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16 PAGES

150 FILS

AWARENESS CAMPAIGN LAUNCHED TO AVERT DIABETES, HEART AILMENT, CANCER

Risk factors for disease high in Kuwait

Fast food main culprit in obesity

Kuwait's rating at AA-, stable outlook: Fitch

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 22: In its recent assessment, Fitch Ratings has highlighted the robustness of Kuwait's banking sector, noting that banks in the country are well-capitalized, well-funded, and exhibit strong risk management practices, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Fitch anticipates a modest credit growth of 3 percent to 4 percent in 2024, influenced by higher interest rates and limited real GDP growth.

However, the agency maintains a stable outlook for Kuwait's rating at "AA-", acknowledging the sector's resilience while noting constraints related to oil dependency and the large public sector.

Fitch's analysis underscores that while Kuwaiti banks are positioned well with adequate capital and strong practices, overcoming political and institutional barriers is essential for accelerating credit growth and realizing the sector's full potential.

The agency views the recent uptick in banking mergers and acquisitions as a positive development for the sector, as it promotes business model diversification and enhances financial stability.

Fitch's report comes amid ongoing discussions about significant mergers within the Kuwaiti banking industry. Notably, the Boubayan Bank, the nation's second-largest Islamic bank, and Gulf Bank, the fifth-largest, are exploring a potential merger.

If realized, this merger could create a formidable Islamic bank with assets totaling 16 billion dinars (approximately \$53 billion) and a 15 percent market share in terms of consolidated assets. However, Fitch does not anticipate the merger's completion before 2025.

The landscape of banking mergers in Kuwait has been active, with Burgan Bank announcing its acquisition of a 100 percent stake in Bahrain's United Gulf Bank in June.

This move is part of Burgan Bank's strategy to optimize capital and concentrate on GCC markets. Previous attempts at consolidation, such as the planned merger between Gulf Bank and Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait in 2023, were canceled.

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New Entertainment City to open in 2 years' time

By Inaas Awadh
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 22: The Municipal Council's approval of the Ministry of Finance's request to transfer ownership of the Entertainment City project from the Amiri Diwan to the Kuwait Investment Authority (KIA) has finally set the long-awaited project on the path to implementation.

This move by the government constitutes a strong push for its efforts aimed at supporting development projects in the country. It will contribute to upgrading the tourism sector in Kuwait to form a non-oil revenue stream that will positively impact the nation's income.

According to informed sources, the timetable for the new Entertainment City project aims for completion within two years. The KIA has assured the Municipal Council that it will present a comprehensive and integrated vision for the project and launch it within six months.

The Ministry of Finance's decision to transfer the management of the Entertainment City project from the Amiri Diwan to the KIA is in line with the ministry's latest plan, which was presented by Minister of Finance Dr. Anwar Al-Mudhaf at the first forum on the state's general budget. It is part of a broader financial and economic reform package designed to boost non-oil revenues, with a particular focus on enhancing the tourism sector.

A study submitted by the Tourism Enterprises Company in 2023 revealed that Kuwait has the lowest contribution from the tourism sector to its gross domestic product (GDP) compared to other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, with just 6.1 percent. On the other hand, tourism contributes 10.8 percent to the GDP in the UAE, 9.8 percent in Bahrain, 9.7 percent in Qatar, 9.4 percent in Saudi Arabia, and 6.8 percent in Oman.

In contrast, Kuwait's annual spending on tourism overseas is estimated to exceed KD 4 billion (USD 14 billion), which represents about 11 percent of the country's GDP.

Meanwhile, the Tourism Enterprises Company has formed a team of consultants to explore ways to develop the Entertainment City project to maximize economic benefits for the country.

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A group of people catching fish with a net, in low-tide, opposite Kuwait City.

Photo by Mohammad Morsi

Hajj registration Nov 3-17 through 'My Identity' app

By Abdul Nasser Al-Aslami
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 22: The Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs issued a circular specifying the general terms of the Hajj registration system for the upcoming Hajj season of 1446 AH.

