future expectations index rose to 88.3 in July, clearing the recession threshold of 80 recorded in June.

Economists closely monitor Americans' spirits because consumer spending accounts for around 70% of U.S. economic activity. The Conference Board index fell more or less steadily from mid-2021 to mid-2022 as surging prices ate into household budgets.

But confidence has come back, in fits and starts, over the past year as inflation eased in the face of 10 interest-rate hikes by the Federal Reserve. Fed policymakers are expected to raise their benchmark rate again Wednesday to the highest level in 22 years.

The U.S. economy - the world's largest - has proved surprisingly resilient in the face of sharply higher borrowing costs. Employers are adding a strong 278,000 jobs a month so far this year; and at 3.6% in June, the unemployment rate is not far off a half-century low. (AP)

Market Movements 26-07-2023

			Change	Closing pts
UAE	-	DFM	+0.61	4,039.48
PAKISTAN	-	KSE 100	+0.70	46,724.57
PHILIPPINES	-	PSEi	+0.27	6,679.13
SAUDI	-	Tadawul	+0.20	11,906.13

			Change	Closing pts
JAPAN	-	Nikkei	-0.04	32,668.34
EGYPT	-	EGX 30	-0.48	17,396.24

Business

Al Rushood sees achievement as promoting competitiveness of national economy

'KFH historic profits boost financing capacity'

KUWAIT CITY, July 26: In an interview with CNBC Arabia TV, Acting Group Chief Executive Officer at Kuwait Finance House (KFH), Abdulwahab Iesa Al Rushood stressed KFH's continuous improvement in the Group's performance significantly during the first half of 2023, in which the net profit increased by over 141% reaching KD 333.4mn compared to the same period last year, the highest-ever quarterly profits recorded in its history and the biggest in Kuwait banking sector.

Al Rushood added that the record profits enhance its local and global standing, supports its financial strength and creditworthiness while enabling the Bank to assist companies and lead mega financing deals, as well as positively contribute to raising the performance of Kuwait banking sector in general and promote competitiveness of national economy.

He indicated that Earnings per share for the first half of 2023 reached over 22 fils; an increase of 73% compared to the same period last year, while Net financing income for H1 23 reached KD 458.5 Million; an increase of 43.2% compared to the same period last year. Net operating income for H1 23 reached KD 489.1 Million; an increase of 58.6% compared to the same period last year.

He explained that the capital adequacy ratio reached about 16.45% which is above the minimum limit required by the regulatory authorities, noting that this ratio confirms the solid financial position of KFH.

He pointed out that KFH is continuing with the exits policy as part of the Bank's strategy of focusing on core banking business and achieving sustainability in profits.

Al Rushood revealed that Group non-performing financing (NPF) ratio reached 1.52% (as per CBK calculation) and Provisions Coverage ratio for KFH-Kuwait is approximately 505% and about 312.6% for the Group.

He mentioned that the provisions carried on consolidated financial statements decreased during the first half of 2023 by nearly 42.8% compared to the same period last year, amounting to about KD 25.9mn, including financing and investment provisions in addition to additional precautionary provisions.

On the acquisition front, Al Rushood said "By the grace of Allah, the acquisition led to various positive benefits in general such as boosting profits, enhancing the financial position and key financial indicators in addition to achieving regional and international expansion. Following the AUB-Bahrain acquisition, KFH has become the largest bank in Kuwait in terms of assets and market capitalization which exceeded KD 11bn. This means KFH is the largest company listed on Boursa Kuwait, not to mention is reporting the highest quarterly profits in Kuwait banking sector."

Speaking about the digital transformation strategy, Al Rushood confirmed KFH's sustained efforts in offering innovative financial and investment solutions to customers by relying on financial technology and AI to support operations and enhance customers' banking experience.

"KFH has made great strides in its digital transformation strategy where customers carried out more than 135 million e-banking transactions through KFHonline on mobile and website in H123, with a growth rate of about 40% compared to the same period last year. This noticeable growth confirms KFH`s leadership in digital transformation and facilitating financial solutions for customers on the mobile and the website". Al Rushood said.

On another front, he pointed out that KFH is at the forefront of many sustainability initiatives, indicating that KFH is the first bank in Kuwait to issue the "Carbon Footprint" report, and the first to issue banking cards made with 85% recycled materials. KFH is also the first bank to receive Global Sustainability Assessment System GSAS certificate – Gold level for its environment-friendly auto showroom (KFH Auto).

He went on to say that KFH has different sustainability initiatives with the UNDP and continues its environmental projects in sustainability under (Keep it Green) initiative.

Al Rushood indicated that KFH's distinguished efforts in sustainability has been commended and recognized worldwide, leading KFH to win various awards such as "Best Bank in Sustainability in Kuwait and the Middle East", as well as the Best Islamic Bank in sustainability" worldwide from prestigious international magazines.

Acting CEO KFH Abdulwahab Al Rushood

KFH headquarters

US economy proves surprisingly resilient

IMF global economic outlook sees slight growth, inflation still a drag

WASHINGTON, July 26, (AP): Global growth will see a slight improvement compared to previous International Monetary Fund projections but "many challenges still cloud the horizon, and it is too early to celebrate," the organization's chief economist said Tuesday.

IMF economist Pierre-Olivier Gourinchas gave his assessment as the organization projected that global economic growth will slow to an estimated 3% in 2023 and 2024, down from 3.5% in 2022.

The latest projection reflects a 0.2% increase from the organization's April projections, when IMF leadership said the world economy was expected to grow less than 3% this year, increasing the risk of hunger and poverty globally.

Despite the slight improvement, global growth "remains weak by historical standards," the IMF report states. But Gourinchas said in a Tuesday blog post that "in the near term, the signs of progress are undeniable."

The IMF also predicts that global inflation is expected to fall from 8.7% in 2022 to 6.8% in 2023 and 5.2% in 2024.

The organization's economists said that when the U.S. was able to fend off an unprecedented default by resolving the debt ceiling standoff earlier this summer, that in part "moderated adverse risks to the outlook."

But it said the threat of higher inflation due to Russia's invasion of Ukraine and extreme weather could lead central banks to hike interest rates or cause world leaders to enact more restrictive economic policies.

In addition, China's slow recovery following the reopening of its economy after the pandemic "shows signs of losing steam" the IMF said.

The U.S. economy has proved surprisingly resilient in the face of sharply higher borrowing costs. Employers are adding a strong 278,000 jobs a month so far this year; and at 3.6% in June, the unemployment rate is not far off a half-century low.

Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell and other officials will gather this week for their latest decision on interest rates, hoping to achieve a "soft landing," which is the goal of curbing inflation without causing a deep recession.

Myanmar Central Bank will issue its highest denomination banknote as economy suffers

BANGKOK, July 26, (AP): The Central Bank of army-ruled Myanmar will issue a new banknote worth twice as much as the current highest denomination, state-run media reported Sunday, in a possible reaction to the economy becoming more unstable since the generals seized power in 2021.

The reason for issuing a higher denomination note of 20,000 kyats (about $9.50) was not explained.

Since the military ousted the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi, economic boycotts and sanctions imposed by Western nations have hurt both big businesses and ordinary people, many of whose lives have already been disrupted by civil war and the coronavirus pandemic.

The issuance of new, higher denomination currency is associated in popular belief with a risk of inflation, though there isn't necessarily a link. Older Myanmar residents are especially sensitive to changes affecting the currency, recalling the sudden demonetization of banknotes in 1987 during an earlier dictatorship, which reportedly affected around 80% of the money in circulation.

The action spurred discontent that contributed to a 1988 uprising against military rule that failed but also led to the birth of the Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy party.

Wall St mixed after Big Tech profits, before Fed decision

Asian markets mixed ahead of what traders hope will be a final Fed rate hike

NEW YORK, July 26, (AP): Stocks are drifting Wednesday, as Wall Street waits to hear what the Federal Reserve will do with interest rates later in the afternoon.

The S&P 500 was 0.2% lower in midday trading, coming off its best closing level in more than 15 months. The Dow Jones Industrial Average was up 14 points, or less than 0.1%, at 35,452, as of 1 p.m. Eastern time, and the Nasdaq composite was 0.4% lower.

Microsoft weighed on the market after falling 4.4%. That was despite reporting stronger profit and revenue for the spring than analysts expected. Analysts said the company made comments that were perhaps intended to rein in huge expectations for upcoming growth from artificial intelligence. Investors also may have been hoping to hear more about when slowing growth at its Azure cloud computing business will trough.

Another Big Tech behemoth, Alphabet, helped to limit the market's losses. Alphabet rose 5.8% after beating analysts' expectations for profit and revenue by a wider margin than Microsoft.

What Big Tech titans do matters more for Wall Street than other stocks because they have become so influential due to their massive size. Seven stocks alone accounted for most of the S&P 500's returns through the first half of this year, largely on expectations that their explosive growth will continue. They'll need to deliver big profits to justify those gains.

Another member of the "Magnificent Seven" that's overshadowed the rest of the market will report its results after trading closes for the day, Meta Platforms. The stock has more than doubled so far this year, while Alphabet and Microsoft are both up close to 40%.

Traders work on the floor at the New York Stock Exchange in New York, Wednesday, July 26, 2023. (AP)

Boeing, meanwhile, was helping to prop up the Dow Jones Industrial Average, which has less of an emphasis on Big Tech than the S&P 500. The aircraft maker reported a smaller loss for the spring than analysts expected, and revenue topped expectations. Boeing's stock rose 7.1%.

Wall Street could be in for more shakes toward the end of the day's trading, when the Federal Reserve announces its latest decision on interest rates.

The wide expectation is that the Fed will announce another increase in hopes of wrestling down high inflation. That would take the federal funds rate to a range of 5.25% to 5.50%, the highest level in more than two decades and up from virtually zero early last year.

But the hope among traders is that will be the last increase of this cycle because inflation has been on a downward trend since last summer. Such hopes have been another big reason for Wall Street's big rally this year. That's because rate increases work to lower inflation by grinding down on the entire economy, raising the risk of a recession and hurting prices for investments.

The economy has so far defied many predictions for a recession, largely because of a remarkably solid job market that has allowed U.S. households to keep spending. That has hopes rising that the Federal Reserve can pull off a "soft landing" for the economy where high inflation falls back to its target without a painful recession.

Some critics, though, say traders may have rushed into such hopes too quickly and too strongly. Inflation is still high, even if it's come down, and the Fed may need to keep rates high for a while to drive it down to its 2% target. A recession is still a risk, they say.

In the bond market, Treasury yields were mixed ahead of the Fed's announcement.

Asia

Asian stock markets were mixed Wednesday after Wall Street hit a 15-month high ahead of what traders hope will be the Federal Reserve's final increase in this interest rate cycle.

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

Meanwhile, traders waited to see how China's ruling Communist Party will carry out its promise to shore up sluggish economic growth. The ruling party has pledged to support entrepreneurs and the struggling real estate industry but gave no details.

That leaves "room for disappointment if the stimulus details were to lack conviction," Yeap Jun Rong of IG said in a report.

The Hang Seng in Hong Kong sank 0.6% to 19,309.22, giving up part of Tuesday's 4.1% surge following the Chinese announcement. The Shanghai Composite Index declined 0.6% to 3,216.21. It rose 2.1% the previous session.

Oil

In energy markets, benchmark U.S. crude lost 48 cents to $79.15 per barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. The contract rose 89 cents the previous session to $79.63. Brent crude, the price basis for international oil trading, sank 49 cents to $82.76 per barrel in London. It gained 90 cents the previous session to $83.64.

Currencies

The dollar declined to 140.88 yen from Tuesday's 141.04 yen. The euro gained to $1.1066 from $1.1045.

TikTok steps up with new text-based posts

The same day Elon Musk abruptly dropped Twitter's name and bird logo as part of its supposed transition to an "anything app" called X, TikTok impishly announced it will begin letting its users post - you guessed it - text-based messages.

The popular Chinese-owned app, best known for lip-synced dances, often farcical "challenges" and other short videos, didn't offer much explanation for the new feature. It did note in a statement that the service is "expanding the boundaries of content creation" by showcasing the written creativity users have previously had to share via comments and video captions.

TikTok announced the new feature late Monday.

It wasn't clear to what extent users have embraced text posts in their first full day of availability. That's partly because searching on variations of the term "text post" largely turned up examples of a popular video genre - those focused on text message phone conversations, typically selected for humorous effect. There were also a few brave users offering video explanations on how to make text posts. (AP)

EU adopts three regulations to reduce energy consumption

The European Union Council Tuesday adopted three regulations to reduce energy consumption and promote alternative energy sources.

Firstly, it adopted new rules to reduce final energy consumption at EU level by 11.7 percent in 2030.

EU Member states will collectively ensure a reduction of final energy consumption of at least 11.7 pct in 2030, compared with the energy consumption forecasts for 2030 made in 2020.

This translates into an upper limit to the EU's final energy consumption of 763 million tons of oil equivalent and of 993 million tons of oil equivalent for primary consumption, said a Council statement.

Secondly, more recharging and refueling stations for alternative fuels will be deployed in the coming years across Europe enabling the transport sector to significantly reduce its carbon footprint following today's adoption on the alternative fuel infrastructure regulation.

From 2025 onwards, fast recharging stations of at least 150kW for cars and vans need to be installed every 60 km along the EU's main transport corridors, the so-called 'trans-European transport (TEN-T) network'.

Maritime ports welcoming a minimum number of large passenger vessels, or container vessels, must provide shore-side electricity for such vessels by 2030. (AP)

Employment held up well in 1Q23

Softer real estate and credit data point to easing economic activity

By National Bank of Kuwait

- Domestic activity showed signs of moderating in 2Q23 amid global uncertainties, higher interest rates and oil output cuts.
- Real estate sales reached their lowest since 3Q20, while credit growth slowed to 2.7% in May amid weak household borrowing.
- Project activity also eased in 2Q23, albeit after a strong Q1 and likely affected by seasonal factors.
- But encouragingly, employment held up well in 1Q23, a continuation of the post-pandemic recovery.
- Following the June elections, the new government outlined its four-year work agenda aimed at boosting economic development.

Economic activity showed signs of further moderation in 2Q23 amid the higher interest rate environment, global uncertainties, and oil production cuts. Household and business credit growth remained weak, while real estate sales stayed on a downward trajectory. Oil production also declined during the quarter with the introduction of voluntary output cuts in May to halt sliding oil prices (which showed signs of working as prices rose in July). On a brighter note, although project awards eased in 2Q23, affected by seasonal factors, they remained above 2022 levels, while employment in 1Q23 was still rising at a fairly solid pace. On the policy front, following the election of a new parliament in June, the new government sent its 2023-27 work plan to the legislature for review. It includes five main pillars covering the economy, jobs, welfare and governance through measures to develop key sectors, boost productivity including in the public sector, address the housing shortage and put the public finances on a sustainable path. Meanwhile, as of mid-July/ the government,s expansionary draft budget for FY23/24 was yet to be signed off by parliament.

Oil prices pressured lower on global recession fears

Oil prices retreated during 2Q23 amid intensifying global recession concerns. Tighter global monetary policy to combat inflation, uninspiring Chinese economic metrics and ample crude stock cover amid resilient Russian supply all combined to push market sentiment in a more bearish direction during the quarter. Having traded sideways through June, Brent crude closed the quarter down 6.1% q/q to $74.9/bbl (-12.8% ytd). (Chart 1.) Local marker Kuwait Export Crude fared better, maintaining a premium over Brent during the quarter, dropping by 1.9% q/q to end 2Q23 at $77.8/bbl (-5.1% ytd). With prices heading south through 2Q23 and OECD crude stocks not drawing down at the rate expected, oil producers in the OPEC+ group, led by Saudi Arabia, moved to extend the previously announced voluntary production cuts to end•2024. Saudi went further, with a unilateral, additional cut of 1 mb/d for July, later rolled over into August.

For Kuwait/ its participation in OPEC+'s additional voluntary production cuts saw its official output reduced by 128 kb/d in May to its quota target of 2.548 mb/d, slightly above the assessment by OPEC secondary sources. Kuwait will need to keep output steady at this level—the lowest since December 2022—through to the end of the year/ which poses a challenge for the country's plan to steadily ramp up crude throughputs in the newly commissioned 1.4 mb/d Al-Zour refinery in pursuit of higher low-Sulphur fuel oil and diesel exports. Kuwait could pare back crude exports in favor of domestic refining and higher refined exports.

Government launches four-year plan to drive growth

Following its appointment in June, the government published its proposed work agenda for the coming four years (2023-27) in July, with the aim of kick-starting a more aggressive period of reforms which have lagged versus Kuwait,s GCC peers in recent years. The plan contains five overall pillars: public finance stability, the economic agenda (including diversification away from oil and promoting the role of the private sector), creating job opportunities, sustainable welfare & strong human capital, and productive government. Each pillar contains a number of goals, with a broad timeline relating to each year of the plan.

Key year-one highlights in our view are the targeted passing of the public debt law, the real estate financing law, laws to facilitate the build of large residential cities and distribute 15,000 more plots of residential land, a mass program of road maintenance works, the launch of a plan for economy-wide carbon neutrality by 2060 and measures to boost healthcare capacity. Also eye-catching was the proposal to create a sovereign fund ('Ciyada,) to invest in the local economy/ which could help spearhead key megaprojects and initiatives. A feasibility study on the fund to be completed over the next year. The government's program has been sent to the National Assembly for debate and review, and parliament,s response will be monitored for signs of a more cooperative and productive relationship with the government in the upcoming period than previously.

Real estate activity continues to soften

Real estate sales dropped to KD672 million (-38% y/y) in 2Q23, their lowest since 3Q20 (Chart 2). Residential sales fell by 28% on lower transactions (-37%), which could be related to the ongoing high valuations within this segment as well as the higher interest rate environment. Investment and commercial segment sales fell by 35% and 60%, respectively, on rising borrowing costs and perhaps uncertainty about the restructuring of utility pricing. The average transaction value only saw a mild decline, supported by the residential segment, where transactions rose by 14.7% y/y. Real estate activity could remain soft throughout this year mainly due to ongoing high residential valuations, tighter financial conditions, elevated construction costs and global macroeconomic uncertainties. The government,s four-year plan, which includes the distribution of around 43,000 building permits and 15,000 land plots, could help in easing the housing shortage by absorbing incremental demand over the medium term. Though by itself it would not eliminate the large backlog of existing applications estimated at above 90,000 in mid-2023.

Project activity slows in Q2 on Ramadan/Eid effect

After a strong 1Q23, project momentum eased in 2Q23, with the value of awards falling for the first time since 3Q22 to KD426 million (-19.2% q/q; +54% y/y). The Ramadan and Eid period likely played a part. (Chart 3.)

Projects overseen by the Ministry of Electricity and Water and the Ministry of Public Works accounted for the bulk of awards signed off on in the quarter. Despite the slower 2Q23, compared to the previous quarter, the market appears to be improving, albeit from a low base. MEED Projects expects KD5.2 billion worth of contracts will be awarded this year, though half this figure relates to KIPIC,s Al-Zour Petrochemicals project packages (1&2) (KD2.4 billion). The outlook remains heavily influenced by events in the political sphere, and in particular cooperation between government and parliament in executing the development plan.

Employment grows; public sector drives Kuwaiti job gains

According to the latest data from the Labor Market Information System (LMIS) and Central Bureau of Statistics (CSB), total employment continued to recover in 1Q23 from its trough seen at the end of 2021, increasing by 10% y/y due to the influx of foreign workers following the resumption of economic activities post-pandemic. (Table 1.) The number of expatriate workers (excluding domestic workers) rose by 12.3% y/y in 1Q23, while growth among Kuwaiti nationals eased to 2.3%. Jobs gains among Kuwaitis were driven by the public sector, which saw a net addition of 11K jobs, while private sector jobs fell by 1,000 over the last four quarters. Expatriate employment was boosted by gains in the private sector (+173K y/y), mainly low paid workers in labor-intensive sectors such as construction (+121K) and manufacturing (+26K). Meanwhile, domestic workers also recorded a sharp rise of 27% y/y (+167K).

Inflation edges up in June on higher housing rents

Consumer price inflation rose to 3.8% y/y in June, up slightly from 3.7% in March and 3.3% at the begining of the year. (Chart 4.) Prices in the 'housing services• category (+3.2% y/y in June) have risen, largely reflecting a pickup in rents, while inflation in clothing and miscellaneous sub-segments continued to trend upwards. Nevertheless, price growth in food and beverages, the second largest component by weight, eased to its lowest rate this year in June (6.3% y/y) amid softening global food prices. Meanwhile, the core inflation rate, which excludes food and housing, has also moved up versus the start of the year, but remained lower than the headline rate at 3.3% y/y in June. With consumer and credit activity softening against a backdrop of tighter monetary policy (relative to last year), inflationary pressures will likely ease as we progress through the year. Nevertheless, since it has come in slightly higher than expected so far this year, we now see year-average inflation at 3.4% versus the previous 3.1%.