In the circular sent to licensed Hajj organizers, the ministry detailed the process for registering and nominating pilgrims. This aims to develop the registration process and serve the pilgrims, as per the decision of the Supreme Committee for Hajj and Umrah during meeting No. 1/1446.

The ministry explained that the central registration system will be open to the public to register automatically via the My Identity app. Registration period will be from Sunday, November 3, 2024 to Sunday, November 17, 2024.

The terms stated by the ministry are as follows:

1. Applicant must be a Kuwaiti citizen
2. Have not performed Hajj before
3. The group size must not exceed three people
4. The group must consist of relatives

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Info sets Sept 30 'deadline' to submit post-12 degrees

By Mohammad Al-Musleh
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 22: The Ministry of Information has given its employees time until September 30 to submit their post-secondary educational certificates.

This is a new deadline issued via a circular issued by the ministry's Undersecretary Nasser Al-Muhaisen, which emphasizes its commitment to streamline procedures for both Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti employees.

According to the circular, employees are required to upload their documents on the Ministry's website and verify their credentials using the 'My ID' application.

For those holding certificates from private institutions in Kuwait or abroad, a scanned copy of the certificate must be uploaded, along with the equivalency issued by the Ministry of Higher Education.

Al-Muhaisen also highlighted that non-Kuwaiti (bedoun) employees must submit their certificates to the Department of Administrative Affairs for job classification purposes.

The ministry warned that failure to comply within the specified time-frame could result in the employee facing consequences determined by the relevant authorities, with the responsibility falling solely on the employee.

Minister vows accountability for Jabriya building collapse

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 22, (KUNA): Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Sharida Al-Mouasherji vowed that those responsible for the collapse of a building in Jabriya would be held accountable.

"We are waiting for the final report about the incident," he told reporters on Wednesday evening.

He expressed appreciation to all efforts made by different ministries and competent bodies, which dealt seriously with the incident despite difficult conditions and hot weather.

Al-Mouasherji added that a team worked on lifting the rubble to make

sure that there were neither victims nor injuries.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Interior said its team, along with the Kuwait Fire Force (KFF), dealt with the collapse.

The incident took place due to negligence from the contractor responsible for the demolition, the ministry's security media and public relations department said in a statement.

It added that the contractor ran away from the site after the incident took place.

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Fire brigade personnel at the site of the building collapse.

KUNA photo

3.5 temblor hits north Kuwait

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 22, (KUNA): Kuwait National Seismic Network (KNSN), affiliated to Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR), said on Wednesday that an earthquake measuring 3.5 on the Richter scale hit northern

Kuwait at 4:46pm (local time).

In a news statement, the KNSN said the quake was six km deep, adding that a 2.2-magnitude aftershock took place at 6:33 the same evening at the same location and the same depth.



Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya receives the French ambassador to Kuwait Claire Le Flecher.

KUNA photo

FM, French envoy discuss ties

Kuwait Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya met Thursday with the French ambassador to the country Claire

Le Flecher. During the meeting, both sides touched on the bilateral ties between the two friendly countries. (KUNA)

MoH dismisses allegations of surgery delayed by biometrics

By Marwa Al-Bahrawi
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 22: The Ministry of Health denied claims made by a doctor on the X platform that the need for using the fingerprint system during working hours had disrupted a surgical operation.

In a press statement, the ministry asserted that such comments are "a disgrace to the health sector" and warned of taking legal action against anyone spreading false information that could incite panic among patients, their families, and the general public. It added that such misinformation could damage the reputation of the national health institution and its dedicated professionals.

The ministry clarified that, after investigating the incident, it was determined that the details in the post were false and lacked accuracy in both de-

scription and reporting.

Throughout the operation, the entire surgical team, including the anesthesiologist and nursing staff, was present to monitor the patient's condition. Contrary to the implication, the surgeon was not alone with the patient during the procedure.

Also, the radiology technician left the operating room only after completing their role and taking the necessary X-rays, which is standard practice in all cases.

The ministry stated that there is an approved mechanism for verifying attendance or departure in exceptional cases when the employees are unable to use the fingerprint system. For those working in operating rooms, a pre-prepared form needs to be filled with the reason for the inability to use the fingerprint system to prove presence during working hours.

25 held in massive drugs, liquor bust

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 22, (KUNA): The Ministry of Interior (MoI) announced on Wednesday that the law-enforcers seized 15 kgs of varied types of drugs, including 60,000 psychotropic pills and 70,000 capsules ready to be packed.

The seizures also include 350 bottles of wine, three unlicensed guns and ammunition as well as some funds at the hands of 25 persons accused in 16 different cases, the ministry said in a news statement.

The move is part of the continued campaigns of the MoI aiming to thwart any attempts to bring narcotics into the country.

Those accused and the seized items were referred to competent bodies to take legal action against them, it added, stressing continued security efforts to monitor any attempts of those trying to trade in narcotics, to protect the society.

The ministry appealed to all to cooperate with security men and inform them about any negative phenomena through its Emergency No. 112 or the Hotline of the General Directorate for Drug Control (1884141).

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NewsWatch

KUWAIT CITY: The Amiri Diwan on Thursday mourned the passing away of Sheikh Salman Faisal Duajj Al-Salman Al-Sabah at the age of 49. The funeral service is to take place today after Maghrib prayers. (KUNA)

BAGHDAD: Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammad Al-Sudani and Saudi Foreign Minister Faisal bin Farhan Al-Saud discussed Thursday bilateral relations between the two countries and the repercussions of the war in the Gaza Strip.

In a press release, the media office of the Iraqi Prime Minister stated that the two sides discussed bilateral relations between Iraq and the Kingdom and prospects for developing and growing them in all fields. (KUNA)

GAZA: At least 26 Palestinians have been killed across various areas of the Gaza Strip since early Thursday morning due to ongoing aggression by the Israeli occupation forces, according to health authorities.

In a press statement, the authorities confirmed that rescue teams recovered the bodies of 14 Palestinians after an airstrike targeted two homes in Beit Lahia, northern Gaza. Additionally, six bodies, including that of a journalist, were retrieved from the Al-Maghazi camp in central Gaza, while six others were found in different locations. (KUNA)

DUBAI: A French destroyer rescued 29 mariners from an oil tanker that came under repeated attack in the Red Sea, officials said Thursday, while also destroying a bomb-carrying drone boat in the area.

Yemen's Houthi rebels are suspected to have carried out the assault on the Sounion, now abandoned in the waterway. The Sounion is now at anchor in the Red Sea and no longer drifting, the European Union's Operation Aspidos said. (AP)

Prayer Timings

Fajr 03:56 Asr 15:26
 Sunrise .. 05:20 Maghrib .. 18:22
 Zohr 11:51 Isha 19:43

Local

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

Embassy extends congratulations to Ukrainians worldwide on 33rd anniversary

Ukraine marks National Day amid global call for peace and security

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 22: This year, on August 24th, Ukraine marks the 33rd anniversary of the restoration of its independence. For Ukrainians, this day transcends being just a national holiday; it is a solemn tribute to Ukraine's thousand-year-old state-building tradition, rooted in the Kyivan Rus, as the oldest recorded mention of the word 'Ukraina' appears in the Kyivan Chronicle under the year 1187. Today, independence is not just a legacy we inherit but a responsibility that requires immense sacrifices.

Every Ukrainian now deeply understands the true meaning of independence because it is something we are actively defending. Independence for us signifies the freedom to choose our own path – one that we see as peaceful, prosperous, and guided by universal human values. This vision aligns closely with Kuwait's ap-

proach to national development, which has earned global recognition as a Humanitarian Center. Ukraine is deeply grateful to Kuwait for decades of effective and mutually beneficial cooperation, characterized by mutual support and humanitarian aid in times of need, developing trade relations, legendary sports ties, and enriching cultural and academic exchanges.