Weak credit growth in 2023, especially household credit

Domestic credit growth continues to soften as the mid-point of the year approaches. Growth was essentially flat over the first five months of 2023/ with May,s reading of 2.7% y/y significantly down on the double-digit growth recorded a year earlier. (Chart 5.) Higher interest rates, banks, lower price competition in terms of retail lending and normalizing growth following a very strong 2022 are some of the factors behind this year,s weaker readings.

Business credit increased by just 1.1% in the year to May, cutting the annual growth rate to 2.1%. This relatively muted business credit growth is partly due to weakness in the particularly interest rate-sensitive real estate sector and in the oil/gas sector, which are both down year-to-date. Excluding these two sectors, business credit would have expanded by a relatively decent 2.9% ytd and 7.0% y/y. In fact, several sectors, such as 'construction, and 'other services, have been resilient so far this year, posting ytd growth of 4.5% and 3.8%, respectively. The slowdown is even sharper in household credit, which is broadly flat year-to-date, cutting the y/y increase to 5.3% in May. Overall, such subdued growth does not bode well for the remainder of the year, knowing that the second half of the year has historically been weaker than the first.

Resident deposit growth has been stronger than credit growth, increasing by 3.2% in the year to May (+3.0% y/y). Growth over the past year has been driven by both private sector (+6%) and government deposits (+10%), in contrast to deposits from public institutions, which fell by 15% y/y in May. Within private-sector KD deposits, current and saving accounts (CASA) continued to decrease (-11.8% y/y) while time deposits remained on an upward trend (+26%), which is unsurprising given the higher interest rate environment.

The Central Bank of Kuwait has hiked the discount rate by a cumulative 2.5% since March 2022, half of the 5% implemented by the US Fed. However, the Fed is close to ending its rate hiking cycle, with the futures market currently expecting a final 25 bps hike on 26 July.

Equities pare losses on a partial recovery in bank sector

Kuwaiti equities ended a lackluster 2Q23 little changed (-0.3% q/q)/ with May,s steep banking sector losses (-6.0% m/m) partially recouped in June after the Fed,s rate hike pause eased investor concerns. (Chart 6).

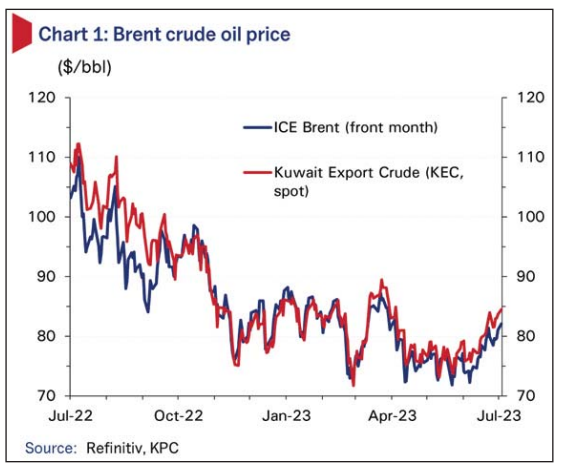
Sentiment was also helped by less political uncertainty given the conclusion of the parliamentary elections andsigns of improvement in global and regional economic data. Market capitalization subsequently recovered to KD 45.7 billion as of end-June from an 8-month low of KD 43.7 in May, while turnover by value eased to a monthly average of KD 798 million reflecting lower trading activity and prices. Despite the recent pickup, the market is still far from a full recovery given that the market capitalization and index level are well below their November 2022 peaks. Further, Boursa continued to underperform GCC peer markets with the MSCI GCC up 3.3% q/q. Looking forward, though there have been signs of improving sentiment, investors remain cautious as still elevated valuations, lagging reform progress, peer market relative strength and the absence of a catalyst pose downside risks.

Table 1: Employment (period-end)

	Employment (period-end, '000)			% y/y		
	Kuwaiti	Non-Kuwaiti (ex domestic workers)	Total	Kuwaiti	Non-Kuwaiti	Total
1Q22	435	1,450	1,885	5.7%	-5.6%	-3.2%
2Q22	439	1,477	1,916	4.5%	-2.2%	-0.7%
3Q22	439	1,538	1,977	3.4%	4.0%	3.8%
4Q22	443	1,594	2,037	2.9%	9.8%	8.2%
1Q23	445	1,628	2,073	2.3%	12.3%	10.0%

Source: LMIS/ CSB

Chart 1: Brent crude oil price

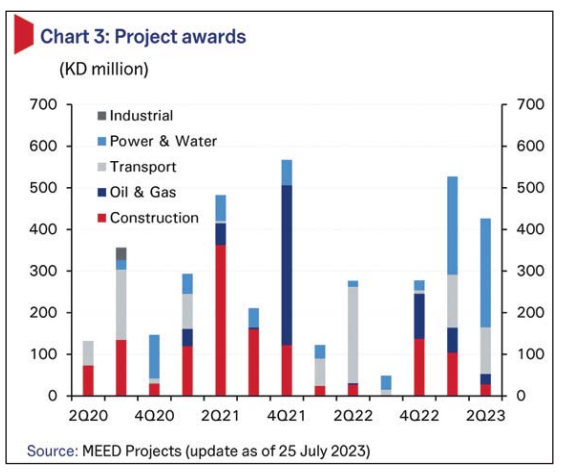


Source: Refinitiv, KPC

Chart 2: Real estate sales

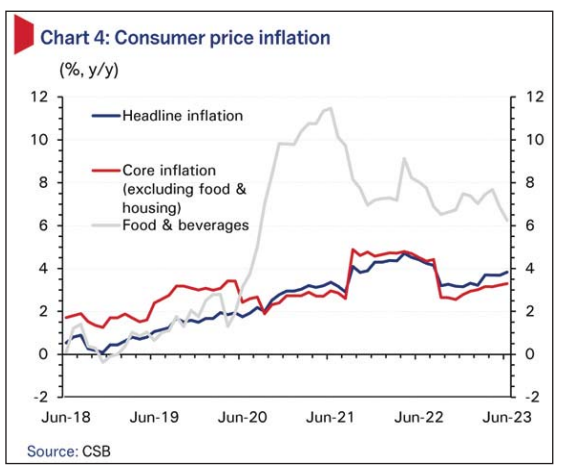
Source: Ministry of Justice

Chart 3: Project awards



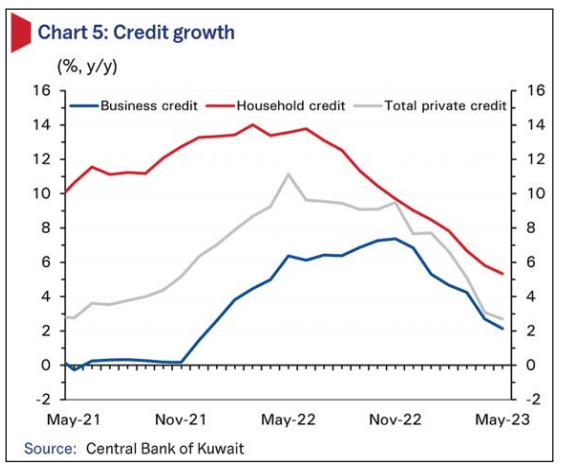
Source: MEED Projects (update as of 25 July 2023)

Chart 4: Consumer price inflation



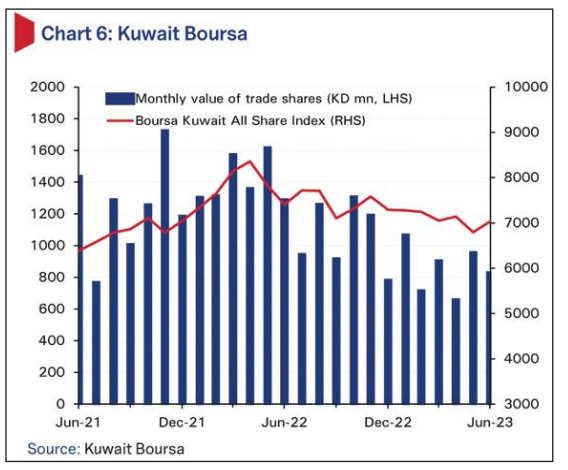
Source: CSB

Chart 5: Credit growth



Source: Central Bank of Kuwait

Chart 6: Kuwait Boursa



Source: Kuwait Boursa

Table 2: Key economic data

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	Estimates/forecasts 2023	2024
				(KD billion)				
Nominal GDP	36.6	41.7	41.3	32.4	42.0	54.3	52.6	53.6
Oil	15.4	19.8	18.9	11.2	18.8	29.1	25.8	24.9
Non-oil	21.2	21.9	22.4	21.3	23.2	25.2	26.8	28.8
				(percent change)				
Real GDP	-4.7	2.4	-0.6	-8.9	1.2	7.6	-0.3	3.3
Oil	-9.2	2.4	-1.0	-8.9	-1.0	12.1	-3.7	2.7
Non-oil	1.3	2.5	-0.1	-8.8	3.8	2.6	3.8	3.9
Private credit (end-year)	3.1	4.2	4.3	3.5	6.3	7.7	...	...
Money supply (M2, end-year)	3.8	3.9	-1.2	2.7	-0.5	6.0	...	...
Inflation (% y/y, average)	1.5	0.6	1.1	2.1	3.4	4.0	3.4	2.1
				(percent of GDP)				
Fiscal balance (before FGF transfers)	-8.9	-3.1	-9.5	-33.2	-7.1	9.6	-2.9	1.0
Revenues	43.7	49.3	41.6	32.4	44.2	49.8	43.7	45.8
Oil	39.0	44.2	37.2	27.1	38.6	46.0	39.3	41.2
Non-oil	4.7	5.1	4.5	5.3	5.7	3.8	4.3	4.5
Expenditures	52.6	52.4	51.1	65.6	51.4	40.2	46.6	44.7
Transfers to Future Generations Fund	4.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	...	...	...
Fiscal balance (after transfers to FGF)	-13.2	-3.1	-9.5	-33.2	-7.1	9.6	-2.9	1.0
Investment income*	15.7	13.3	14.9	15.5	17.4	13.5	15.5	15.4
Public debt	19.0	13.9	9.9	10.7	4.4	3.0	2.9	2.7
Current account balance	3.4	11.2	10.1	1.4	26.9	34.1	30.6	32.0
Exchange rate (KD per US$1, average)	0.303	0.302	0.304	0.307	0.302	0.307	...	...
CBK discount rate (percent, end-year)	2.75	3.00	2.75	1.50	1.50	3.50	...	...
Kuwait export crude price ($/bbl, avg)	51	69	64	41	70	100	85	90
Oil production (million b/d, average)**	2.70	2.74	2.68	2.44	2.41	2.71	2.61	2.68

Source: Central Statistical Bureau, Ministry of Finance, Central Bank of Kuwait, NBK estimates.
*Based on estimated figures by CSB and NBK. ** Uses JODI/OPEC direct communication figures.

Table 3: Monthly economic data

(KD billion, unless otherwise indicated)	Dec-21	Dec-22	Jan-23	Feb-23	Mar-23	Apr-23	May-23	Jun-23
Credit	39.8	46.9	47.1	47.1	47.1	46.9	46.9	...
Growth (% y/y)	3.5	7.7	7.7	6.6	5.1	3.1	2..7	...
Money supply (M2)	39.1	38.4	39.2	39.2	39.5	39.5	39.7	...
Growth (% y/y)	2.7	6.0	6.9	5.7	6.6	4.1	5.7	...
Inflation (% y/y)	3.0	3.2	3.3	3.2	3.7	3.7	3.7	3.8
ex food and housing	2.7	2.8	2.9	3.0	3.1	3.1	3.2	3.3
Real estate sales (KD million)	253.8	210.0	276.4	187.8	249.6	124.9	337.8	209.3
Kuwait export crude price ($/bbl, avg)	49	80	83	83	80	85	77	77
Stock market – All Share index (mth-end)	5,546	7,292	7,277	7,244	7,051	7,142	7,142	7,142
Growth (% y/y)	-11.7	3.5	-1.0	-5.1	-13.5	-14.5	-14.5	-14.5

Source: Central Statistical Bureau, Ministry of Finance, Central Bank of Kuwait

Indoor farming company files for bankruptcy

AppHarvest, a Kentucky-based indoor farming company that was backed by Martha Stewart when it began shipping tomatoes in early 2021, has filed for bankruptcy, officials announced on Monday.

The Chapter 11 filing on Sunday came following several months of financial difficulties, including the potential foreclosure of its greenhouse in Richmond and concerns about cash flow, news outlets reported. In addition, AppHarvest Founder Jonathan Webb was replaced earlier this month as chief executive officer and chairman of the board.

The company said in a statement that it is looking to restructure while business operations continue at its four farms.

"The AppHarvest board of directors and executive leadership evaluated several strategic alternatives to maximize value for all stakeholders prior to the Chapter 11 filing," said AppHarvest CEO Tony Martin. "The Chapter 11 filing provides protection while we work to transition operation of our strategic plan, Project New Leaf, which has shown strong progress toward operational efficiencies resulting in higher sales, cost savings and product quality." (AP)

Momentum Ventures Supports Canada's INSAT

Momentum Ventures, a Canadian venture studio, is thrilled to express its support of the Canadian government's newly unveiled Initiative for Sustainable Aviation Technology (INSAT). The INSAT, backed by a robust $350 million investment from the Strategic Innovation Fund, is a testament to Canada's commitment to fostering green transformation within the aerospace industry.

As the parent company to Canadian online travel agency FlightHub, and sister company Justfly, Momentum Ventures is inspired and excited by the INSAT initiative. "Its comprehensive approach, targeting key aspects like alternative propulsion systems, advanced aircraft designs, transition to greener fuels, and improved aircraft support infrastructures, resonates profoundly with Momentum Ventures' roadmap for an environmentally responsible future in aviation," commented Matt Keezer, Momentum Ventures CEO.

According to the David Suzuki Foundation, the aviation industry is responsible for 12 per cent of transportation emissions.

Carbon emissions from the airline industry grew by 75 per cent from 1990 to 2012 and emissions are expected to triple by the year 2050. (AP)

Burgan Bank offers Visa credit cardholders an elevated 'rewards program' in collaboration with xperience app

KUWAIT CITY, July 26: As part of our continuous efforts to provide our customers an added value experiences, Burgan Bank is pleased to announce an added offer under Burgan Rewards program. Our valued Visa credit cardholders can now enjoy a wide range of deals and offers using xperience with the ENTERTAINER application. This rewards program expansion comes as part of Burgan's committed efforts to collaborate with the best service providers in the market, as a means of expressing gratitude to the Bank's customers and turning their every transaction into an exciting and rewarding experience.

Renowned for its "2-for-1" offers, xperience with the ENTERTAINER is free-to-download app, easy to use, and excellent for saving money on everyday expenses like dining, shopping, entertainment, and much more. Visa credit cardholders can enjoy over 5,000 new and dynamic deals, locally and abroad; simply by downloading the app on Android and IOS, registering to the app for free by entering primary personal data, and finally adding the Visa card number to verify that they are eligible.

Once logged into the app, customers can click on 'Burgan Offers' to find out about the latest deals that satisfy their interests and taste, noting that all offers can be redeemed more than once as long as they are available on xperience. To redeem an offer, Burgan premium Visa cardholders need to head to the store of interest, where they can share the voucher code with the store's staff and enjoy endless in-store deals while paying at a point-of-sale (POS).

In light of this new loyalty program addition, Mr. Nasser Al-Qaisi, General Manager - Retail Banking at Burgan Bank, said: "There are two facts that are always front and center at Burgan. The first is that our clients are pivotal to our success, and the second is that customer satisfaction goes a very long way. That's why our efforts go beyond innovating the best products and services in the market. Instead, we are always coming up with new ideas on how to go the extra mile for our clients – how to truly let them know that their loyalty as customers is appreciated."

Al-Qaisi added that Burgan Bank designs its loyalty programs in such a way that offers its customers multiple reward options that are tailored to their different lifestyles and that provide them with the holistic banking experience to enrich their lives.

It also serves to note that Burgan Rewards remains the top loyalty program of its kind in the Kuwaiti banking sector. The unique platform offers a diverse range of redeemable redemption options, including and not limited to cash back, airline ticket purchases, hotel reservations, retail offers, e-vouchers, and much more.

KIB continues to support SMEs with Mubader Account, Center and App

Bid to contribute to entrepreneurial success

KUWAIT CITY, July 26: Kuwait International Bank (KIB) continues to encourage, support and empower Kuwait's aspiring entrepreneurs and owners of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to stimulate economic growth and help create more local jobs.

Abdullah Al-Awadhi

Mohammad Al-Huwaidi

Payzah CEO Fahad Al-Ghareeb

As a demonstration of its support, the Bank is urging current and future customers to benefit from its Mubader Account, which is specifically tailored to this vital segment, in addition to the KIB Mubader Center and the unique Mubader App.

This step falls in line with the Bank's strategy aimed at providing entrepreneurs with the tools necessary that ultimately lead to their success, all while offering an innovative, creative, and supportive environment enriched with educational and guidance tools. KIB also offers a set of packages, meetings, lectures, and workshops to strengthen their practical knowledge and skills.

Discussing the Bank's strategy toward serving the entrepreneurial segment, Abdullah Al-Awadhi, General Manager of Strategy and Change Management at KIB, said that the Bank provides an integrated system to offer financial support and tools to entrepreneurs. These include banking services and products, an incubator and business accelerator center, and an application that facilitates the process of education, training, and communication, equipped with the necessary tools to simplify the work of entrepreneurs.

On his part, Mohammad Al-Huwaidi, Head of Mubader, stated that the opening of the KIB Mubader Center came within the framework of the Bank's continuous endeavor as a leading banking institution to help enhance the performance of entrepreneurs and the efficiency of the SMEs sector. He also highlighted the vital role of this sector in economic diversification and development in Kuwait.

The KIB Mubader Center works as a start-up incubator and business accelerator to advance the path of Kuwaiti youth entrepreneurs and refine their skills. It offers a pioneering package of integrated learning and training tools equipped with comprehensive and specialized educational content prepared by the Center in cooperation with Rainmaking – the world-leading corporate innovation and venture development firm. To this end, a series of top-notch hands-on entrepreneurship workshops will be delivered by Rainmaking using the latest methods and approaches applied internationally to help Kuwait's local entrepreneurs launch their small-sized projects and take the right steps towards developing their business ideas before introducing them to the market.

Furthermore, Al-Huwaidi pointed to the launch of the Mubader Account, which is a current account designed to cater to the banking needs of entrepreneurs. It provides banking solutions and specific services from the Mubader Center. In addition, it offers many features and benefits, such as a free debit card, a cheque book upon the customer's request, POS availability if required, the eligibility to apply for credit/charge cards, and the ability to access Murabaha financing facilities. A minimum amount is not required to open the account, while its benefits are subject to the terms and conditions stipulated in the Bank's policy.

Al-Huwaidi added that the KIB Mubader Center launched the Mubader App in collaboration with Payzah. The innovative application is designed to provide all the services that help entrepreneurs manage and develop their projects to achieve all their goals and the best possible results.

Al-Huwaidi elaborated that the main idea behind the Mubader App, which is available on both IOS and Android systems, is providing entrepreneurs with services that enable them to work in an entrepreneurial environment that matches technological development and allows them to develop their businesses in line with market trends. He underscored that the application contains a series of specialized educational and training programs designed to support Kuwaiti entrepreneurs while starting their small projects.

Meanwhile, Fahad Al-Ghareeb, Co-Founder and CEO of Payzah, said: "We are pleased to continue our successful partnership with KIB Mubader Center as part of its positive endeavors to achieve sustainable development. In addition, we strive to create a pioneering business environment suitable for SMEs and entrepreneurs that keeps pace with technological development and contributes to improving the performance and efficiency of the app's services and products." He elaborated that Payzah is offering payment services and business solutions for all new and existing entrepreneurs to help with the success of their businesses, providing e-commerce sites equipped with storage and delivery solutions through its network of partners.

It is worth noting that KIB Mubader Center is constantly keen on offering all the tools that help Kuwaiti entrepreneurs achieve success throughout their journey and facilitate providing them with various means of support and guidance. The Bank aims to play a major role in helping build the next generation of Kuwaiti youth energies, startups, and entrepreneurs. Furthermore, KIB strives to develop ambitious and successful projects that contribute to diversifying and advancing the local economy and result in sustainable development.

CSR team from AUB with the students during the training course.

AUB 'sponsors' summer training course held by the Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research

KUWAIT CITY, July 26: Ahli United Bank (AUB) announced its sponsorship of the forty -fourth summer training course organized by Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR) for intermediate school and university students in the summer holiday of the academic year 2022-2023 with the aim of directing them towards practicing scientific research, linking them to scientific topics, accustoming them to looking at various topics from a scientific perspective, and helping young people to know the basic rules for conducting scientific research and how to apply these researches in real life. The training program will continue from July 23 until August 24, 2023.

The training course aims to discuss a number of different practical topics with the students in an atmosphere of confidence and a sense of responsibility on their part, where at the end of the course, a group of students can give a lecture. The course also includes conducting a number of simple scientific experiments and drawing important observations out of them.

Commenting on this sponsorship, Ms. Faten Al-Tamimi, Head of Corporate Communications Department at Ahli United Bank, said in a press release : "We are pleased to have the opportunity to sponsor this training course, which contributes to spreading the love of science and developing the ability to practice scientific research among our children from secondary schools and universities. To have a role in preparing future scientists from the sons of the beloved Kuwait.

Furthermore, Al-Tamimi added that Ahli United Bank does not hesitate to provide support and assistance to young people in all fields, without a doubt, training them to practice scientific research was of special importance on our part, to reassure our commitment to support a new generation that approach scientific research and believes in its importance.

Al-Tamimi confirmed that the remarkable turnout of students to participate in this course is a confirmation on its importance in building the human element on sound scientific foundations. She called on the students to continue the scientific path, bearing in mind that they are the real wealth of the country and that they are the sure guarantee to achieve an advanced position for the country and achieve what it aspires to.

Moreover, Al-Tamimi expressed her sincere wishes for the continuation of cooperation between Al-Ahli United Bank and the Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research. She also expressed her sincere wishes for the Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research to continue the success of its path towards scientific education for youth and spreading the importance of scientific research.

It is worth noting that Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research is a leading and independent institution in the field of research and development. The institute is constantly looking for new ways to preserve the country's natural resources to ensure continued prosperity. The Institute also works in cooperation with clients and partners at the local and international levels to develop technologies that help them achieve economic, technical and social goals, by adopting an extensive knowledge exchange approach.

Zain Innovation Nation Summer Camp 2023

Over 130 courses, workshops held

Zain 'upskills' over 800 young people in digital and tech skills

KUWAIT CITY, July 26: Zain announces the successful conclusion of the Innovation Nation summer camp, a unique educational experience that came in partnership with Sabah Al Ahmad Center for Giftedness and Creativity (SACGC) and in collaboration with the Avenues. The camp presented a unique set of rich content, courses, and workshops for children and youth to upskill a wide range of digital and technical skills with the aim of nurturing their creativity and fostering their talents.

This initiative was the first fruitful result of Zain and SACGC's recently signed strategic partnership to invest in the talents and skills of Kuwait's youth to contribute to the national economy by empowering tech and digital competencies, which are core requirements of today's career market.

The initiative achieved outstanding results in a short period of time. In just 10 days, the summer camp welcomed over 800 children and youth aged 7-14 years to join over 130 courses and workshops, covering the fundamentals of electronics, robotics, 3D printers, programming, artificial intelligence, and more.

The Innovation Nation summer camp offered a great opportunity for parents to positively fill their children's free time while they shop at the Avenues. Each course or workshop ran for two hours and was supervised and facilitated by experts, volunteers, and certified trainers from SACGC. The content was presented in an out-of-the-box way with fun, informative, and innovative educational methods that appealed to younger age groups, resulting in hundreds of registrations.

Zain Innovation Nation Summer Camp 2023.

Zain recently signed a memorandum of understanding with SACGC - a center of the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS) - to build a new strategic partnership that focuses on elevating the digital literacy of the youth, empower creativity and innovation, and enhance the local startup ecosystem in the community.

The MoU aims to foster a joint collaboration between the two partners to achieve a number of targets, including elevating digital literacy, developing digital competencies, supporting the local startups ecosystem, empowering Kuwaiti inventors and innovators to excel, and more to serve the nation's developmental, economic, and social goals. The partnership targets young people of 7-35 years, and includes insightful programs, workshops, and more to share expertise and achieve these shared goals.

Al-Muzaini Exchange Company opens new branches in Kuwait

KUWAIT CITY, July 26: The number one money exchange company in Kuwait, Al-Muzaini Exchange Company recently opened its 131st branch in Al Andalus on Monday, 17th July, 2023 and opened its 132nd branch in Al Eqaila on Tuesday, 18th July, 2023. This rapid expansion reflects the company's endeavor to always be near its customers and its commitment to providing the highest quality of financial services such as money transfers, foreign currency exchange and bill payments with ease, comfort and safety and at the best prices, seven days a week.

The General Manager of Al Muzaini Exchange Company, Mr. Hugh Fernandes and the company's department managers, along with a number of the company's valued customers inaugurated the new branches in Al Andalus and Al Eqaila and Mr. Fernandes stated: "We place immense focus in strengthening our leading position in the local market and to ensure that we provide the best financial services experience to our customers and meet all their money transfer needs. It is an incredible achievement for Al Muzaini to have launched two new branches in Al Andalus and Al Eqaila within a span of few days and this emphasizes our efforts to stay true to our mission; to always be near to our customers and to add to their convenience."

The ribbon being cut to signal the opening of one of the branches.

The company always strives to make its financial services accessible to all. In addition to its strong network of branches, Al Muzaini application provides safe and simplified financial solutions with many features such as: - Availability in all digital platforms, new customer registration, the ability to add a new beneficiary and benefits from the Western Union service and Visa Direct services with simple steps to assist you with your transfers anywhere, anytime.

Al Muzaini, always near you!

Visa profits rise

Visa Inc said its adjusted third-quarter profits rose by nearly double digits, as the global payments company continues to benefit from the broad shift by consumers to using credit and debit cards instead of cash.

The company said Tuesday that it earned a profit of $4.2 billion, or $2 a share, in its fiscal third quarter compared with a profit of $3.4 billion, or $1.60 a share, in the same period a year earlier. Last year's results included a $456 million legal expense. Excluding that one-time cost, Visa's adjusted profits rose 7% from a year earlier.

Visa said its payments volume rose 9% from a year earlier, while the number of processed transactions on Visa's network increased 10% from a year earlier. Visa gets a fee from merchants and businesses who use its payment network to process transactions, so Visa's profits rise and fall with the global economy as well as customers choosing to use a Visa debit or credit card over its competition or cash.

Roughly $3.799 trillion was processed on Visa's network last quarter, with the biggest growth coming from Central and Eastern Europe, the Middle East and Latin America. In the U.S., which accounts for roughly half of Visa's global payments volume, the number of payments rose 4.9%. (AP)

This Aug 11, 2019 file photo shows a Visa logo on a credit card in New Orleans. Visa reports earnings on July 25, 2023. (AP)

Weak yen helped Nissan's bottom line

Japan automaker Nissan reports profit rise, outlines Renault alliance

TOKYO, July 26, (AP): Nissan and Renault have formally redefined their French-Japanese auto alliance into a more equal one in cross-shareholdings, both sides said Wednesday.

The disparity between the holdings has long been a cause of friction in the alliance, set up in 1999. At the start, Nissan, based in the Japanese port city of Yokohama, had been on the verge of bankruptcy.

Under the latest terms, which still need regulatory approval expected by the end of the year, Nissan Motor Co will invest 600 million euros ($663 million) in Ampere, Renault's electric vehicle and software entity in Europe.

Renault Group and Nissan will retain cross-shareholdings of 15% in each other, and Renault will transfer 28.4% of its Nissan shares into a French trust, so that voting rights of both sides will be capped at 15% of the total, they said in a statement.

"The agreements that have been signed today allow us to step into the next chapter of the alliance," said Jean-Dominique Senard, chairman of the alliance.

The deal initially announced earlier this year also calls on the companies to work together on marketing, vehicles and technology in Latin America, India and Europe.

Nissan also announced financial results, which showed that April-June net profit more than doubled to 105.5 billion yen ($753 million). While Nissan's vehicle sales volume in China declined because of the negative effects of the coronavirus pandemic, other regions' sales grew significantly.

Converted

The weak yen also helped Nissan's bottom line. The weak yen generally helps the results of Japanese exporters like Nissan by raising the value of overseas earnings when converted into yen.

Quarterly sales grew 36% to 2.92 trillion yen ($20.8 billion). Nissan lowered its sales forecast for the year through March 2024 to 3.7 million vehicles, down from an earlier projection of 4 million vehicles. The lowered target is still better than the 3.3 million vehicles sold the previous fiscal year.

The maker of the Leaf EV and Infiniti luxury brands still expects fiscal result to hold up because of the boost from a favorable currency exchange rate. Nissan is forecasting 340 billion yen ($2.4 billion) net profit for the fiscal year through March 2024.

It had previously forecast 310 billion yen ($2.2 billion) profit. It earned nearly 222 billion yen the previous fiscal year.

The alliance has had its ups and downs. Carlos Ghosn, sent in by Renault to lead a turnaround at Nissan, was a star executive until his arrest in Japan in late 2018 on various financial misconduct charges.

The alliance, which also includes smaller Japanese automaker Mitsubishi Motor Corp., has been eager to put the Ghosn scandal behind it.

Ghosn now lives in Lebanon, after jumping bail in late 2019. He recently filed a $1 billion lawsuit against Nissan. Lebanon has no extradition treaty with Japan.

Ghosn, who is wanted in Japan and France, has repeatedly said he is innocent of all charges, which include underreporting income, using investment funds for personal gain and illicit use of company expenses, including overseas homes and a yacht. He says he could not expect a fair trial in Japan. Ghosn has French, Brazilian and Lebanese citizenship.

A hearing date in the case by Lebanon's prosecution is set for Sept. 18. Ghosn said half the money he is seeking is for damages, while the other half is for compensation including salary, retirement funds and stock options.

Nissan has declined comment.

Chief Executive Makoto Uchida said the latest move on the alliance is positive for the automakers' electrification drive.

"With the finalization of the definitive agreements, we have entered the next phase of collaboration with Renault and Mitsubishi Motors in mutually beneficial areas of innovations," he said.

He also acknowledged China remains a challenge.

"As the business environment in China is changing drastically and competition is becoming fiercer, it will be difficult to rebuild our business overnight," said Uchida.

United Parcel Service driver Hudson de Almeida steers through a neighborhood while delivering packages, June 30, 2023, in Haverhill, Mass. UPS has reached a contract agreement with its 340,000-person strong union Tuesday, July 25, averting a strike that had the potential to disrupt logistics nationwide for businesses and households alike. (AP)

Teamsters hail deal as 'historic'

UPS and Teamsters reach labor deal, averting strike

NEW YORK, July 26, (AP): UPS has reached a tentative contract with its 340,000-person union, potentially averting a strike that threatened to disrupt package deliveries for millions of businesses and households nationwide.

The agreement was announced Tuesday, the first day that UPS and the Teamsters returned to the table after contentious negotiations broke down earlier this month.

Negotiators had already reached tentative agreements on several issues but continued to clash over pay for part-time workers, who make up more than half of the UPS employees represented by the union.

The Teamsters hailed the agreement as "historic."

Under the tentative agreement, which still needs union members' approval, full- and part-time union workers will get $2.75 more per hour in 2023, and $7.50 more by the end of the five-year contract. The agreement also includes a provision to increase starting pay for part-time workers - whom the union says are the most at risk of exploitation - from $16.20 per hour to $21 per hour. The average pay for part-timers had been $20.

Teamsters General President Sean M. O'Brien said in a statement that UPS put $30 billion more on the table due to the negotiations, saying the deal "sets a new standard in the labor movement."

The two sides had already tentatively agreed to make Martin Luther King Jr. Day a full holiday and to end forced overtime on drivers' days off. Tentative agreements on safety issues were also reached, including equipping more trucks with air conditioning.

Eliminate

UPS had also agreed to eliminate a lower-paid category of drivers who work shifts that include weekends, and convert them into regular full-time drivers. Under the agreement, the company will create 7,500 full-time jobs and fill 22,500 open positions, allowing more part-timers to transition to full-time.

"Together we reached a win-win-win agreement on the issues that are important to Teamsters leadership, our employees and to UPS and our customers," Carol Tomé, UPS CEO, said in a written statement.

Voting on the new contract begins Aug 3 and concludes Aug 22.

Industry groups, the US Chamber of Commerce, labor leaders and President Joe Biden applauded the deal.

The White House said Biden spoke via phone with Tomé and O'Brien and pointed to their agreement as evidence that collective bargaining works and offered his best wishes for a smooth ratification.

Union members, angered by a contract they say union leadership forced on them five years ago, argued that they have shouldered the more than 140% profit growth at UPS as the pandemic increased delivery demand. Unionized workers said they wanted to right what they saw as a bad contract.

Union leadership was upended two years ago with the election of O'Brien, a vocal critic of union president James Hoffa - son of the famed Teamsters firebrand - who signed off on that contract.

The 24 million packages UPS ships daily amount to about a quarter of all US parcel volume, according to the global shipping and logistics firm Pitney Bowes. According to UPS, that's equivalent to about 6% of the nation's gross domestic product.

During the last breakdown in labor talks a quarter of a century ago, 185,000 UPS workers walked out for 15 days, crippling the company. A walkout this time would have had much further-reaching implications, with millions of Americans now accustomed to online shopping and speedy delivery.

Handle

The consulting firm Anderson Economic Group estimated a 10-day UPS strike could have cost the US economy more than $7 billion and triggered "significant and lasting harm" to the business and workers.

Logistics experts warned that the other US shipping companies do not have the combined capacity to handle all the packages that would come their way during a UPS work stoppage, and that prices of shipping and goods would inevitably increase. Meanwhile, customers who shop online could have faced higher shipping fees and longer waits.

In recent weeks, large and small businesses worked to create contingency plans in the event of a strike.

Joseph Debicella, a small business owner who sells bridesmaids' gifts online, said his company ships roughly 50% of its orders through UPS. He hasn't used FedEx, but he created an account with the company two weeks ago as chatter over a strike picked up. He was also hearing about the negotiations from his UPS driver, who told him his deliveries were getting lighter as the July 31 deadline for a new contract neared.

Macy's CEO Jeff Gennette told The Associated Press that the department store chain was considering its options and that its supply chain team was mapping out what a strike would look like and how it would affect shipping.

If ratified, the deal could prevent major disruption just as retailers are in the throes of the back-to-school shopping season - the second largest sales period behind the winter holidays.

The Retail Industry Leaders Association, a national retail trade group that counts retailers including Best Buy, CVS Health and Kohl's as members, called the tentative pact "an enormous relief to retailers, who have been navigating the possibility of a strike and the associated uncertainty for weeks."

"We're grateful that this challenge, which would have had a price tag in the billions of dollars and a long runway for recovery, was avoided," the group said in a statement.

Software giant's earning beat expectations

Microsoft reports $20.1b Q4 profit as it vows to lead 'new AI platform shift'

NEW YORK, July 26, (AP): Microsoft reported a 20% spike in quarterly profits Tuesday, helping to fuel its battle to get ahead of rivals like Google, Amazon and Facebook parent Meta in selling the latest artificial intelligence technology.

The software giant said its fiscal fourth-quarter profit was $20.1 billion, or $2.69 per share, beating analyst expectations for $2.55 per share.

It posted revenue of $56.2 billion in the April-June period, up 8% from last year. Analysts polled by FactSet Research had been looking for revenue of $55.49 billion.

CEO Satya Nadella said the company remains focused on "leading the new AI platform shift," though its push to add AI features to its existing products - among them cloud computing services, workplace software and its Bing search engine - are not yet making an obvious mark on its financial results.

Microsoft was an early mover in this year's hype around "generative AI" tools that can help people write documents and create new images and other media. It capitalized on its multibillion dollar investments in ChatGPT-maker OpenAI to launch a Bing chatbot and similar tools tailored to its business customers. It said last week that it would start charging $30 per user for business accounts that sign up for its new AI "Copilot" that integrates with existing software such as Word, Excel and email.

"Organizations are asking not only how - but how fast - they can apply this next generation of AI to address the biggest opportunities and challenges they face - safely and responsibly," Nadella said in a prepared statement.

Despite beating Wall Street analyst expectations for profit and revenues, Microsoft's stock dropped slightly in after-hours trading after it released its financial report upon the market's close Tuesday.

Macquarie analyst Sarah Hindlian-Bowler said investors have been focused on Microsoft's early revenue from those artificial intelligence investments, the performance of the Azure cloud computing platform and the likelihood that Microsoft will close its deal to buy video game company Activision Blizzard, which could help boost gaming revenue and drive more users to the Xbox game system and other Microsoft platforms.

More than 18 months after announcing the $69 billion deal, Microsoft is still negotiating with a British antitrust regulator over concerns it will harm competition. The U.S. Federal Trade Commission also opposed the transaction but lost a court fight to stop it.

"We still expect a successful close as the company works toward an amenable solution that satisfies the U.K.'s concerns," Hindlian-Bowler said in an analyst note ahead of Tuesday's earnings.

Quarterly sales were highest in Microsoft's cloud business segment, which the company said grew 15% from the same time last year to $24 billion. Much of that was driven by its flagship Azure platform "and other cloud services revenue," which grew 26%.

Microsoft doesn't reveal the total revenue for its Azure business, though a document inadvertently disclosed during its recent court fight with the FTC showed it as $34 billion last year, Hindlian-Bowler said. Microsoft has declined to comment on that number. It's long been seen as the runner-up to Amazon's dominant cloud platform, Amazon Web Services.

Microsoft's second-biggest business segment - centered on productivity software led by its Office suite of workplace products - grew 10% to $18.3 billion in sales for the April-June quarter.

While AI has captivated the attention of the public and investors, Microsoft is also still heavily reliant on its personal computing business centered around the licensing fees paid by the makers of computers running its Windows software.

Microsoft made $13.9 billion from its personal computing business segment in the quarter, down 4% from the same time last year. While that segment also includes other products, including Xbox games and consoles, it's been the Windows revenue dragging the overall numbers down.

Worldwide shipments of PCs from various manufacturers in the April-June quarter dropped 16.6% from the same time last year, marking the seventh consecutive quarter of year-over-year decline, according to market research group Gartner. However, the market is starting to stabilize and demand could grow again in 2024, Gartner said.

With most of its revenue coming from sales to business clients, Microsoft hasn't been as affected by economic troubles that have hit consumer-focused sectors or advertising-dependent tech rivals like Google and Meta. But Microsoft has still laid off hundreds of workers in recent months, including many around its headquarters in Redmond, Washington, according to notices it sent to government agencies. That's on top of the 10,000 employees, almost 5% of its workforce, that it cut earlier this year.

Gains to fuel investments in AI tech

Google rebounds from unprecedented ad revenue drop to push stock higher

SAN FRANCISCO, July 26, (AP): Google snapped out of an unprecedented advertising slump during its latest quarter, signaling a return to growth cycle needed to fuel investments in artificial intelligence technology that expected to reshape the competitive landscape.

The results for the April-June period released Tuesday by Google's corporate parent, Alphabet Inc., reversed a financial downswing that had raised fears Google was losing its financial steam at the same time advances in artificial intelligence, or AI, threatened to undercut the dominant search engine that powers its digital ad empire.

But after Google's ad revenue suffered year-over-year declines in consecutive quarters for the first time in its history, ad sales rose 3% from a year ago to $58.1 billion during the second quarter. That was better than analysts had been anticipating, according to FactSet Research.

Those gains helped lift Alphabet's total revenue for the period by 7% from last year to $74.6 billion. The company posted a profit of $18.4 billion, or $1.44 per share, a 15% increase from the same time last year. Both those numbers also surpassed the analyst estimates that steer investors.

The Mountain View, California, company also announced that Chief Financial Officer Ruth Porat will take on the newly created role of president and chief investment officer. Alphabet will seek a new CFO to take over a job that Porat, a former investment banker, has handled for the past eight years.

Alphabet's stock price surged nearly 10% in Tuesday's extended trading after the results came out. The shares have climbed nearly 50% so far this year, with much of the gains since Google provided a deeper dive into its AI products and strategy during a May conference. That presentation helped alleviate concerns that Google is being outmaneuvered in a pivotal field of technology by Microsoft, which is backing and deploying some of the breakthroughs made by Open AI and its popular chatbot, ChatGPT.