On this occasion, we also extend our heartfelt thanks to the foreign diplomatic missions accredited to Kuwait and their respective capitals for standing with us in upholding international law, justice and security. Together with foreign partners, Ukraine has made significant contributions to overcoming the consequences of humanitarian crises worldwide, as Ukrainians are acutely aware of what a humanitarian disaster means. Thus, in collaboration with several dozen countries and

international organizations, we successfully implement the 'Grain from Ukraine' food security program, aimed at helping countries affected by food shortages. To date, the program has dispatched 10 vessels carrying over 200,000 tons of wheat and flour to Somalia, Ethiopia, Kenya, Yemen, Nigeria, Sudan, and Palestine, with the latter recently receiving 1,000 tons of Ukrainian flour – enough to feed 100,000 people in Gaza for a month.

In conclusion, we extend our congratulations to Ukrainians worldwide on the 33rd anniversary of Ukraine's independence. We raise our blue-and-yellow flags in honor of our freedom – something that cannot be taken from us, alongside respect for international law and security, for the benefit of all peace-loving nations. We also wish for peace, security, and stability to prevail throughout the world.

Weather

Expected weather for next 24 hrs:

By Day: Hot and humid especially over coastal areas with light variable wind changing to light to moderate southeasterly wind, with speeds of 08-32 km/h.

By Night: Hot to rather hot and humid especially over coastal ar-

eas with light to moderate southeasterly wind to light variable wind, with speeds of 08-32 km/h with a chance for light fog forming over some areas.

Station **Max Exp** **Min Rec**
 Kuwait City 44 36

Kuwait Airport	44	33
Abdaly	45	31
Jahra	46	31
Salmiyah	40	34
Jal Aliyah	46	30
Nuwaisib	46	33
Wafra	46	30



Several programs from accreditation list removed

'Education' enforces attendance regulations, details punishment

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 22: The Ministry of Education has taken a firm stance on enforcing attendance regulations, especially regarding the new fingerprint attendance system, which has been integrated with the Civil Service Commission's systems, reports Al-Jarida daily.

Here's a summary of the key points:

Implementation of Fingerprint System -- The ministry has linked its fingerprint attendance system with the Civil Service Commission. This system, also referred to as the "third" fingerprint, is now actively monitoring employee attendance and punctuality.

Penalties for Non-Compliance -- Starting from September's salaries, employees who do not adhere to the attendance regulations will face salary deductions. These deductions are based on delays and non-compliance with the fingerprint attendance system.

According to the Civil Service Law the following are the rules for attendance -- employees are allowed a maximum of 105 minutes of lateness per month; excess lateness is deducted from the salary, ranging from a quarter of a day to a full day, depending on the duration of the delay and if an employee fails to prove attendance within the sixty-minute period following the first two hours of the workday, it is considered unauthorized absence.

Initial reports indicate that around 500 employees have been registered for delays due to non-compliance with the fingerprint system.

Some employees who forget to use the fingerprint system may also face penalties despite being present at work.

The ministry has emphasized that there will be no leniency in enforcing these penalties. Deductions will be applied based on the delays recorded in August, and adherence to official working hours and the fingerprint system will be strictly monitored.

Meanwhile, Dr. Adel Al-Adwani, the Minister of Education, Higher Education, and Scientific Research has issued a decision to remove several academic programs and degrees from the list of higher education institutions in the United States recommended by the National Authority for Academic Accreditation and Educational Quality Assurance, reports Al-Jarida daily.

The affected programs include Master's in Global Logistics from the University of Arizona - West Campus; Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Administration from the University of Oregon; Bachelor's degree in Nutrition Science from the University of California, Berkeley; Master's in Nutrition from California Polytechnic State University, Pomona and Master's and Doctorate in Nutrition from the University of Arizona.

Dr. Al-Adwani emphasized that this decision should be considered in the context of enrollment regulations and study systems in educational institutions outside Kuwait.

The decision is effective immediately, and any previous texts that contradict this new decision are repealed.

Expats misuse visit visa, seen on roads looking for odd jobs

Local, foreign networks active selling fake permits

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 22: Security authorities have taken strict precautionary measures to prevent anyone from exploiting loopholes in the visa regulations, reports Al-Shahed daily quoting sources.

Sources revealed that some of those who entered Kuwait on family visit visa did not leave after the three-month validity period. Sources said majority of those who came to Kuwait on family visit visa engaged in marginal work on the streets, indicating these people exploited the opportunity to work illegally.