Innovation

"We are in a period of incredible innovation in search," Alphabet CEO Sundar Pichai said Tuesday during a conference call he conducted from London, where he said he was visiting with the DeepMind division overseeing the company's AI efforts.

The brewing battle for AI supremacy is expected to require billions of dollars in investments in the years to come - money that Alphabet should be able to get from Google's advertising machine, as long as it can continue the steady growth of the past 20 years. But Google has recently been facing more daunting challenges, not only from the ChatGPT-like technology that Microsoft has been embedding in its Bing search engine, but also from Amazon in shopping, and TikTok and Reddit in hot topics.

Insider Intelligence analyst Evelyn Mitchell-Wolf said the past quarter showed Google remains on "the high ground. All it has to do now is keep increasing revenues while executing its carefully-laid plans to lead advertisers and consumers into the AI-powered future without any catastrophes."

After YouTube saw its ad sales fall year-over-over in three straight quarters as TikTok's audience swelled, Google's popular video site also bounced back with a 4% increase in ad revenue from last year. Meanwhile, the Google Cloud division that provides the behind-the-scenes technology for a wide swath of websites posted a 28% increase in revenue from last year. The Cloud division also posted its second consecutive profitable quarter in a development that has pleased investors.

Porat's promotion signaled Alphabet is looking to pare the losses in its long-unprofitable "Other Bets" division that includes self-driving car pioneer Waymo and other far-flung projects working on technology expected to take many years to yield a return. When she takes on her new role as Alphabet's president, Porat will oversee the Other Bets portfolio as part of a commitment to "drive financial discipline and returns for shareholders, while spearheading investment to create sustainable, long-term value," Pichai said in a statement.

Stock transactions made millions for Tottenham owner's cronies

UK billionaire Lewis charged with insider trading in US

NEW YORK, July 26, (AP): British billionaire and Tottenham soccer team owner Joe Lewis has been indicted on charges of slipping confidential stock tips to his romantic partners, private pilots and other pals, US prosecutors said Tuesday.

Lewis exploited his entrée to various corporations to reap lucrative secrets, passed them on to people in his own inner circle and prompted them to trade on the knowledge, prosecutors said. They said the stock transactions made millions of dollars for Lewis and his cronies.

"As we allege, he used insider information as a way to compensate his employees and shower gifts on his friends and lovers," Manhattan-based US attorney Damian Williams said in a Twitter video announcing the insider trading case. "It's cheating, and it's against the law."

David M. Zornow, an attorney for Lewis, said his client had come to the US "to answer these ill-conceived charges" and would fight them vigorously.

"The government has made an egregious error in judgment in charging Mr Lewis, an 86-year-old man of impeccable integrity and prodigious accomplishment," Zornow said in a statement. The charges include securities fraud and conspiracy.

With a fortune that Forbes estimates at $6.1 billion, Lewis has investments that span from real estate to biotechnology, energy to agriculture - and, of course, sports. He bought Tottenham, one of England's most storied soccer clubs, in 2001.

Stakes

Lewis' Tavistock Group has stakes in more than 200 companies around the world, according to its website, and his art collection boasts works by Picasso, Matisse, Degas and more. His business connections include Tiger Woods, Ernie Els and Justin Timberlake, with whom he built a Bahamian oceanside resort that opened in 2010.

According to the indictment, Lewis' investments in various companies gave him control of board seats, where he placed associates who let him know what they learned behind the scenes. Prosecutors say Lewis improperly doled out that confidential information between 2019 and 2021 to his chosen recipients and urged them to profit on it.

At one point, according to the indictment, he even loaned his two private pilots $500,000 apiece to buy stock in a cancer-drug company that he knew had gotten - but not yet publicly disclosed - encouraging results from a clinical trial.

"Boss is helping us out and told us to get ASAP," the pilot texted when advising a friend to buy the stock, too, according to the filing. In later texts telling the friend about the loan, the pilot reasoned that "the Boss has inside info" and "knows the outcome."

Junior doctors and members of the British Medical Association (BMA) stand on the picket line outside Leeds General Infirmary at the start a five-day strike amid the continuing dispute over pay, the longest walkout of its kind in the history of the NHS, in Leeds, England, on July 13. (AP)

doctors in England escalate pay dispute

Tens of thousands of doctors in Britain's state-funded health service will go on strike for a further four days in August as their pay dispute with the government shows few, if any, signs of resolution, their union said Wednesday.

Fresh from a five-day walkout that was described as the longest in the history of the National Health Service, doctors at the early stages of their careers will stage a walkout in England between Aug. 11 and Aug. 15.

"It should never have got to the point where we needed to announce a fifth round of strike action," said Dr. Robert Laurenson and Dr. Vivek Trivedi, co-chairs of the British Medical Association's junior doctors' committee.

"Our message today remains the same: act like a responsible government, come to the table to negotiate with us in good faith, and with a credible offer these strikes need not go ahead at all," they added.

The approximately 75,000 so-called junior doctors are asking for a 35% pay bump to get pay back to 2008 levels once inflation is taken into account. But the government is only offering them 6% with an additional consolidated increase, and Prime Minister Rishi Sunak has insisted there will be no more discussions.

Like other nations in Europe, the United Kingdom has faced disruptive strikes as workers, from teachers to train drivers and nurses, have pressed for pay that keeps pace with a sharp increase in consumer prices. (AP)

The Conversation

'Can cultured meat be cost-efficient and brought to scale?'

Lab-grown meat techniques need further refinement

By André O. Hudson
Rochester Institute of Technology

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

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You might be old enough to remember the famous "Where's the Beef?" Wendy's commercials. This question may be asked in a different context since US regulators approved the sale of lab-grown chicken meat made from cultivated cells in June 2023.

Growing animal cells in the lab isn't new. Scientists have been culturing animal cells in artificial environments since the 1950s, initially focusing on studying developmental biology and cancer. This technique remains one of the major tools in life science research, especially for drug development.

What are cell cultures?

Cell cultures are typically grown using either natural or artificial growth media. Natural media comprise naturally-derived biological fluids, whereas artificial media comprise both organic and inorganic nutrients and compounds. Both contain the necessary ingredients to foster the growth and development of cells. These ingredients typically contain nutrients such as vitamins, carbohydrates, amino acids and other molecules that provide the fuel for cells to grow and multiply.

Researchers use cells grown using tissue culture to answer a variety of experimental questions. As a biochemist, I use plant tissue culture techniques in my courses and research program. Researchers can add viruses, bacteria, fungi, hormones, vitamins and other pathogens or compounds to cells grown in culture to observe how different factors affect the cells' behavior or function, especially as it relates to which genes are turned on or off in the cell and which proteins respond to those pathogens or compounds.

In drug development, growing cells in culture is usually the first step before potential drug candidates can be tested in animals.

How is lab-grown meat made?

Researchers use similar techniques to grow meat in the lab. The process can generally be broken down into three major steps.

The first step involves removing a small number of cells – typically muscle or stem cells – from an animal during a harmless and painless procedure. Stem cells are cells from an organism that are not specialized and can be manipulated in the lab to turn into the many different types of cells of that organism.

The next step is culturing the cells. The cells are placed in an artificial environment favorable to their growth. Because of the large amount of cells that have to be grown to produce meat, the cells are incubated in a bioreactor – a steel tank that provides controlled temperature, humidity, pressure and sterile conditions – with the appropriate medium to facilitate growth. The growth media are changed a number of times to encourage the cells to differentiate and multiply into the three major components of meat: muscle, fat and connective tissue.

In last step of the process, known as scaffolding, the cells are organized and packed tightly together to create the desired size, shape and cut of meat for consumption.

Pros and cons of cultured meat

There are pros and cons to growing meat through cell culture techniques. While cultured meat may produce relatively less greenhouse gas than conventional livestock production in certain conditions, researchers need to refine the process before it can be cost-efficient and brought to scale.

A 2021 analysis estimated that lab-grown meat will cost US$17 to $23 per pound to produce, and that does not include grocery store markups. In comparison, conventionally grown ground beef typically costs a little under $5 per pound.

A 2021 McKinsey report estimates that it will take approximately 220 million to 440 million liters of bioreactor capacity to meet 1% of current protein market share, but current bioreactor capacity tops out at 200 million liters. There are also concerns about the biological limitations of growing large numbers of various cell types in the same bioreactor.

Lab-grown meat may improve animal welfare and be less likely to carry disease or cause food-borne illnesses. However, consumers may also perceive lab-grown meat to be unnatural or have concerns about its taste.

Companies are likely paying attention and adapting to the public's response. To put things in perspective, the first lab-grown burger cost $330,000 to create in 2013. The price has fallen to just under $10 per burger today, which is remarkable progress in just a decade. (AP)

'Revolutionary point-of-care lab testing platform'

VitalOne allows docs to test and treat patients in the course of a single visit

TORONTO, July 26: Diagnostics are about to change radically and forever. In front of thousands of global leaders in lab medicine at the 2023 American Association of Clinical Chemistry (AACC) Annual Scientific Meeting & Clinical Lab Expo, Vital Biosciences introduced its revolutionary new product, the VitalOne. The VitalOne intends to make blood diagnostics ubiquitous by bringing more than 50 lab-grade test results that cover 95% of routine lab orders to primary care sites in the form of a simple device the size of a desktop computer. The VitalOne will allow doctors to test, diagnose, and treat patients in the course of a single visit. Patients receive their results within 20 minutes. The VitalOne is in late-stage development and is not yet available for sale. The underlying technology already has been tested and validated against thousands of samples versus gold-standard instruments with Vital's lab partners.

Vital executives on Monday presented to an audience of thousands of lab experts at the annual meeting of the AACC and were selected as Audience Choice winners for this year's AACC Disruptive Technology Award.

In addition to sharing news about the VitalOne, Vital announced that they have raised $48 million to date from Lachy Groom, Northpond Ventures, Sam Altman, Marc Benioff, Labcorp, Inovia Capital, Route 66 Ventures, and others.

Activities

Funding will be directed toward late-stage development, verification and validation activities, and initiating clinical studies.

Vital is reimagining point-of-care testing through its development of the VitalOne to create a world where patients will not need to take additional time off from work, travel between their primary care doctor and a lab, or wait for days to discuss their results with their healthcare provider. Closing this gap will make diagnostics more accessible and accelerate clinical interventions that prevent adverse outcomes and disease progression.

The VitalOne is currently in late-stage product development, with further clinical studies planned for later this year.

"We started Vital to make high-quality care more accessible to millions of people and realized how limited we were by our current diagnostic infrastructure," according to Vasu Nadella, CEO and Co-Founder of Vital Biosciences. "We seek to disrupt the $85 billion diagnostics industry by bringing lab-grade diagnostics everywhere and eliminating the impediments to proactive and accessible care."

Routine lab testing has been part of clinical guidelines for decades. Today, 70% of medical decisions depend on laboratory test results. Yet up to 30% of electronic lab orders go unfilled. For example, as many as 20% of U.S. adults with diabetes do not know they have it, and 80% of individuals with prediabetes are unaware of their condition. Preventing the progression of chronic diseases such as hyperlipidemia, type 2 diabetes, or congestive heart failure is through early detection and intervention. The current process for testing, diagnosis, and treatment is simply not accessible to all patients.

"We live in a world where you can order a pizza and have it delivered in 20 minutes but your lab results take days. That's not okay," according to Mounir Koussa, Co-Founder and VP of Research and Development at Vital. "We want to ensure that diagnostics are available wherever and whenever they are needed, and that testing never becomes an impediment to treatment and care."

Vital is currently exploring relationships with industry, academia, and the laboratory medicine community for further performance evaluations and feedback.

"We are committed to introducing this disruptive technology in partnership with the laboratory medicine community and the FDA," added Koussa.

The VitalOne will be a fully automated platform that will bring a comprehensive suite of lab tests to all sites where primary care is accessed, including clinics, pharmacies, in-home care, and more. Vital's technology aims to make healthcare radically more personalized, proactive, and accessible. With as little as 600 uL (1/8th of the volume of a teaspoon of blood), the VitalOne is being developed to quantify more than 50 of the most commonly requisitioned test results in primary care in just 20 minutes; all with performance comparable to central labs.

'More precise diagnostics'

Lunit 'accelerates' expansion across ME by bringing AI solution to Al Habib Group

SEOUL, South Korea, July 26: Lunit (KRX:328130.KQ), a leading provider of AI-powered solutions for cancer diagnostics and therapeutics, continues its rapid expansion across the Middle East with a new supply contract. Following its recent collaboration with Seha Virtual Hospital earlier this month, Lunit today announced the signing of a commercial contract with Cloud Solutions, a subsidiary of Dr. Sulaiman Al Habib Medical Group (HMG), Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Under the agreement, Lunit will supply its AI solution for mammography analysis, Lunit INSIGHT MMG, to Dr. Sulaiman Al Habib Medical Group for the next three years. HMG intends to integrate Lunit INSIGHT MMG into the diagnosis systems of medical institutions across the Middle East, analyzing hundreds of thousands of mammography images annually.

In addition to the supply contract, Lunit and Cloud Solutions will collaborate to enhance Lunit's AI-powered solutions based on Cloud Solution's cutting-edge cloud AI platform. This collaboration aims to further optimize Lunit's offerings and provide an even more advanced and seamless experience for the Kingdom.

The agreement between Lunit and Cloud Solutions is set to deliver high-quality medical services to patients across the Kingdom, addressing pressing challenges such as doctor shortages or medically underserved populations. Furthermore, this partnership will contribute to the Kingdom's national cancer screening program, building on the success and impact of Lunit's collaboration with Seha Virtual Hospital.

Jaemin Oh (center), VP of Business Development at Lunit, signs the contract with Abdulelah Al Mayman (right), CEO of Cloud Solutions, Dr. Sulaiman Al-Habib Medical Group, at the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

To further innovate breast screening for patients in Saudi Arabia, Lunit also plans to introduce Lunit INSIGHT DBT, an AI-powered 3D Breast Tomosynthesis analysis solution, to HMG later this year. The advanced capabilities of Lunit INSIGHT DBT will provide more precise diagnostics compared to traditional 2D breast imaging, contributing to early detection and improved treatment outcomes.

Dr. Sulaiman Al Habib Medical Group is the largest provider of comprehensive healthcare services in the Middle East, with 20 medical sites spread across Saudi Arabia, UAE, and Bahrain.

"We are thrilled to announce our partnership with Lunit, marking the first AI-based healthcare service available in Saudi Arabia," said Dr. Fatina Al Tahan, Senior Consultant at Dr. Sulaiman Al Habib Medical Group. "Breast cancer represents the most common cancer in the Saudi Arabia population in general. With Lunit's AI solution, we expect significant innovation in healthcare services and improved patient outcomes with early detection of breast cancer."

Stars give fiery speeches, show solidarity with Hollywood strike

Cranston, Chastain join star-studded rally in Times Square

NEW YORK, July 26, (AP): SAG-AFTRA held its largest and most star-studded rally yet Tuesday in Times Square in a picket sign-waving show of solidarity 12 days into the actors strike.

A day after a Variety report questioned the lack of A-listers that have hit picket lines thus far, the rally Tuesday boasted more star wattage than perhaps any single strike action yet. Among those joining throngs of demonstrators were Jessica Chastain, Bryan Cranston, Brendan Fraser, Ellen Burstyn, Wendell Pierce, Steve Buscemi, Rachel Zegler, Michael Shannon, Jane Curtin, Christian Slater and Chloe Grace Moretz.

Taking up a full city block, actors and representatives from the actors union took turns giving fiery speeches on a stage in the heart of Times Square while tourists gawked and passing trucks honked in support. At times, the actors took aim at the corporate lights and billboards around them, including the Walt Disney-owned ESPN and ABC studios that sat alongside the rally.

"We've got a message to Mr. Iger," said Cranston, directing his comments at Disney CEO Bob Iger. "I know, sir, that you look through things from a different lens. We don't expect you to understand who we are but we ask you to hear us, and beyond that, to listen to us when we tell you we will not be having our jobs taken away and given to robots. We will not have you take away our right to work and earn a decent living."

The rally took place a stone's throw from Broadway theaters and, given the talent involved, featured a higher degree of show business than your usual labor rally. "Avatar" actor Stephen Lang quoted Frederick Douglass. Wendell Pierce recited Samuel Beckett. Tituss Burgess didn't speak; he sang Stephen Sondheim.

Arian Moayed, who played the investor Stewy Hosseini in "Succession," compared the characters of the HBO series to the studio executives the actors are negotiating with.

"It's like these people haven't seen (expletive) 'Succession,'" Moayed exclaimed. "It's about you!"

Christine Baranski of "The Good Wife" and "The Good Fight" likewise drew from her own credits.

"We will not live under corporate feudalism. It is time, it is just simply time to make things right. Our contribution will not be undervalued, and we will not be robbed," said Baranski before concluding: "Let's fight the good fight!"

Streaming

Earlier this month, actors joined striking screenwriters who walked out in May. It's the first time both unions have been on strike at the same time since 1960. The stoppage has shuttered nearly all film and television production. Actors say the streaming revolution has altered pay in entertainment, stripping them of residuals and remaking working conditions. They are also seeking guardrails against the use of artificial intelligence, along with increases to the union's health care and pension programs.

"Our industry has changed exponentially," said Cranston. "We are not in the same business model that we were in even 10 years ago. And yet, even though they admit that that's the truth in today's economy, they are fighting us tooth and nail to stick to the same economic system that is outmoded, outdated. They want us to step back in time."

The Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers, which is negotiating on behalf of studios, has said it presented actors with a generous deal that included the biggest bump in minimum pay in 35 years among other benefits. Since talks broke off and Screen Actors Guild-American Federation of Television and Radio Artists commenced the strike, the sides have not negotiated and no talks are scheduled.

"We may be on strike but I said to them on July 12 we are ready to continue talking tomorrow and every day after until we reach a deal," said Duncan Crabtree-Ireland, chief negotiator for SAG-AFTRA. "And I've said that every day since to the media, to them, to anyone who would listen. SAG-AFTRA is ready, willing and able to return to the bargaining table.

"The only reason we aren't there now is because those companies said that they didn't want to deal with people who were uncivilized and because those companies said they wouldn't be ready to talk for quite some time," added Crabtree-Ireland.

Features

Variety

This image released by Netflix shows Michael Fassbender in a scene from 'The Killer.' (AP)

Film

Films by Pine, Kendrick to premiere at Toronto fest

Venice unveils A-list lineup amid strikes

NEW YORK, July 26, (AP): Bradley Cooper's Leonard Bernstein drama "Maestro," Sofia Coppola's Priscilla Presley movie, Michael Mann's "Ferrari," David Fincher's "The Killer" and Ava DuVernay's "Origin" will make their world debuts at the Venice International Film Festival this fall.

Organizers announced the lineup Tuesday for the 80th edition of the festival, which - despite the flashy names behind the films - could have a little less Hollywood glamour than usual gracing its picturesque docks and red carpet come September if the Hollywood actors and writers strikes stretch on. As part of the strike, actors cannot promote projects from the studios and streamers with whom the union is negotiating.

The prestigious film festival already lost one high-profile premiere to the labor disputes in the US in Luca Guadagnino's tennis drama "Challengers, " starring Zendaya, which had been set to play in the opening night slot but has now been pushed to 2024. But Alberto Barbera, the director of the Venice Film Festival, said Tuesday that the strikes' effects on the festival lineup had otherwise been minimal.

"Priscilla," an A24 film based on Priscilla Presley's memoir "Elvis and Me," stars Cailee Spaeny and Jacob Elordi and was widely expected to be in the festival. Coppola also launched "Somewhere" in Venice in 2010. "Priscilla" will be competing for the Golden Lion alongside "Ferrari," the buzzy racing drama starring Adam Driver as Enzo Ferrari, and Penélope Cruz as his wife Laura, based on Brock Yates' biography.

Yorgos Lanthimos' highly anticipated "Poor Things," with Emma Stone and Mark Ruffalo, will also have its bow on the Lido. Lanthimos previously launched "The Favourite" at Venice in 2018; it would go on to score 10 Oscar nominations and win one.

DuVernay's film, "Origin," meanwhile, is based on the book "Caste" and the life of its author, Pulitzer winner Isabel Wilkerson. The movie stars Aunjanue Ellis-Taylor.

Netflix will once again have a big presence at the festival with "Maestro," directed by and starring Cooper as the legendary composer, opposite Carey Mulligan as Felicia Montealegre, and Fincher's "The Killer," with Michael Fassbender playing an assassin. The streamer is also bringing Pablo Larraín's "El Conde," a dark comedy in which Augusto Pinochet is a vampire, as part of the competition titles.

Another high-profile competition title is Michel Franco's "Memory," with Jessica Chastain and Peter Skarsgaard, as is "Drive My Car" director Ryûsuke Hamaguchi's "Evil Does Not Exist."

Venice has never been a festival to shy away from controversial directors and has programmed new films from both Roman Polanski and Woody Allen.

Polanski is back for the first time since 2019 with "The Palace," about a New Year's Eve in 1999 in a Swiss hotel, with John Cleese and Mickey Rourke. Allen is debuting his first French movie, "Coup de Chance." Luc Besson, who was recently cleared of charges in a rape case, will also be on the Lido with "Dogman," starring Caleb Landry Jones.

Competition

The jury presiding over the main competition this year is full of high-profile directors, including Damien Chazelle, Jane Campion, Martin McDonagh and last year's Golden Lion winner Laura Poitras.

In addition to the Polanski and Allen films, also playing out of competition are Wes Anderson's Roald Dahl-inspired "The Wonderful Story of Henry Sugar" with Benedict Cumberbatch, Dev Patel and Ralph Fiennes; Harmony Korine's "Aggro Dr1ft"; Richard Linklater's "Hit Man"; Frederick Wiseman's "Menus Plaisirs - Les Troisgros"; and William Friedkin's "The Caine Mutiny Court-Marshall."

Venice is a top launching ground for awards hopefuls and has, in recent years, debuted Oscar-nominated films like "The Whale," "The Banshees of Inisherin," "Tár," "The Power of the Dog," "A Star is Born" and "La La Land." It's also the first major stop of the busy fall film festival season, with Toronto, Telluride and the New York Film Festivals close behind.

Like the Cannes Film Festival, celebrity is a huge part of the Venice iconography: Think of Lady Gaga perched on the side of a water taxi in her black Jonathan Simkhai bustier dress, or Timothée Chalamet vamping in that backless red halter top by Haider Ackermann. Last year there were also viral moments aplenty thanks to the cast of "Don't Worry Darling" and the alleged "spit-gate," in which internet spectators wondered if Harry Styles had spit on his co-star Chris Pine at the film's premiere.

It remains unclear whether any Hollywood talent will be able to make the journey this year. Barbera said at this point that some actors and actresses will not be able to attend but, without getting specific, said that talent from independent fare will be able to grace the red carpets and press conferences.

The Venice Film Festival runs from Aug. 30 through Sept. 9.

Also:

NEW YORK: The Toronto International Film Festival unveiled a starry lineup to its 48th edition on Monday, even if remains unclear if stars will be there to walk red carpets due to the ongoing actors and writers strikes.

Among the films making their world premieres at TIFF this year are **Craig Gillespie**'s GameStop drama "Dumb Money," with **Paul Dano** and **Pete Davidson**; **Ellen Kuras**' "Lee," starring Kate Winslet at war photographer **Lee Miller** and **Tony Goldwyn**'s Ezra," with **Robert De Niro** and **Rose Byrne**.

Also headed to **Toronto** are **Michael Keaton**'s "Knox Goes Away," starring **Al Pacino** and **James Marsden**; **Kristen Scott Thomas**' "North Star," featuring **Scarlett Johansson** and **Sienna Miller**; **David Yates**' Netflix drama "Pain Hustlers," starring **Emily Blunt** and **Chris Evans**; and **Maggie Betts**' "The Burial," with **Jamie Foxx** and **Tommy Lee Jones**.

Those films, and many more including directorial debuts by **Anna Kendrick** ("Woman of the Hour") and **Chris Pine** ("Poolman"), will make up some of the gala premieres at TIFF, the largest film festival in **North America**.

The festival is a key platform for **Hollywood** to debut its fall fare and awards hopefuls. But like the Venice Film Festival, which begins about a week before TIFF launches on Sept. 7, Toronto organizers are anxiously following the SAG-AFTRA and WGA strikes.

ARAB TIMES
THURSDAY, JULY 27, 2023

LOS ANGELES: **Pete Davidson** has entered a diversion program to resolve a reckless driving charge for crashing into a **Beverly Hills** home and will perform 50 hours community service, authorities said Tuesday.

The 29-year-old "Saturday Night Live" and "King of Staten Island" actor and comedian will likely do his community service with the **New York** Fire Department, where his late father worked, Los Angeles County prosecutors said.

Davidson was 7 years old when his father, **Scott**, a New York firefighter, died responding to the 9/11 attacks.

Davidson pleaded not guilty to the misdemeanor and was put in an 18-month diversion that also includes 12 hours of traffic school, an order to obey all laws and restitution that was not specified.

When Davidson was charged on June 16, prosecutors called the March 4 crash a "serious collision." No one was reported injured.

Davidson's latest show, "Bupkis," debuted on Peacock in May, and he stars in the forthcoming film " Dumb Money." (AP)

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LOS ANGELES: A **California** appeals court on Wednesday will consider reviving the dismissed lawsuits of two men who allege **Michael Jackson** sexually abused them as children for years, a move the court appears likely to make after a tentative decision that would order the cases back to a lower court for trial.

The suits were filed after Jackson's 2009 death by **Wade Robson** in 2013 and **James Safechuck** the following year. The two men became more widely known for telling their stories in the 2019 HBO documentary, " Leaving Neverland."

Both sued MJJ Productions Inc. and MJJ Ventures Inc, two corporations for which Jackson was the sole owner and lone shareholder.

In 2021, Superior Court Judge **Mark A. Young** ruled that the two corporations and their employees had no legal duty to protect Robson and Safechuck from Jackson and threw out the suits. But in a tentative decision last month, California's 2nd District Court of Appeal reversed that judge and ordered the cases back to trial.

Lawyers for the Jackson estate on Wednesday will try to convince the appeals court to reverse course.

Jackson

Davidson

The lawsuits have already bounced back from a 2017 dismissal, when Young threw them out for being beyond the statute of limitations. A new California law that temporarily broadened the scope of sexual abuse cases led the appeals court to restore them. Jackson's personal estate - the assets he left after his death - was thrown out as a defendant in 2015.

Robson, now a 40-year-old choreographer, met Jackson when he was 5 years old. He went on to appear in Jackson music videos and record music on his label.

His lawsuit alleged that Jackson molested him over a seven-year period. It says that he was Jackson's employee, and the employees of two corporations had a duty to protect him the same way the Boy Scouts or a school would need to protect children from their leaders.

Safechuck, now 45, said in his suit that he met Jackson while filming a Pepsi commercial when he was 9. (AP)

People & Places

Music

Group sings the blues

Kenney's album hits right emotional note

Madeline Kenney, **"A New Reality Mind"** (Carpark Records)

Madeline Kenney's new album "A New Reality Mind" is a neatly woven ethereal treatise on rebuilding after a relationship collapse.

The Oakland-based singer-songwriter fused her thoughts and music together during the pandemic, sorting through it all in a basement she once shared with her partner. The result is a lush, sonic exploration that would not be out of place on a playlist heavy with Cocteau Twins.

Early tracks like "Plain Boring Disaster" and "Superficial Conversation" offer melodies that meander and flow as if conceived underwater. They deal with innocent missteps and the personal ability to move past them.

Kenney

Kenney hits her best stride on "It Carries On," a gorgeous song about working through personal pain. Musician Jeff Kolhede plays a nice featured saxophone section on this deftly mixed track.

Sudden solitude following a breakup clearly moved Kenney to explore her raw emotions through art and sound. Choosing to create and not wallow is the precise kind of process that can deliver good music in the right hands.

"A New Reality Mind" feels sincere and personal and hits the right emotional mark. Kudos to Kenney for her passion and vulnerability.

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"Everything Is Alive," Darlingside (Thirty Tigers)

Even the percussion is pretty.

Darlingside's "Everything Is Alive" achieves a melancholy-inducing beauty from the sum of its parts. That includes the quartet's vocals, whether individually or in harmony, and arresting arrangements with chiffon textures that make a kick drum sound tender.

There's variety thanks to the Boston-based band's democratic approach - lead vocals are shared by all four members, as are writing credits. Don Mitchell evokes fire and rain contemplating mortality on "Darkening Hour," and Auyon Mukharji's tenor shines atop baroque strings on "Down Here," which has the subtle sway of a courtly Sarabande. Harris Paseltiner offers "Green Light" as an Irish blessing paired with an intricate melody, while David Senft somehow creates an ethereal mood on "All the Lights in The City" even as he sings of boustrophedon.

Keep the dictionary handy: There are also lofty lyrics about a Robitussin dream and cerulean embrace, which perhaps is to be expected with a band from a college town. Recurring themes of loss and darkness, however, are plain enough.

"Lose the keys, the marbles, lose a parent, lose the count, lose the plot," Mitchell laments on "Lose the Keys."

Darlingside sings the blues with a lovely, inviting intimacy. These are songs made for bedroom headphones - good ones, not the cheap kind. "Everything Is Alive" is worth the investment.

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"In the End it Always Does" by The Japanese House (Dirty Hit)

More than four years have passed since the first studio release by Amber Bain, known professionally as The Japanese House. Her second album, "In the End it Always Does," was conceived in a burst of creativity after the disintegration of a relationship. The result is a sweetly melancholic chronicle of a cycle of falling in and out of love, and a celebration of the dog who got her through it.

The album slides smoothly between dreampop, '70s-infused folk rock and a half dozen other genres to fit comfortably into an emergent London sound alongside artists such as Arlo Parks and Etta Marcus. Bain produces and writes or co-writes all of the songs, and plays nearly all of the instruments, including bass, guitar, keyboard, piano and percussion.

George Daniel of The 1975 and Chloe Kraemer share production credit. The 1975's Matty Healy adds production, vocals and guitars on some tracks, and Muna's Katie Gavin sings on one. But this album is largely the product of Bain's singular talent and vision, and she establishes coherent musical and emotional themes that run its full length.

The opening track, "Spot Dog," sets the rules on Bain's terms, blending analog instruments with intermittently heavy production and distortion. As in many of the songs, it is slow to resolve, starting with jazzy piano noodling, and adding in other instrumentals that search for and usually find their melodies.

"Sad to Breathe" highlights the extent of her toolkit. It starts soft and simple but confidently layers rhythms and complex instrumentation under the chorus, "it's sad to breathe the air when you're not there." Throughout the album, lyrics are consistently simple, devastating and relatable. On the following track, "Over There," she sings "She stops by/ From time to time/ She keeps her coat on."

"Sunshine Baby" is a lovely bit of summertime sadness with bright instrumentals and wistful delivery. She sings, "I don't know what's right anymore/I don't wanna fight anymore," but finds her grounding, "Sitting by the seafront/Lying with my sunshine baby." (Sunshine is her nickname for her dog.)

Also:

BAYREUTH, Germany: The Bayreuth Festival intends to present "Rienzi" for the first time in 2026 for its 150th anniversary, going outside the canon of **Richard Wagner**'s final 10 operas for the first time.

Wagner's family still runs the festival in Bayreuth Germany, and until now has limited it to only what are considered his mature works.

Katharina Wagner, a great-granddaughter who directs the festival, announced future plans during a Zoom news conference on Monday, a day before this year's schedule opens.

"Rienzi" will be staged along with the 10 other operas in 2026. "Rienzi," Wagner's third completed opera, opened in 1842 and is based on the 14th century Italian politician **Cola di Rienzo**.

Wagner said the 2024 festival will feature a new staging of "Tristan und Isolde" directed by **Thorleifur Örn Arnarsson**, conducted by **Semyon Bychkov** and starring **Andreas Schager** and **Camilla Nylund**.

The 2025 festival will have a new production of "Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg (The Mastersingers of Nuremberg)" directed by **Matthias Davids**, conducted by **Daniele Gatti** conducting and starring **Georg Zeppenfeld** and **Michael Spyres**. (AP)

Scott Hoying, of Pentatonix, performs at The Forum in Inglewood, Calif., on May 16, 2019. Hoying's debut album 'Parallel,' releases on Friday. (AP)

Actors Christopher Lloyd, (from left), Lea Thompson and Michael J. Fox attend the 'Back to the Future: The Musical' Broadway opening at the Winter Garden Theatre on Tuesday, July 25, in New York. (AP)

Nassetta

Cole

Variety

MOSCOW: The Russian prosecutor-general's office on Tuesday declared independent TV channel Dozhd to be an undesirable organization, continuing the country's wide crackdown on news media and groups regarded as threats to **Russia**'s security.

The designation outlaws Dozhd from operating in Russia and exposes its journalists, staff and donors to potential criminal charges.

Dozhd, which is often critical of the **Kremlin**, closed its operations in Russia soon after the beginning of the **Ukraine** conflict, moving first to **Latvia** and then to the **Netherlands**. The prosecutor-general's office said Dozhd had spread extremist material and discredited authorities.

The channel frequently offended authorities with its coverage of Russia's political opposition and criticism of the Kremlin. It was removed from Russian cable TV systems in 2014 after conducting a controversial poll of whether viewers thought the Soviet Union should have surrendered in the World War II siege of Leningrad in order to save civilian lives.

It then transmitted programs on a subscription internet site and through YouTube. (AP)

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BILLINGS, Mont.: A musician who performs with **Lyle Lovett** and His Large Band found a noose on a light pole over the weekend, prompting police in Montana's largest city to investigate the case as a possible hate crime.

Charles Rose, who plays trombone, says he saw the noose on a light pole a few feet from the band's tour bus in Billings when he went out to get something from the bus on Sunday morning. Lovett and his band performed at an outdoor concert in downtown Billings on Sunday evening.

"I don't recall seeing it when we first arrived this morning," Rose wrote on his Facebook page Sunday, where he shared an image of the noose. "Scary. Needless to say I took it down."

Rose later made a report to police. He did not immediately respond to a Facebook message from The Associated Press seeking comment on Tuesday.

Billings Mayor **Bill Cole** addressed the issue at a city council meeting on Monday night. (AP)

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CULLMAN, Ala.: Police in Alabama said Monday they're closing in on suspects who beat a young man at a music festival, sending him to the hospital with severe injuries.

Reid Watts was injured by several men during a Saturday night assault at the Rock the South country music festival in Cullman.

One witness, **Katie Faye Hudgins**, told WVUA-TV that a group of people standing near her and Watts accused them of spilling drinks.

Hudgins, who said she is Watts' girlfriend, said some of those people eventually attacked Watts.

Kaci Howard, Watts' mother, appealed on Facebook for help finding the assailants, saying her son suffered "a fractured nose, concussion, stitches, knots the size of softballs on the back of his head."

Cullman Police Chief **David Nassetta** told The Cullman Times on Monday that investigators are narrowing down their investigation and are only seeking eyewitness accounts or video of the beating. Video shared separately on Facebook shows multiple people beating the victim as he lay defenseless on the ground. (AP)

Music

Singer sings from the heart in 'Parallel'

Hoying celebrates love in solo debut

LOS ANGELES, July 26, (AP): During a two-month break in the a cappella group Pentatonix's world tour, baritone Scott Hoying became a newlywed. He also went out on his own, with his most personal music to date.

The 31-year-old Grammy winner sings from the heart about falling in love and losing his best four-legged friend in his seven-track solo debut "Parallel," which is out Friday.

Other members of Pentatonix have released solo albums before, and going at it alone is something Hoying has thought about for many years, but with much hesitation. Still, the process of finally doing it has been therapeutic. It's given Hoying an opportunity to fortify his creativity and build confidence.

"I have always been a little bit scared to be vulnerable and kind of put myself out there as a solo act," Hoying told The Associated Press. "And I feel like this timing is just so perfect because I'm entering this very beautiful era of my life, like producing and making music and being more motivated than ever. And then I'm in love ... and I've just had a lot of personal growth over the past couple of years.

"It's just like this really big new chapter that's starting. And it feels kismet and amazing."

The COVID-19 pandemic was an underlying reason for the project. Because Pentatonix couldn't record together due to social distancing, the five-member a cappella group laid down tracks separately, having learned how to use digital audio technology. Once Hoying became comfortable with the process, he was captivated by it. He constantly watched tutorials on YouTube and it led to a flurry of personal songwriting.

The pandemic process "was super energizing and inspiring, and I ended up writing hundreds of songs," Hoying said.

Produced by Jon Levine, four of the seven songs are about love, including the title track "Parallel," which was released as a single in June.

Personal

"Parallel" is about Hoying's relationship with his husband, Mark, their shared qualities and being in sync with one another. It recalls a time when the couple was supposed to attend an event but ended up laying side by side on the floor of the kitchen talking long into the night. Hoying directed the song's video, filmed in Iceland after Pentatonix had performed the last show on its European Tour there in June.

Mark Hoying appears in the videos for "Parallel" and "Mars," a single released last September.

Scott Hoying also pays tribute to his dog that passed away in "Bubs." There's also "King Kong," about personal growth and finding confidence, and "Trust Fall," which "is about diving into the scary, unknown parts of life. It's only scary because we don't know what's to come, but exciting. More like a nervous butterfly," he said.

And just like that, Hoying will be back on tour with Pentatonix when it starts a North American leg of their tour in August.

The group has been together since 2011. It began with Hoying, tenor Mitch Grassi and mezzo-soprano Kirstin Maldonado as high school classmates in Arlington, Texas. They added bass Avi Kaplan and beatboxer Kevin Olusola prior to competing - and winning - on the television competition program, "The Sing-Off." Kaplan left Pentatonix in 2017 and was replaced that year by Matt Sallee.

The group's popularity is as strong as ever. Pentatonix sang the national anthem at college football's national championship game in January and was honored with a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame in February.

"I think with any genre of music, if it's bringing emotion and bringing joy to people, it's going to stick around," Hoying said. "And so, I think that if we keep pushing the limits of a cappella, and if we keep doing interesting things that makes people feel, I think that we can do it for a long time."

Hoying and Grassi formed the group "Superfruit" several years ago for a comedy YouTube channel. The pair produced a couple of albums, including the popular upbeat song "GUY.EXE."

Hoying currently is working with others to develop "The Life of Death," a musical about the Grim Reaper and his daughter. Hoying says is right up his creative alley.

Actors Annette Bening, (from left), Jason Butler Harner, Sarah Paulson and Elizabeth Reaser appear on a picket line outside Netflix studios on Tuesday, July 25, in Los Angeles. The actors strike comes more than two months after screenwriters began striking in their bid to get better pay and working conditions. (AP) **– Details Page 11**

Climate

Warming blamed

Cases of 'tick-borne' illnesses on the rise

NEW YORK, July 26, (AP): In 2022, doctors recorded the first confirmed case of tick-borne encephalitis virus acquired in the United Kingdom.

It began with a bike ride.

A 50-year-old man was mountain biking in the North Yorkshire Moors, a national park in England known for its vast expanses of woodland and purple heather. At some point on his ride, at least one black-legged tick burrowed into his skin. Five days later, the mountain biker developed symptoms commonly associated with a viral infection - fatigue, muscle pain, fever.

At first, he seemed to be on the mend, but about a week later, he started to lose coordination. An MRI scan revealed he had developed encephalitis, or swelling of the brain. He had been infected with tick-borne encephalitis, or TBE, a potentially deadly disease that experts say is spreading into new regions due in large part to global warming.

Földvári

For the past 30 years, the UK has become roughly 1 degree Celsius warmer (1.8 degrees Fahrenheit) on average compared to the historical norm. Studies have shown that several tick-borne illnesses are becoming more prevalent because of climate change. Public health officials are particularly concerned about TBE, which is deadlier than more well-known tick diseases such as Lyme, due to the way it has quickly jumped from country to country.

Gábor Földvári, an expert at the Center for Ecological Research in Hungary, said the effects of climate change on TBE are unmistakable.

"It's a really common problem which was absent 20 or 30 years ago," he added.

Ticks can't survive more than a couple of days in temperatures below zero, but they're able to persevere in very warm conditions as long as there's enough humidity in the environment. As Earth warms on average and winters become milder, ticks are becoming active earlier in the year. Climate change affects ticks at every stage of their life cycle - egg, six-legged larva, eight-legged nymph, and adult - by extending the length of time ticks actively feed on humans and animals. Even a fraction of a degree of global warming creates more opportunity for ticks to breed and spread disease.