Sources confirmed that the residency affairs investigation officers arrested hundreds of those who did not leave Kuwait after the expiration of the family visit visa and deported them immediately along with their sponsors who were lenient with the visitors and did not ask them to leave upon the expiration of their visas.

Sources said there are internal and external networks trading in expatriate visas; some of their members were arrested, while others are still involved in suspicious activities. This has prompted the security authorities to take strict precautionary measures; such as scrutinizing all types of visa holders, and preventing the re-entry of any person deported from Kuwait regardless of the justification. Sources affirmed that those with previous convictions and those who committed crimes -- whether fraud or misdemeanor, and were imprisoned and deported, are permanently banned from entering Kuwait.

In addition, sources revealed that networks in and outside the country are selling expatriate visas for as much as KD1,000 per visa which is forged; while a number of people inside Kuwait were arrested for selling visas through social media.

In a related development, security sources disclosed that the concerned authorities have started taking measures to prevent the entry of deportees, those with criminal records, and those who committed drug crimes, fraud and deception even if they changed their names in their passports.

Sources added the Ministry of Interior has launched a mechanism to regulate the entry of expatriate workers, verify the entry of workers and visitors, and authenticate entry visas electronically before the holders board the aircraft in order to prevent tampering.

MoH inks KD107m deals to promote medicine security

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 22, (KUNA): The Kuwaiti Ministry of Health has signed 145 contracts worth KD 107 million (around USD 350 million) as part of ongoing endeavors to launch new hospitals and clinics in a bid to promote the country's medicine security.

The Ministry's Assistant Undersecretary for Medicine and Medical Preparations Khaled Al-Yaseen said in a press statement that the ministry had concluded 106 medicine contracts, 30 medical supply contracts and nine lab equipment contracts.

The move came after all required legal and regulatory approvals were obtained, the official underlined, terming the process as part of the ministry's strategy to boost the country's strategic medicine and lab stock and to provide high-quality and efficient health services.



A photo during the signing of the MoU.

Housing authority initials MoU with SMEs fund

PAHW inks KD 37.2m asphalt subcontract for South Saad Al-Abdullah Housing City

By Mohammed Al Musleh

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 22: Public Authority for Housing Welfare (PAHW) and Abdulrahman Al-Kandari, Acting Director General of the National Fund, has recently signed a subcontracting agreement worth 37.2 million dinars for asphalt work.

The contract includes the supply, implementation, testing, maintenance, and delivery of asphalt works, with an expected completion period of 38 months.

In a related development, the authority has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the National Fund for Small and Medium Enterprises to strengthen and expand the collab-

oration between the two entities.

The MoU was signed in a ceremony attended by Eng. Rashid Al-Enezi, Acting Director General of the PAHW, and Abdulrahman Al-Kandari, Acting Director General of the National Fund.

Eng. Ahmed Al-Mohammed Al-Ansari, Acting Deputy Director General for Investment Affairs and Private Sector Projects, highlighted that the agreement represents a mutual commitment to enhancing cooperation for the public good.

The MoU will provide essential support to entrepreneurs and small and medium enterprises (SMEs) financed by the National Fund and registered in the National Registry. This initiative aligns with the existing laws and regulations governing both parties.

Eng. Al-Ansari noted that the housing sector has previously engaged in contracts to establish and operate small projects in various residential cities, including Jaber Al-Ahmad City, Saad Al-Abdullah City, and the West Abdullah Al-Mubarak Project.

These projects address the needs of residents in new areas and are integral to the state's strategy for promoting private sector involvement in national development.

He emphasized that the small and medium projects in housing cities are not merely economic initiatives but crucial components of a broader strategy to foster private sector growth, create job opportunities for Kuwaiti youth, diversify income sources, and reduce reliance on the government sector.

KISR to build world's first advanced desalination plant

AAEI acts to improve education institutes efficiency

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 22: The Association of Administrators of Educational Institutions (AAEI) has made several recommendations to improve the management and efficiency of educational institutions, reports Al-Jarida daily.

The association advocates for standardizing job descriptions across all administrative roles within the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Higher Education. This would align positions with academic degrees and ensure that job titles and responsibilities match employees' qualifications.