Contact

"The number of overwintering ticks is increasing and in spring there is high activity of ticks," said Gerhard Dobler, a doctor who works at the German Center for Infection Research. "This may increase the contact between infected ticks and humans and cause more disease." Since the virus was first discovered in the 1930s, it has mainly been found in Europe and parts of Asia, including Siberia and the northern regions of China. The same type of tick carries the disease in these areas, but the virus subtype - of which there are several - varies by region. In places where the virus is endemic, tick bites are the leading cause of encephalitis, though the virus can also be acquired by consuming raw milk from tick-infected cattle. TBE has not been found in the United States, though a few Americans have contracted the virus while traveling in Europe.

According to the World Health Organization, there are between 10,000 and 12,000 cases of the disease in Europe and northern Asia each year. The total number of cases worldwide is likely an undercount, as case counts are unreliable in countries where the population has low awareness of the disease and local health departments are not required to report cases to the government. But experts say there has been a clear uptick since the 1990s, especially in countries where the disease used to be uncommon.

"We see an increasing trend of human cases," Dobler said, citing rising cases in Austria, Germany, Estonia, Latvia, and other European countries.

TBE is not always life-threatening. On average, about 10 percent of infections develop into the severe form of the illness, which often requires hospitalization. Once severe symptoms develop, however, there is no cure for the disease. The death rate among those who develop severe symptoms ranges from 1 to 35 percent, depending on the virus subtype, with the far-eastern subtype being the deadliest. In Europe, for example, 16 deaths were recorded in 2020 out of roughly 3,700 confirmed cases.

Up to half of survivors of severe TBE have lingering neurological problems, such as sleeplessness and aggressiveness. Many infected people are asymptomatic or only develop mild symptoms, Dobler said, so the true caseload could be up to 10 times higher in some regions than reports estimate.

While there are two TBE vaccines in circulation, vaccine uptake is low in regions where the virus is new. Neither vaccine covers all of the three most prevalent sub-types, and a 2020 study called for development of a new vaccine that offers higher protection against the virus. In Austria, for example, the TBE vaccine rate is near 85 percent, Dobler said, and yet the number of human cases continues to trend upward - a sign, in his opinion, of climate change's influence on the disease.

In central and northern Europe, where for the past decade average annual temperatures have been roughly 2 degrees Celsius above pre industrial times (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit), documented cases of the virus have been rising in recent decades - evidence, some experts say, that rising global temperatures are conducive to more active ticks. The parasitic arachnids are also noted to be moving further north and higher in altitude as formerly inhospitable terrain warms to their preferred temperature range. Northern parts of Russia are a prime example of where TBE-infected ticks have moved north. Some previously tick-free mountains in Germany, Bavaria, and Austria are reporting a 20-fold increase in cases over the past 10 years.

The virus's growing shadow across Europe, Asia, and now parts of the United Kingdom throws the dangers of tick-borne disease into sharp relief. The UK bicyclist who was the first domestically acquired case of the disease survived his bout with TBE, but the episode serves as a warning to the region: though the virus is still rare, it may not stay that way for long.

Also:

PHOENIX: Longtime Phoenix residents know that sweltering Julys are to be expected, but no one could have predicted the brutal heat wave that has enveloped the country's fifth largest city this summer.

Phoenix this month shattered its record for consecutive days in which the temperature reached at least 110 degrees Fahrenheit (43.3 Celsius), standing at 26 days and counting as of Tuesday, when the forecast called for a high of 118 (47.8 C). The record was likely to grow Wednesday, with a high of 119 degrees (48.3 C) expected. A bit of relief might be on the horizon, though, after this week.

"It seems unlikely we'll see over 110 every day through the end of the month," said meteorologist Isaac Smith, of the National Weather Service in Phoenix. "We are expecting to see the highs fall through this weekend, with chances for monsoon rains rising to 40-50%."

Smith said by next Monday, the high was expected to be 108 (42.2 C).

This undated photo provided by Roscosmos shows the International Space Station. A NASA power outage disrupted communication between Mission Control and the International Space Station on Tuesday, July 25. (AP)

NASA power outage temporarily halts contact with space station

A NASA power outage disrupted communication between Mission Control and the International Space Station on Tuesday.

Mission Control couldn't send commands to the station and talk with the seven astronauts in orbit. The power outage hit as upgrade work was underway in the building at Houston's Johnson Space Center.

Space station program manager Joel Montalbano said neither the astronauts nor station were ever in any danger and that backup control systems took over within 90 minutes. The crew was notified of the problem through Russian communication systems, within 20 minutes of the outage.

It's the first time NASA has had to fire up these backup systems to take control, according to Montalbano. He said NASA hoped to resolve the issue and be back to normal operations by the end of the day.

NASA maintains a backup control center miles from Houston in the event a hurricane or other disaster requiring evacuations. But in Tuesday's case, the flight controllers stayed at Mission Control since the lights and air-conditioning still worked. (AP)

A squirrel climbs a fence in Central Park, May 2, 2020, in New York. New York could ban contests that involve killing coyotes, squirrels and some other wildlife species for cash prizes.

Whitby

Denenberg

Discovery

Volunteers saving whales: Volunteers worked frantically on a second day Wednesday to save dozens of pilot whales that have stranded themselves on a beach in Western Australia, but more than 50 have already died.

Nearly 100 long-finned pilot whales, stranded themselves Tuesday on the beach by the city of Albany, on the southern tip of Western Australia, south of Perth.

They were first spotted swimming Tuesday morning near Cheynes Beach east of Albany. As the day progressed, the pod began moving closer to the beach, sparking the concern of conservation officers. By 4 pm, a large stretch of the shoreline was covered in beached whales.

Reece Whitby, Western Australia's environment minister, said it was particularly frustrating because it's not known why the phenomenon occurs.

"What we're seeing is utterly heartbreaking and distressing," he told reporters. "It's just a terrible, terrible tragedy to see these dead pilot whales on the beach."

Fifty-two whales had perished, and volunteers are doing what they can to try and save 45 still alive, he said.

"People are committed to doing what they can to save as many whales as they can," Whitby said.

Western Australia state's Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions set up an overnight camp to monitor the whales.

Peter Hartley, a manager from the department, told the Australian Broadcasting Corp. that the volunteers were trying to get the living whales back into the water and encourage them to swim away.

"We are optimistic that we will save as many as we can," Hartley said.

The team tasked with helping the whales includes Perth Zoo veterinarians and marine fauna experts. They have been using specialized equipment, including vessels and slings.

Hundreds of volunteers also offered to help - so many that officials said they had enough registered volunteers and urged other members of the public to stay away from the beach.

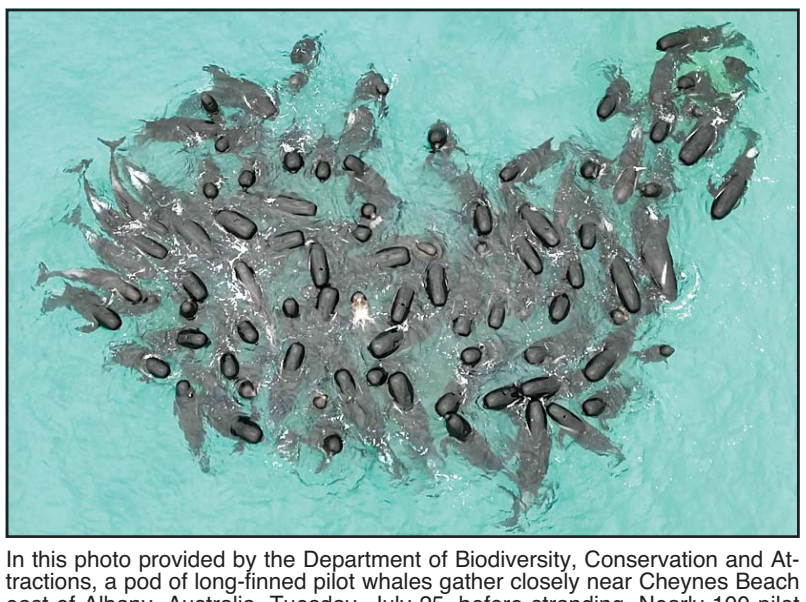
Drone footage released by the department showed the whales clustering and forming into a heart shape before stranding themselves on the beach.

"This is just an amazing event," Joanne Marsh, the owner the Cheynes Beach Caravan Park told the ABC. "We've never seen anything quite like this."

Wildlife experts said the unusual behavior of the whales could be an indicator of stress or illness within the pod. Pilot whales are highly social animals and often maintain close relationships with their pods throughout their lives.

Macquarie University wildlife scientist Vanessa Pirotta said the drone footage could suggest the whales had become disoriented, although she said the exact reasons for mass strandings remain unclear.

"The fact that they were in one area very huddled, and doing really interesting behaviors, and looking around at times, suggests that something else is going on that we just don't know," she said. (AP)



In this photo provided by the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions, a pod of long-finned pilot whales gather closely near Cheynes Beach east of Albany, Australia, Tuesday, July 25, before stranding. Nearly 100 pilot whales stranded themselves on the beach in western Australia and about half had died by Wednesday morning, despite the efforts of wildlife experts and volunteers to save them. (AP)

The Conversation

For many docs, essential oil doesn't pass the smell test

Millions believe aromatherapy works

By Marian Reven
West Virginia University

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

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The history of using essential oils and their aromas to improve health and well-being dates back thousands of years. Like today, patients would inhale or topically apply these oils, which were typically extracted from plants - from leaves to flowers to roots to bark.

But not until the 1930s was this form of therapy considered to have true potential in mainstream health care. That was when Rene Maurice Gattefossé, a French chemist who coined the word aromatherapie, wrote extensively about the properties of essential oils.

Today, depending on whom you talk to, aromatherapy comprises anything from pleasant odors associated with personal hygiene and cleaning products to a serious therapy practiced by aromatherapists.

As a nurse and educator for more than 30 years, I've taught nursing students everything from intensive care to end-of-life support. Since becoming an aromatherapist in 2016, I've tried to determine how this practice could fit into the health care community and how hospitals and clinics might use aromatherapy as adjunct support for different kinds of ailments.

Aromatherapy is not approved by the US Food and Drug Administration for treatment of any medical condition. This is one reason why many clinicians are reluctant to use aromatherapy in their practice. They also say there's not sufficient evidence to show that it works - nor do most have any training in aromatherapy.

Conversely, public acceptance of aromatherapy has never been higher. But this is not always a good thing. Although information about aromatherapy abounds on the internet, many of the claims are based on personal experience. This is not scientific evidence.

Yet millions of Americans subscribe to expensive multilevel marketing strategies that seem to suggest anything and everything is treatable with essential oils. But as with any substance, there are risks as well as benefits to using them - and sometimes, the information found online neglects to mention those risks.

Though studies supporting the efficacy of aromatherapy are increasingly visible in peer-reviewed journal articles, they do not always stand up to scrutiny. In my own research, I have found that many studies on aromatherapy are flawed.

Studies

Here are just some of the problems: Exactly which essential oil was used is often not mentioned in these studies. How much essential oil was used, and for how long, is not always accurately described. The qualifications of the practitioner are frequently missing. Study participants may have a poor sense of smell, or a personal aversion to certain smells, which could skew results. The studies don't always provide clear explanations on how they control for bias. Some have few participants, and many are done only on animals.

Also, some essential oils have many varieties; for example, some types of lavender may have calming properties, yet others are known for clearing of the sinuses. This is a critical distinction that may not be understood by the authors of these studies.

The good news: Efforts are underway to improve the quality of research, and the future for this therapy appears promising.

According to the National Cancer Institute, a growing body of studies shows aromatherapy can improve the physical, mental and spiritual well-being of cancer patients and help reduce anxiety, nausea and vomiting.

The National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health notes that essential oils may be used for insomnia, pain, anxiety and for cancer treatment - though, again, rigorous research is lacking.

Researchers are exploring whether aromatherapy can help dementia and substance use disorder patients.

A 2021 meta-analysis of clinical trials revealed that the essential oil bergamot can reduce anxiety in humans. Based on this, it is reasonable to think that using bergamot via inhalation may reduce anxiety. It is also "generally recognized as safe" by the FDA.

The Aromatic Research Quality Appraisal Taskforce was founded in 2021 and has created a checklist to assess the quality of aromatherapy studies. This is foundational work to try to get aromatherapy research up to the highest standards.

Inhalation of the essential oil often incorporates aroma sticks - small cylinder-shaped tubes about the size of a lipstick container with a wick containing essential oils - or patches worn by the patient, or diffusers using either cool water vapor or ultrasonic dispersal. For topical applications, essential oils do not dissolve in water, so use of a vegetable or other oil is necessary to dilute and decrease their concentration.

But before introducing essential oils into your life, you first have to find accurate information about them. There are professional organizations working to maintain a standard of practice for aromatherapy.

There is nothing wrong with searching for natural and clean products that might help you. This is why so many people are attracted to beautiful essential oils and their lovely aromas. Just remember that natural and beautiful does not mean they work - or that the oils are without risk. (AP)

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Museum gifted art collection: A Vermont museum has acquired a more than 200-piece collection of Native American art and is planning to construct a $12.6 million facility to house the pieces that make up a rare national collection in the Northeast.

The collection donated to the Shelburne Museum is comprised of late 19th and early 20th century pottery, beadwork, clothing and weavings predominantly from Plains and Southwest communities, and combined with its existing Native American collection represents nearly 80 tribes, the museum said.

"Together, the two collections are over 500 items and that's a center of gravity, which is fairly important for northern New England," said museum director and **CEO Thomas Denenberg.**

The 9,750-square-foot (906-square-meter) building - called the Perry Center for Native American Art - will be designed by Adjaye Associates, an internationally known firm that designed the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington, D.C. The building is slated to open in the spring of 2026 and "planned to be a highly sustainable pavilion designed to support the culturally appropriate interpretation and care of Indigenous material culture," the museum said in a statement.

Museum officials have consulted on the project with the leaders of the four bands of the state-recognized Abenaki tribes in Vermont. (AP)

'Too soon to speculate on whether Bronny can return to basketball'

Bronny James, son of LeBron, in stable condition after cardiac arrest

CALIFORNIA, July 26, (AP): Bronny James, the oldest son of NBA superstar LeBron James, was hospitalized in stable condition on Tuesday, a day after going into cardiac arrest while participating in a practice at the University of Southern California, a family spokesman said.

The spokesman said medical staff treated the 18-year-old James on site at USC's Galen Center after he went into cardiac arrest on Monday morning. He was transported to a hospital, where he was in stable condition Tuesday after leaving the intensive care unit.

"We ask for respect and privacy for the James family and we will update media when there is more information," the spokesman said. "LeBron and (his wife) Savannah wish to publicly send their deepest thanks and appreciation to the USC medical and athletic staff for their incredible work and dedication to the safety of their athletes."

USC spokesman Jeremy Pepper declined a request from The Associated Press for comment or additional details, citing student privacy concerns. The AP also left a message seeking comment from the Los Angeles County Fire Department.

Bronny

A representative for USC outside the Galen Center on Tuesday said the school would not have a briefing or issue a statement about James' health scare.

Bronny James announced in May that he would play college basketball for the Trojans, whose campus is less than two miles from the downtown arena of his father's Los Angeles Lakers. USC's basketball team is holding offseason practices in preparation for a two-week European tour next month.

His father is the leading scorer in NBA history and a four-time champion, but Bronny James is an elite talent in his own right, establishing himself as one of the nation's top point guard recruits before he chose the Trojans late in the commitment cycle.

Buffalo Bills safety Damar Hamlin, who suffered cardiac arrest during an NFL game last season, tweeted his support: "Prayers to Bronny & The James Family as well (prayer emoji) here for you guys just like you have been for me my entire process."

Sports figures across the world also sent messages of support. Jayson Tatum, Trae Young and Donovan Mitchell were among many NBA stars tweeting prayers for James, while former Lakers forward Metta Sandiford-Artest wrote: "Prayers for Bronny. What a great kid. Come back stronger young fella. Get better and feel better."

Bronny James was stricken just over a year after USC freshman 7-footer Vincent Iwuchukwu collapsed during a practice. Iwuchukwu not only survived but returned to play for the Trojans in the second half of the season.

Dr. Sameer Amin, a cardiologist and the chief medical officer at L.A. Care Health Plan, is not treating Bronny James, but he says the teenager's move out of intensive care is encouraging.

"It's a really positive sign that they didn't sustain too much brain damage or any brain damage, or any major heart damage in the setting of their heart stopping," Amin said. "Usually we see that when somebody's heart gets restarted very quickly after it stops. Also, in young people, you tend to get these bounce-backs a lot faster. It's a really positive outcome that he's already out of the ICU."

Amin said it's too soon to speculate on whether Bronny James can return to basketball, or how quickly it could happen.

"If (the cardiac event) is happening because of a unusual blow to the chest like in the Damar Hamlin case, oftentimes those people can have a positive outcome because it's a rare and unusual event that led to the heart stopping," Amin said. "In those where there's an underlying genetic problem or an underlying electrical issue, it can be a little bit more tricky to get somebody back on the playing field."

With his family fame and huge social media following, Bronny James has the top name, image and likeness valuation in sports at $6.3 million, On3.com estimates.

LeBron James has spoken frequently about his desire to play a season in the NBA with Bronny, the first of his three children with his wife. The elder James recently confirmed he will play his 21st NBA season in the fall with the Lakers, his home since 2018.

Bronny's decision to stay close to home was a coup for USC, which is expected to have one of college basketball's most compelling teams next season after making its third straight NCAA Tournament appearance last March.

Bronny, whose name is LeBron James Jr., was one of the top college prospects in the country last season as a star two-way guard at Sierra Canyon School in suburban Chatsworth. His younger brother, 16-year-old Bryce, played at Sierra Canyon last season before transferring to Campbell Hall School in Studio City for the upcoming high school season.

Iwuchukwu, one of the nation's top college basketball prospects a year ago, went into cardiac arrest on July 1, 2022, with athletic trainers using an automated external defibrillator to revive him. Iwuchukwu had a battery-powered pulse generator known as an implantable cardioverter-defibrillator implanted in his chest, the Los Angeles Times reported.

Iwuchukwu made his Trojans debut Jan. 12 and eventually appeared in 14 games, including five starts. He will return this season to USC, which is expected to have a powerhouse team.

Mets win Subway Series opener

Reds reduce Milwaukee NL Central lead to half-game

NEW YORK, July 26, (AP): Pete Alonso homered twice and drove in a season-high five runs, Justin Verlander pitched six shutout innings and the New York Mets beat the New York Yankees 9-3 on Tuesday night in their Subway Series opener.

Jeff McNeil had three RBIs and Francisco Lindor added three hits and three runs for the disappointing Mets (47-53), hoping for a big week that might persuade ownership not to sell at the Aug. 1 trade deadline.

Alonso and Daniel Vogelbach connected back-to-back to begin the sixth against Domingo Germán, who fell to 0-2 in four starts since throwing the 24th perfect game in major league history June 28 at Oakland.

BASEBALL

Germán (5-7) struck out nine in six innings at Yankee Stadium but was tagged for three homers and seven hits. McNeil's run-scoring single made it 7-0 in the seventh after a throwing error by rookie shortstop Anthony Volpe.

The 40-year-old Verlander (5-5) was touched for just two hits. He struck out six and issued four walks - three to DJ LeMahieu. The three-time Cy Young Award winner is 5-0 in his last eight regular-season starts versus the Yankees.

Verlander was pulled after 98 pitches, and it took three relievers to get the next four outs. David Robertson entered with the bases loaded in the eighth and got two quick outs, leaving New York ahead 7-3 heading to the ninth.

Dodgers 8, Blue Jays 7, 10 innings

In Los Angeles, James Outman doubled in the 10th inning to score Chris Taylor and Los Angeles rallied to beat Toronto.

The Dodgers sent it into extra innings with four runs in the ninth. Taylor tied it on a two-run single with the bases loaded when Vladimir Guerrero Jr. dove but had the liner deflect of his glove, allowing both runs to score.

Mookie Betts had an RBI single and Miguel Rojas scored on a bases-loaded walk to Max Muncy to get the Dodgers within striking range.

Taylor was on second base as the automatic runner in the 10th inning. After Yonny Hernandez was unable to advance the runner, Outman hit a long drive off Mitch White (0-1) that popped out of the glove of right fielder Jordan Luplow, who jumped at the wall to try to make the catch.

Los Angeles' Freddie Freeman homered for the fourth time in the last five games. J.D. Martinez also went deep.

Reds 4, Brewers 3

In Milwaukee, Andrew Abbott pitched six scoreless innings, Will Benson hit a two-run homer and Cincinnati withstood Milwaukee's frantic ninth-inning comeback attempt.

Cincinnati reduced the Brewers' NL Central lead over the Reds to a half-game. The Brewers and Reds will have their final regular-season meeting Wednesday in the rubber match of the three-game series.

The Brewers trailed 4-0 before nearly coming all the way back in the ninth.

One night after hitting a walk-off single in a 3-2 victory, Christian Yelich ripped a three-run homer off reliever Daniel Duarte with two outs in the ninth. William Contreras greeted Alexis Díaz with an infield single, though he initially was called out before replays showed he had beaten the throw from third baseman Elly De La Cruz. After Tyrone Taylor pinch-ran for Contreras and stole second, a 3-2 pitch from Díaz hit Willy Adames. Díaz finally sealed Cincinnati's victory and his 30th save by retiring Andruw Monasterio on a fly to center.

Astros 4, Rangers 3

In Houston, Kyle Tucker and Martín Maldonado homered, rookie starter J.P. France worked seven solid innings and Houston beat Texas.

The Astros (58-44) moved within a game of the AL West-leading Rangers (59-43). The injury-plagued Astros could see the return of stars José Altuve and Yordan Alvarez on Wednesday when they go for a series sweep and the top spot in the division.

Tucker's line-drive homer narrowly cleared the wall in right-center, giving Houston a 3-1 lead in the sixth inning. In the seventh, Maldonado crushed a 93-mph fastball that nearly landed on the train tracks above left-center field, extending the Astros' lead to 4-1.

Cubs 7, White Sox 3

In Chicago, Dansby Swanson homered twice and drove in four runs and the Cubs beat the crosstown White Sox for their fourth consecutive victory.

Christopher Morel and Nico Hoerner also connected for the Cubs, and Kyle Hendricks (4-4) pitched four-hit ball into the seventh inning. Swanson and Hoerner each had three hits, and Hoerner had two of the Cubs' five stolen bases.

The Cubs (49-51) won for the sixth time in seven games overall, putting them firmly on the bubble ahead of the Aug. 1 trade deadline.

Gurdians 5, Royals 1

In Cleveland, Bo Naylor had his first career two-homer game and drove in three runs to help Cleveland beat Kansas City and hand Royals pitcher Zack Greinke his 16th consecutive road loss.

Naylor hit a 430-foot solo shot to right in the third inning and a 397-foot blast to right-center in the fifth to score Myles Straw for his first home runs at Progressive Field. The 23-year-old rookie catcher entered the game with two home runs.

Greinke (1-11) gave up four runs in five innings and remained winless on the road since Aug. 13, 2021, when he pitched for Houston at Angel Stadium. In 27 subsequent away starts, the 39-year-old right-hander is 0-16 with a 6.43 ERA over 134 1/3 innings.

Phillies 4, Orioles 3

In Philadelphia, Alec Bohm followed Bryson Stott's two-out, tying RBI double to right field in the ninth inning with a winning RBI single, rallying Philadelphia past AL-leading Baltimore.

Yennier Cano (1-2) allowed a one-out single to Bryce Harper - who had tied the game for the Phillies at 2l in the sixth with a solo homer - and got the second out before he gave up Stott's sharp double. J.T. Realmuto reached on an infield single off a chopper to shortstop that Jorge Mateo struggled to get out of his glove and made a late throw, extending the inning.

Bohm singled to left past a drawn-in infield and Phillies fans erupted after the comeback victory.

Red Sox 7, Braves 1

In Boston, Nick Pivetta pitched five scoreless innings of relief, Masataka Yoshida hit a two-run homer and Boston overcame a triple play to beat Atlanta Braves in a game delayed 1 hour, 40 minutes by rain and lightning.

Yoshida's two-run shot to right in the eighth was his third hit of the night, and eight Boston hitters finished with at least a hit in the Red Sox's third straight win. Rafael Devers had a pair of singles and drove in his 75th run of the season for the Red Sox, who took a 2-1 lead in the bottom of the first and never trailed the major league-leading Braves the rest of the way.

Rays 4, Marlins 1

In St. Petersburg, Tyler Glasnow went seven strong innings, Brandon Lowe homered and Tampa Bay beat Miami to improve to 5-14 in July.

Glasnow (4-3) allowed one run, two hits, two walks and struck out eight. Jason Adam and Pete Fairbanks completed the two-hitter, with Fairbanks working the ninth for his 12th save.

The Marlins have lost nine of 10 overall and 10 straight on the road. Miami is 2-19 against the Rays, dating to May 14, 2019.

Angels 7, Tigers 6, 10 innings

In Detroit, Shohei Ohtani had two walks and two runs, Mickey Moniak hit a tiebreaking RBI double in the 10th inning and Los Angeles beat Detroit after blowing a four-run lead in the ninth inning.

Ohtani is potentially in his last week with the Angels. The franchise has to decide whether to risk losing the 29-year-old two-way star in free agency or trade him ahead of the trade deadline next Tuesday.

Angels closer Carlos Estevez (4-1) pitched the ninth in a non-save situation and earned an improbable win after giving up four unearned runs, allowing Detroit to pull into a 6-all tie to extend the game.

Diamondbacks 3, Cardinals 1

In Phoenix, Pinch-hitter Corbin Carroll had a two-run triple in a three-run rally in the eighth inning and Arizona beat St. Louis to snap a five-game losing streak.

Trailing 1-0, Arizona tied it in the eighth off JoJo Romero (2-1), who had retired the side in order in the seventh in relief of Steven Matz. Ketel Marte led off with a triple to the gap in left-center and scored when Jake McCarthy punched a single up the middle through St. Louis' drawn-in infield.

Chris Stratton relieved and retired two batters but walked pinch-hitter Dominic Canzone before Carroll, batting for Emmanuel Rivera, drove one to the center-field wall, where Dylan Carlson could not make the play.

Nationals 6, Rockies 5

In Washington, Joey Meneses hit a three-run homer in a four-run eighth inning and Washington rallied to beat Colorado.

The game was delayed nearly 90 minutes before the first pitch and stopped for 51 minutes by rain with one out in the top of the seventh.

CJ Abrams led off the eighth with a single against Justin Lawrence (3-4) and stole second. Lane Thomas reached on an error by third baseman Ryan McMahon, and Jeimer Candelario doubled to right center, scoring Abrams. Meneses followed with a homer to left field, his seventh of the season.

Giants 2, Athletics 1

In San Francisco, Wearing Oakland green and gold and Giants orange and black, thousands of fans from both sides of the bay stood together to protest the Athletics' planned move to Las Vegas.

Mike Yastrzemski hit a go-ahead double in the eighth after JJ Bleday tied it on a single in the top half of the inning against Tyler Rogers (4-4). Giants starter Alex Cobb struck out nine over six scoreless innings as the Giants took the Bay Bridge Series opener to snap a six-game losing streak.

Mariners 9, Twins 7

In Minneapolis, Julio Rodríguez homered twice, including a two-run shot in a four-run eighth to tie it, and Seattle Mariners rallied to beat Minnesota.

After Rodríguez tied it, Eugenio Suárez came through with a two-run double in the ninth off Oliver Ortega (0-1) to put Seattle ahead after the Mariners trailed 4-0 after the first inning.

Cade Marlowe added his first career homer in his fourth major league game for the Mariners. They have won four of six.

Padres 5, Pirates 1

In San Diego, Manny Machado, Juan Soto and Gary Sánchez homered to help San Diego beat Pittsburgh.

Blake Snell (7-8) limited the Pirates to two hits and one run in six innings. Steven Wilson, Robert Suarez and Josh Hader pitched three innings of one-hit relief.

Machado's 20th homer of the season, a 418-foot shot to left-center off Rich Hill (7-10), tied it at 1 in the second inning.

Cleveland Guardians' Jose Ramirez hits a single in the sixth inning of a baseball game against the Kansas City Royals in Cleveland. (AP)

MLB Results/Standings

WASHINGTON, July 26, (AP): Results and standings from the MLB games on Tuesday.

Tampa Bay	4	Miami	1
Cleveland	5	Kansas City	1
Philadelphia	4	Baltimore	3
LA Angels	7	Detroit 10 inn	6
Boston	7	Atlanta	1
NY Mets	9	NY Yankees	3
Houston	4	Texas	3
Seattle	9	Minnesota	7
Chicago Cubs	7	Chicago W. Sox	3
San Francisco	2	Oakland	1
LA Dodgers	8	Toronto 10 inn	7
Washington	6	Colorado	5
Cincinnati	4	Milwaukee	3
Arizona	3	St Louis	1
San Diego	5	Pittsburgh	1

American League

East Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Baltimore	62	39	.614	—
Tampa Bay	62	42	.596	1-1/2
Toronto	56	46	.549	6-1/2
Boston	54	47	.535	8
New York	53	48	.525	9

Central Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Minnesota	54	49	.524	—
Cleveland	50	51	.495	3
Detroit	46	55	.455	7
Chicago	41	61	.402	12-1/2
Kansas City	29	74	.282	25

West Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Texas	59	43	.578	—
Houston	58	44	.569	1
Los Angeles	52	49	.515	6-1/2
Seattle	51	50	.505	7-1/2
Oakland	28	75	.272	31-1/2

National League

East Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Atlanta	64	35	.646	—
Philadelphia	54	47	.535	11
Miami	54	48	.529	11-1/2
New York	47	53	.470	17-1/2
Washington	42	59	.416	23

Central Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Milwaukee	56	46	.549	—
Cincinnati	56	47	.544	-1/2
Chicago	49	51	.490	6
St Louis	45	57	.441	11
Pittsburgh	44	57	.436	11-1/2

West Division

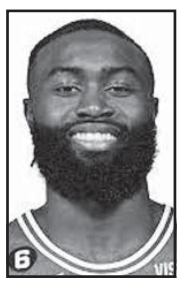
	W	L	Pct	GB
Los Angeles	58	42	.580	—
Arizona	55	47	.539	4
San Francisco	55	47	.539	4
San Diego	49	53	.480	10
Colorado	40	61	.396	18-1/2

Brown, Celtics agree to 5-year supermax deal worth up to $304 mln, biggest in NBA history

BOSTON, July 26, (AP): The Boston Celtics have answered their most pressing question of the offseason. Jaylen Brown will be part of the franchise for the foreseeable future.

The Celtics' wing has agreed to terms on a five-year supermax contract extension that will pay him up to $304 million, his agent said Tuesday.

It's the richest contract in NBA history, surpassing the $264 million deal signed by Nuggets center Nikola Jokic last summer.



Brown

The deal was first reported by ESPN and confirmed to The Associated Press by Brown's agent, Jason Glushon.

It keeps Brown with the team that drafted him third overall in 2016 and watched him develop into a two-time All-Star.

He averaged career highs of 26.6 points, 6.9 rebounds and 3.5 assists last season. But those numbers went down in the playoffs, when the Celtics lost to the Miami Heat in the Eastern Conference finals. In Game 7, Brown had 19 points on 8-of-23 shooting, making just one of nine 3-point attempts.

Still, the totality of his time in Boston has made him a key piece of the franchise's current core that management wasn't willing to risk seeing depart when his current four-year deal expires after next season.

By virtue of making the All-NBA second team - Brown's first such honor in his career - he was eligible for the supermax extension.

From the moment this past season ended, Celtics president of basketball operations Brad Stevens has been adamant that he wanted to see Brown sign a long-term deal.

"He's a big part of us. We believe in him and I'm thankful for him," Stevens said last month. "I'm really thankful that when those guys have success they come back to work. And when they get beat, they own it and they come back to work. And so I know that's what they're about. And that's hard to find."

BASKETBALL

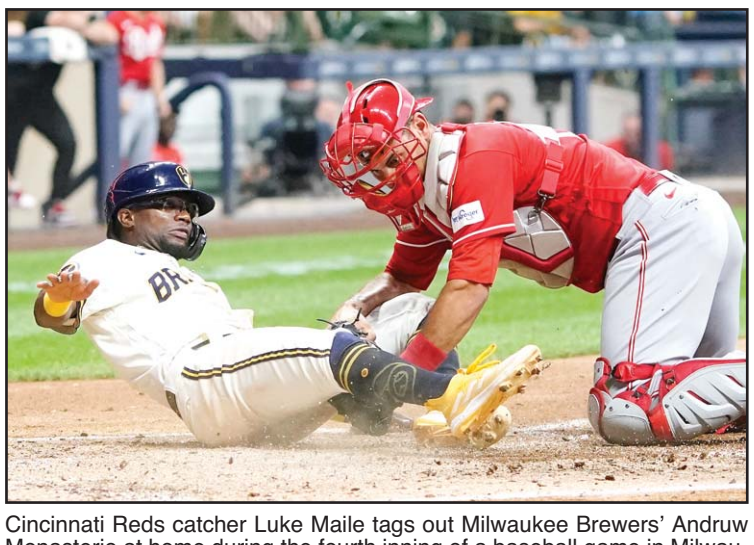
Those sentiments were echoed by All-Star Jayson Tatum, who has paired with Brown to lead the Celtics' one-two punch in their runs to the NBA Finals in 2021-22 and the conference finals last season.

Following Boston's East finals loss in May, Tatum said retaining Brown long-term was "extremely important."

"He's one of the best players in this league," Tatum said. "He plays both ends of the ball and still is relatively young. And he's accomplished a lot so far in his career. So, I think it's extremely important."

Brown's new contract likely will lead to some financial maneuvering down the road with the league's new collective bargaining agreement bringing more limitations on how teams construct their rosters and additional luxury tax penalties.

Tatum is still playing under his rookie extension that kicked in last season and will be eligible for his potential supermax extension next summer.



Cincinnati Reds catcher Luke Maile tags out Milwaukee Brewers' Andruw Monasterio at home during the fourth inning of a baseball game in Milwaukee. (AP)

Mollie sets world record at worlds

Hafnaoui stars in 800 freestyle

FUKUOKA, Japan, July 26, (AP): Australian swimmer Mollie O'Callaghan picked up a knee injury about five weeks ago, described as anything from a dislocation to a simple tweak. She said it slowed her some in practice, and modified her training schedule.

But heck, what's a little injury matter.

The 19-year-old O'Callaghan broke the world record on Wednesday in the 200-meter freestyle at the world championships, clocking 1 minute, 52.85 seconds to erase Federica Pellegrini's mark of 1:52.98 set in 2009 in the fast-suit era.

SWIMMING

"I'm just really shocked," O'Callaghan said. "I was just expecting to have fun tonight and whatever I did I was going to be really happy. To come away with a world record is just amazing."

She also picked up a check for $30,000, which goes to any record setter at this year's worlds.

O'Callaghan overtook Australian teammate Ariarne Titmus - she set a world record in the 400 free on Sunday - in the final 20 meters. Titmus finished in in 1:53.01 and 16-year-old Summer McIntosh of Canada took bronze in 1:53.65.

Here's what O'Callaghan said she told herself over the last 50.

"Right now I just need to go. I don't care how hard it is or if it hurts. I'm just going to push and if I come last and completely die, then that's all right. At least I gave it a crack," she said.

It took O'Callaghan a few minutes after the race to compose herself and digest the moment.

"I was a wreck afterwards," she said. "I couldn't really explain it - those tears of happiness, very mixed emotions. I'm just so proud of myself to do that. It was just such an unexpected moment."

Titmus did not hold back.

"To be completely honest, I wanted to win that," the 22-year-old Titmus said. "I thought I had a great swim in me - and that was a great swim. If not winning, it's great to have someone from Australia on top of the podium."

It was a personal-best time, but not fast enough.

Leon Marchand, a 21-year-old Frenchman who figures to be the face of next year's Paris Olympics, added the men's 200 butterfly gold to the one he won in the 400 IM on the opening day when he broke Michael Phelps' last individual world mark. Marchand took the lead at 80 meters and powered home in 1:52.43.

Krzysztof Chmielewski of Poland took silver in 1:53.62 and Tomoru Honda gave host Japan its second bronze medal of the worlds in 1:53.66.

Kristof Milak of Hungary, the current world-record holder in the 200 butterfly and gold medalist at the Tokyo Olympics, is not competing at this year's championships for what he has called mental health and physical reasons.

"I'm just trying to enjoy the moment and keep going," Marchand said. "It's been very good the past few days."

Ahmed Hafnaoui of Tunisia won the men's 800 freestyle in 7:37.00, pushing Sam Short of Australia into second at 7:37.76. Bobby Fink of the United States took bronze in 7:38.67.

It was sweet for Hafnaoui, the 400 Olympic champion, who was beaten at that event earlier in this meet by Short.

"The silver in the 400, I think that was part of the win," said Hafnaoui, who has been training since last year at Indiana University in Bloomington. "It's like too much adrenaline when you see all these guys next to you battling for the gold."

Qin Haiyang of China won his second gold, taking the 50 breaststroke to go with the 100. Nic Fink of the United States took silver in 26.59 and Sun Jiajun of China got bronze in 26.79. The 50 breaststroke is not an Olympic event.

China also won in the 4x100 mixed medley relay behind a strong leg from Qin, taking gold in 3:38.57. Australia got silver in 3:39.03, with the United States rounding out the podium with bronze in 3:40.19.

The top three finishers in the relay automatically qualified for next year's Paris Olympics.

Leon Marchand of France competes during the men's 200m individual medley semifinal at the World Swimming Championships in Fukuoka, Japan. Inset: Mollie O'Callaghan of Australia reacts after winning the women's 200m freestyle swimming final. (AP)

Bayern confirm talks around Mané move to Al-Nassr

TOKYO, July 26, (AP): Bayern Munich's president confirmed Wednesday that the club is aware of "initial talks" around a reported move for forward Sadio Mané from the German champion to Saudi Arabian club Al-Nassr, where he could team up with Cristiano Ronaldo.

SOCCER

"FC Bayern is informed about this," club president Herbert Hainer said in Japan during a pre-season tour, in quotes reported by German news agency dpa. "But these are initial talks, you have to wait and see."

His comments followed a report in German tabloid newspaper Bild that an adviser to Mané would meet representatives of Al-Nassr to discuss a possible deal. A Premier League and Champions League winner with Liverpool, Mané would be the latest in a series of big-name players in Saudi clubs' signing spree.

Mané has two years left on his contract with Bayern after a disappointing and injury-hit first season since joining from Liverpool last year.

The Senegal forward scored 12 times in 38 games for Bayern, but only one of those goals came after a leg injury in November which ruled him out of the World Cup. Mané was also suspended for one game by Bayern for "misconduct" in April after he reportedly struck teammate Leroy Sané in the locker room after a Champions League loss to Manchester City.

On Tuesday, Hainer described Mané's first season at Bayern as "certainly not satisfactory, neither for him, nor for us," dpa reported.

New era for the club and MLS

Messi shines again as Inter Miami rout Atlanta

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla., July 26, (AP): Inter Miami co-owner Jorge Mas has one lasting memory from Lionel Messi's debut: the image of Messi running to embrace his family after delivering the game-winning free kick and cementing a new era for the club and Major League Soccer.

"That was for the fans. This community is hungry," Mas said.

Messi's follow-up performance Tuesday night against Atlanta United in the Leagues Cup showed the impact that one player - the right player - can have on an entire club.

Messi scored twice and had an assist in his first start for Miami, bringing his total to three goals in two games. Inter Miami had a 3-0 lead by halftime, the first such lead in club history.

"There's going to be a before and after Messi in football for this country," Mas said.

Miami went on to win 4-0. Messi exited in the 78th minute to a standing ovation, with many in the crowd wearing his No. 10 jersey. Many also headed for the exits themselves once Messi was on the bench.

"With the type of player that he is, it's justified that this happens," Miami coach Tata Martino said. "I would have preferred that the public stayed and pay tribute to the entire team, but I can also understand it."

Miami swept its group and moved on to the round of 32 in the Leagues Cup, in which it will host a to-be-determined opponent.

In the eighth minute, Messi took a pass from his longtime Barcelona teammate Sergio Busquets, surged forward and sent a strike off the right post before tapping in his own rebound. Then, in the 22nd minute, Messi put Miami ahead 2-0 off a pass from Robert Taylor.

"Since those two have gotten here, the spirit has changed," Miami's DeAndre Yedlin said, referring to Messi and Busquets. "Obviously, guys are really excited. But I think just their presence gives everybody more confidence. And I think also the teams that we're playing against now have a bit of fear in their eyes. When those two are on the field, you know you're in for a tough game."

Messi came off the bench in the 54th minute Friday night in Miami's first Leagues Cup match against Mexican club Cruz Azul. And he provided a moment fans had hoped for when the seven-time Ballon d'Or winner and World Cup champion for Argentina decided to take his talents to MLS. Messi converted the game-winning free kick in stoppage time in front of a crowd estimated at 21,000.

Yedlin had placed the skipper's armband on Messi when he checked in on Friday, but Messi entered Tuesday's match wearing the armband just below his right shoulder.

"He's my teammate now. He's our teammate," Yedlin said. "He's part of this team and he wants to win like everybody else. And he's been a joy to be around, obviously not just on the field. He's obviously an amazing talent but off the field he really helps a lot of the younger guys, even older guys like myself."

Brazilian midfielder Gregore had been the club's captain before suffering a foot injury in March.

SOCCER

With Messi rightly commanding much of the attention from Atlanta's defenders, opportunities opened for other Miami players. Taylor scored in the 44th minute, then made it 4-0 in the 53rd after being set up by Messi.

"There's times when the coach prepares a certain game in a certain way, but these two players are so good at what they do that they create space," Martino said about Messi and Busquets.

Goalkeeper Drake Callender preserved the shutout when he stopped a penalty shot by Thiago Almada in the 86th minute.

"There are things that of course after review of the game that we can do way better," Atlanta coach Gonzalo Pineda said. "I think we also had some chances to score. ... We couldn't capitalize."

Messi had entered holding hands with the son of hip-hop artist DJ Khaled.

Atlanta United midfielder Santiago Sosa (5) defends against Inter Miami forward Lionel Messi (10) during the first half of a Leagues Cup soccer match in Fort Lauderdale, Fla. (AP)

We are in a very good position

Pakistan build huge lead over Lanka after Shafique double ton in 2nd Test

COLOMBO, Sri Lanka, July 26, (AP): Opener Abdullah Shafique hit a career-best 201 as Pakistan built a huge 397-run lead over Sri Lanka on the third day of the second test.

Pakistan was 563-5 in its first innings at stumps Wednesday at the Sinhalese Sports Club.

Shafique's total came off 326 deliveries and contained 19 fours and four sixes. He improved on his previous best score in test cricket - 160 last year, also against Sri Lanka - reaching his first double hundred with a pulled single off Asitha Fernando, who took 3-133 in 24 overs.

Soon after completing his double hundred, Shafique took on Prabath Jayasuriya (2-181) but failed to clear long-off as Dilshan Madushanka took the catch.

Pakistan won the first test in Galle by four wickets and is heading for a 2-0 sweep.

advantage and we need to see how well we can wrestle back the initiative in the next two days," Sri Lanka spin bowling coach Piyal Wijetunga said.

Sri Lanka's bowlers toiled hard with little success on a batting-friendly surface and the hosts were ruing their batting collapse in the first innings where they were dismissed for 166 runs after choosing to bat first.

Shafique had got a life on 42 when Jayasuriya put down a return catch. He had been given out leg before wicket to Jayasuriya on 74 but the batter successfully overturned the decision.

Dropped catches have cost Sri Lanka dearly this series. Saud Shakeel was dropped twice in Galle and scored a double hundred.

Shafique added 89 runs for the third wicket with Babar Azam (39) before the Pakistan captain was given leg before wicket to Jayasuriya.

A 109-run stand followed for the fourth wicket between Shafique and Shakeel (57).

Sri Lanka opted for the second new ball soon after it was available and Fernando claimed his third wicket in the innings when he trapped Shakeel lbw.

CRICKET

Agha Salman, who had missed a hundred in the first test, wasn't going to miss out on one this time round. He reached his ton with a dab that ran between slip and gully to the boundary.

❑ ❑ ❑

England announced an unchanged team on Wednesday to play Australia in the fifth and final Ashes test at the Oval.

England record wicket-taker James Anderson, who turns 41 on the fourth day, retains his place in the side despite a disappointing series so far while pacer Mark Wood and all-rounder Chris Woakes have both been passed fit.

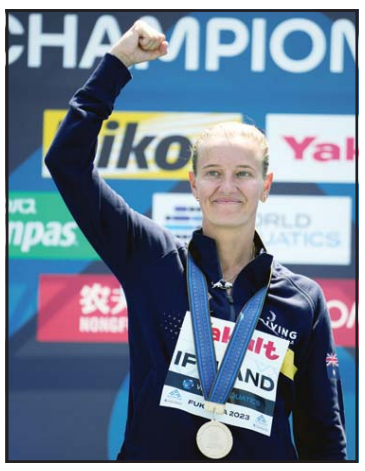
The fifth test starts Thursday.

Australia takes a 2-1 lead into the match and has already retained the urn but England is looking to level the series after the final-day washout at Old Trafford in the drawn fourth test and has kept faith in Anderson.

Australia arrived in south London with an insurmountable lead as holder of the Ashes, but a similar scenario in 2019 saw the team come unstuck in the final test and forced to settle for a drawn series.

England team: Zak Crawley, Ben Duckett, Moeen Ali, Joe Root, Harry Brook, Ben Stokes (captain), Jonny Bairstow, Chris Woakes, Mark Wood, Stuart Broad, James Anderson.

Pakistan's Abdullah Shafique celebrates scoring a double century during the third day of the second cricket Test match between Sri Lanka and Pakistan in Colombo, Sri Lanka. (AP)



Rhiannon Iffland of Australia celebrates her gold medal during the award ceremony of Women's 20 meter high diving at the World Swimming Championships at Seaside Momochi Beach Park in Fukuoka, Japan. (AP)

US face a tougher task against Dutch

AUCKLAND, New Zealand, July 26, (AP): The United States and the Netherlands meet again on the Women's World Cup stage - with smaller stakes than the 2019 title game won by the Americans - and the Dutch team collecting injuries at a terrible time of the tournament.

The Netherlands will most likely be without forward Lineth Beerensteyn, who was hurt early in her team's 1-0 victory over Portugal to open the tournament, when they play the Americans on Thursday in New Zealand's capital city of Wellington.

The Americans are the two-time reigning World Cup champions and Netherlands coach Andries Jonker said on the eve of the match "we would need a miracle" for Beerensteyn to be ready to play.

SOCCER

"And if that doesn't happen, then she won't participate," he said.

The Netherlands came to the tournament in Australia and New Zealand already missing leading scorer Vivianne Miedema, who ruptured her ACL while playing for Arsenal in December. The forward is the Netherlands' leading scorer with 95 goals.

Just before the team's first match against Portugal in Dunedin, Miedema posted a photo of herself on social media as a little girl cheering for her team. She's cried, she said, watching the Netherlands play without her.

"Although I've known I won't be able to play in this World Cup for about seven months now, it's still been pretty tough and emotional," she wrote.

Ahmed Hafnaoui of Tunisia competes during the men's 800m freestyle swimming final at the World Swimming Championships in Fukuoka, Japan. Hafnaoui won gold. (AP) – See Page 15

Sports

Latest sports scores at — http://sports.arabtimesonline.com

Japan, Spain move on to knockout stage

Canada hold off Ireland

DUNEDIN, New Zealand, July 26, (AP): Hikaru Naomoto and Aoba Fujino scored two minutes apart in the first half to lead Japan to a 2-0 Women's World Cup victory over Costa Rica on Wednesday, and the Japanese qualified for the knockout stage later when Spain beat Zambia.

Japan and Spain - 5-0 winners over Zambia - were the first teams in the tournament to move on to the round of 16. They are tied for the top spot in Group C with six points each, and seeding will be determined by the outcome of their Monday match.

Japan and Costa Rica kicked off in front of a sparse crowd of 6,992 at Dunedin Stadium, a huge differential from the record sales of over 1.5 million tickets for this year's tournament. High fan turnout in Auckland and Sydney - there were 117,000 combined at opening night in those cities - have been partly offset by much smaller crowds in Dunedin, where attendance has dropped with each match from an initial high of 13,711.

SOCCER

Las Ticas kept the pressure high throughout the match, but the Japanese dominated with precision in ball handling and passes.

Mina Tanaka passed the ball to Naomoto, who dribbled past a Costa Rican defender before scoring on outstretched goalkeeper Daniela Solera in the 25th minute. Fujino then snuck the ball in on an angle into the far left corner of the net. Costa Rican defenders Maria Paula Elizondo and Mariana Benavides failed to stop Fujino from scoring.

Japan came close to scoring earlier in the match off the rebound of a save by Solera. Hinata Miyazawa collided with Japanese teammate Aoba Fujino as they both went in for the kick, causing them to miss the shot.

Costa Rican midfielder Raquel "Rocky" Rodriguez, the star of the team, didn't come into the game until midway through the second half. She missed her team's last match against Spain due to an undisclosed injury.

Solera went down midway through the second half after taking a shoulder to the head, but she remained in the game.

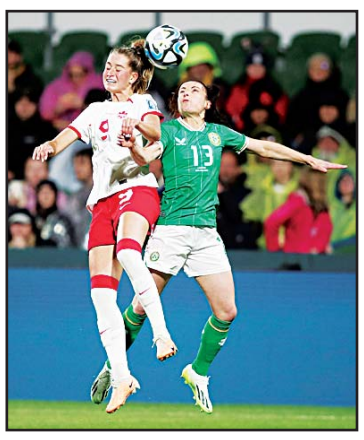
Japan has now qualified for the knockout stage for the fourth time in the nation's history.

Japan won the tournament in 2011, beating the United States, and lost to the Americans in a rematch in 2015.

Costa Rica was eliminated from contention with its second loss of the group stage.

"There are some players who are at the World Cup for the first time, but they are so energetic and that makes me so happy. The team is working together as one unit," Japan head coach Futoshi Ikeda.

"Honestly, it makes me a little emotional because, I don't know, sometimes people within our own country, they're the harshest critics for us. But to see people who come and support (us) all the way here, it means the world to us," Rodriguez on fan support for Costa Rica.



Canada's Jordyn Huitema (left), and Ireland's Aine O'Gorman battle for the ball during the Women's World Cup Group B soccer match between Canada and Ireland in Perth, Australia. (AP)

WC Standings

BRISBANE, July 26, (AP): Women's World Cup standings on Wednesday.

Group A	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	Pts
Canada	2	1	1	0	2	1	4
Australia	1	1	0	0	1	0	3
Nigeria	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
Ireland	2	0	0	2	1	3	0

Group B	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	Pts
q-Spain	2	2	0	0	8	0	6
q-Japan	2	2	0	0	7	0	6
Costa Rica	2	0	0	2	0	5	0
Zambia	2	0	0	2	0	10	0

Group C	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	Pts
United States	1	1	0	0	3	0	3
Netherlands	1	1	0	0	1	0	3
Portugal	1	0	0	1	0	1	0
Vietnam	1	0	0	1	0	3	0

Group D	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	Pts
Denmark	1	1	0	0	1	0	3
England	1	1	0	0	1	0	3
China	1	0	0	1	0	1	0
Haiti	1	0	0	1	0	1	0

Group E	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	Pts
Sweden	1	1	0	0	2	1	3
Italy	1	1	0	0	1	0	3
South Africa	1	0	0	1	1	2	0
Argentina	1	0	0	1	0	1	0

Group F	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	Pts
Brazil	1	1	0	0	4	0	3
France	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
Jamaica	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
Panama	1	0	0	1	0	4	0

Group G	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	Pts
Germany	1	1	0	0	6	0	3
Colombia	1	1	0	0	2	0	3
South Korea	1	0	0	1	0	2	0
Morocco	1	0	0	1	0	6	0

Note 1: Standings read as played, won, drawn lost goals for goals against and points.

Note 2: q denotes qualified for the knockout stage.

Japan faces Spain in the New Zealand capital of Wellington in a match to decide the winner of Group C and knockout round seeding. Japan will need to win that match to capture first place in the group because Spain has the edge in goal differential.

Also on Monday, Costa Rica travels to Hamilton to play Zambia.

Spain 5, Zambia 0

In Auckland, Jennifer Hermoso scored twice and assisted in her 100th international appearance to push Spain past Zambia

Hermoso, Spain's all-time leading scorer, deposited a one-time header off a perfect cross from Alexia Putellas in the 13th minute. She then gathered a rebound and scored on an empty net in the 70th minute. The goal was initially wiped away for offside, then eventually confirmed after a lengthy review.

Teresa Abelleira launched a 58-mph strike from well outside the box in the ninth minute and beat Eunice Sakala to the top side of the net, her second goal with the Spain national team.

Like Hermoso, Alba Redondo also scored twice, in the 69th and 85th minutes. Her first goal was an impressive run off of a long pass, while her second was on a rebound in front of an empty net.

Spain's attack benefitted from facing Zambia's third-string goalkeeper. Sakala started Monday night after the starting goalie and her backup were injured and received a red card, respectively.

The game was played before 20,983 fans in chilly Eden Park, the lowest attendance of the four games played so far in New Zealand's largest city.

Barbra Banda registered Zambia's first shot on goal of the tournament in the eighth minute, a good chance to turn early momentum toward the Copper Queens. Spain's Misa Rodriguez saved the rolling shot.

Abelleira scored in the next minute, and Spain held a clear advantage through the rest of the match.

Costa Rica are eliminated from advancing out of Group C.

Canada 2, Ireland 1

In Perth, Canada recovered from conceding directly from a corner kick to seal a come-from-behind 2-1 win against Ireland .

Adriana Leon's second-half strike at Perth's rain-soaked Rectangular Stadium boosted Olympic champion Canada's hopes of advancing to the round of 16 by moving to the top of Group B.

Defeat for Ireland saw it eliminated from the tournament after back-to-back losses on its first appearance at a World Cup.

It had all started so well for Ireland when captain Katie McCabe curled a fourth-minute corner beyond Canada goalkeeper Kailen Sheridan into the back of the net.

But an own-goal by Megan Connolly in the fifth minute of first-half time added on gifted Canada an equalizer before the break.

Leon scored the winner in the 53rd after an assist from substitute Sophie Schmidt.

Schmidt was one of three halftime substitutes made by Canada coach Beverly Priestman, with Christine Sinclair and Shelina Zadorsky also coming on.

The changes turned the course of the game, with Schmidt cutting open Ireland's defense to set up Leon.

McCabe's stunning goal was Ireland's first ever at a World Cup and could be a contender for the best of the tournament.

Ireland's exit comes after losing 1-0 against Australia in its opening game. Canada drew 0-0 with Nigeria.

Japan's Yui Hasegawa (right), and Costa Rica's Priscilla Chinchilla compete for the ball during the Women's World Cup Group C soccer match between Japan and Costa Rica in Dunedin, New Zealand. (AP)

Bach invokes John Lennon's memory

Paris marks 1-year countdown to Olympic Games

PARIS, July 26, (AP): The president of the International Olympic Committee on Wedn\esday formally invited the world's nations but not Russia or its military ally Belarus to gather in one year in Paris for the Olympics - launching the final countdown to the 2024 Games against the backdrop of war in Ukraine.

IOC president Thomas Bach accompanied his invite with a plea for togetherness and invoked the memory of John Lennon as he argued that "our fragile world, with conflicts, divisions and wars rising," needs the Olympics' "unifying power more than ever."

"The Olympic Games must always build bridges. The Olympic Games must never erect walls. Imagine. You may say we are dreamers. We are not the only ones," Bach said, borrowing from Lennon's famous peace anthem, "Imagine."

OLYMPICS

Bach has heaped praise on Paris' preparations this week as the French capital marked the year-to-go milestone to the opening ceremony on July 26, 2024.

"Paris is maybe at this stage the best-prepared city ever," Bach said.

Without the usual worries about whether Olympic venues will be ready, the biggest unknown this time is whether Bach and the IOC will let athletes from Russia and Belarus compete.

In Paris this week, the IOC president has not deviated from his line that there may be a pathway for some of them to compete as "neutral athletes," without their countries' flags, names or colors, but that the final decision will come later.

"There's still one year to go," Bach said Wednesday. "We have not taken any decision about the participation of individual neutral athletes yet."

The sending out of formal invites for national Olympic committees and their best athletes to take part in the July 26 to Aug. 11 Olympics is an IOC tradition to mark the year-to-go milestone of both Summer and Winter Games. This time, 203 NOCs are getting them. Some picked up their invites from Bach in person Wednesday at a ceremony at the Paris Games headquarters. An invite also went to the IOC's team of refugee athletes.

Guatemala joined Russia and Belarus on the list of NOCs that aren't invited. Guatemala is suspended from the Olympic movement because of alleged government interference with the independence of its NOC.

Other year-to-go events this week have been less formal than the ceremony where Bach spoke about Olympic values and where a violinist played France's national anthem and Lennon's "Imagine."

On a visit to the Olympic village that will house many of the 10,500 Olympians and 4,400 Paralympic athletes, Bach got to test one of the cardboard beds they'll sleep on. Cardboard beds were also used at the pandemic-delayed Tokyo Games in 2021 and became something of a hit when athletes posted videos of themselves testing their durability.

"I can assure them that they will sleep very well in these beds," Bach said.

He also rubbed shoulders with eight-time gold-medal winner Usain Bolt, who was the star guest on a festive trip for Olympic officials and French athletes on the River Seine. The boat trip Tuesday to the foot of the Eiffel Tower offered a small foretaste of the unprecedented waterborne opening ceremony that Paris is planning for its Games.

Paris organizers this week also unveiled the design of the sleek silver-colored torch that will be used to carry the Olympic flame around France and on its final leg at the July 26 opening.

And they snagged a sponsorship deal with the world's biggest luxury group, LVMH Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton.

The Olympic torch is pictured during the IOC invitation ceremony, exactly one year before the 2024 Olympics, Wednesday, July 26, 2023 in Saint-Denis, outside Paris. The torch that will be used to carry the Olympic flame around France and on its final leg at the opening ceremony of the 2024 Paris Games next July is a sleek silver-colored cylinder of recycled steel that is gracefully tapered at both ends and is being made in limited numbers to save resources. (AP)

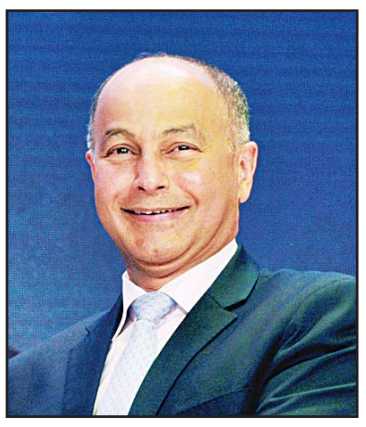
World swim body re-elects Al-Musallam for 8 years, agrees to move to Hungary

FUKUOKA, Japan, July 26, (AP): Swimming officials gave World Aquatics president Husain al-Musallam an eight-year mandate on Tuesday to lead them and backed his plan to move the organization's headquarters to Hungary, where the government has offered a 15-year rent-free deal and legal protection.

The election on the sidelines of the world championships in Japan resets al-Musallam's presidential term in reforms enacted after he was first elected unopposed two years ago. The reforms allow for two terms - the first for eight years and a second for four years.

The Kuwaiti official now can be in office through 2031, taking in the Paris Olympics next year and the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics, with the possibility then to a seek a final four-year term ending in 12 years' time.

World Aquatics plans to move from the Olympic capital of Lausanne, Switzerland - which has been its home for 37 years - to the Hungarian capital before the swim worlds returns to Budapest in 2027.



In this file photo, First Vice President of the International Swimming Federation, FINA, Husain Al-Musallam, attends the FINA World Aquatics Gala in Budapest, Hungary. (AP)

Minutes after being re-elected Tuesday, al-Musallam got overwhelming support from member federations to advance a working agreement announced in May with the government of Prime Minister Viktor Orbán.

The proposed headquarters near the Danube Arena - which hosted the worlds in 2017 and 2022, and is scheduled to do so again in 2027 - includes pools and training facilities for international athletes in swimming, diving, water polo and artistic swimming.

Hungarian foreign minister Péter Szijjártó promised swim officials Tuesday they would have the headquarters site "free of charge for 15 years."

"We are ready to provide you with tax benefits," Szijjártó said. "And we provide immunity for all your official activities and official documentation."

Moving from Lausanne would save millions each year and let the governing body double its staff numbers in Budapest plus invest more in athletes, al-Musallam told his voters.

"World Aquatics will not spend money on this headquarters. So you don't have to worry about the financials," he said.

Al-Musallam has now been elected unopposed three times by national swimming federations - first as senior vice-president and twice as president - since April 2017 when he was implicated in United States federal court documents in the guilty plea of a soccer official from Guam who admitted taking bribes. Al-Musallam consistently denied wrongdoing and was not indicted.

Three weeks ago, he lost an election to be president of the Olympic Council of Asia in a 24-20 vote to a fellow Kuwaiti, Sheikh Talal Fahad Al-Sabah.

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