The association stresses the need for a swift review of all academic certificates held by members of the education and higher education sectors.

This is aimed at ensuring that all credentials are properly vetted and that leadership and supervisory positions can be filled promptly before the new academic year begins.

The association calls on ministry officials to develop and implement action plans for maintaining and equipping classrooms and other academic sectors to prepare for the academic year without issues.

The association has commended Dr. Adel Al-Adwani, the Minister of Education and Minister of Higher Education, for his efforts in reviewing and approving academic certificates for employees in various educational institutions. This includes schools, Kuwait and Abdullah Al-Salem Universities, the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training, and the Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research.

Seawater desalination plant: The Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research is set to establish a pioneering desalination plant in Doha with a production capacity of 50 million

imperial gallons per day, ranking it as the ninth such plant in the country, reports Al-Rai daily.

This facility will be the first of its kind globally, using the cutting-edge technology that harnesses wasted and dissipated energy.

The report highlights Kuwait's position as the second country in the world for scarcity of natural fresh water resources and third in per capita water consumption.

Currently, Kuwait has eight desalination plants producing a total of 695.1 million imperial gallons per day, with the Doha West plant leading at 170.4 million imperial gallons, followed by Al-Zour South at 145.2 million imperial gallons.

The new plant aims to address growing population demands, government projects, and commercial and agricultural needs, ensuring future water security as desalination capacity must increase to meet these future requirements.

Gov't needs to be given more time to realize achievements, says Al-Kharafi

By Marwa Al-Bahrawi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 22: Chairman of the Kuwait Industries Union Hussain Al-Kharafi says the first 100 days since the formation of the government represent a period of anticipation and exploration of the government's economic and political reform.

He insisted that this time frame is insufficient to fully implement the government's plans, strategies, and work program, especially considering the challenges left by the previous administrations that have had negative impacts across various sectors.

Al-Kharafi stressed that it is unfair to judge the government's performance and achievements within this short period, adding that he has observed emerging signs of political reform and positive economic recovery and growth trends.

In a press statement, Al-Kharafi highlighted several positive achievements attributed to the current government within this short period. For example, the Kuwait Authority for Partnership Projects has made significant strides by qualifying international companies for investing in solar energy production.

He also highlighted the resumption of the Central Tender Committee's activities after a long hiatus, indicating that the committee recently adopted several key decisions related to awarding major projects, such as the Mutlaa water treatment plant, road repair and maintenance, and other projects that had previously been stalled.

Observations

It is worth mentioning that Al-Kharafi's observations reflect his involvement in the industrial sector and his keen interest in economic affairs, which have given him insight into the projects currently prioritized by the state.

Al-Kharafi explained that the Kuwait Authority for Partnership Projects recently announced the launch of several projects after a long period of inactivity. This move is significant, considering the fact that the authority has only completed three projects since its establishment about ten years ago, which are the Umm Al-Hayman water treatment project, the North Al-Zour Power Station, and the Health Insurance Hospitals Company project. Despite announcing several projects over the years, many have been halted without clear or publicly explained reasons.

Al-Kharafi stated that the Council of Ministers, as the executive body of the state following the dissolution of the National Assembly, must now demonstrate its capabilities in various fields, and it currently has the authority and resources to achieve the

goals of its citizens.

He said he wondered why the Health Insurance Hospitals Project for expatriates has not yet been launched, adding, "Despite its significance in alleviating the burden on state hospitals and improving services for expatriates, the project continues to be stalled, and the reasons for its delay are unclear".

Al-Kharafi stressed that the Health Insurance Hospitals Project is a crucial initiative for the Kuwait Authority for Partnership Projects, and its successful implementation would serve as a key driver for attracting and motivating further investments in other projects.

He expressed optimism that the current government, given its performance during this brief period, will soon launch the Health Insurance Hospitals Project, as this development would pave the way for other pending projects to move forward.

Al-Kharafi affirmed that the health insurance hospitals are fully equipped with the necessary medical staff, including doctors and nurses, and essential equipment, adding that they are only awaiting the official go-ahead.

He indicated that the Medical City project for retirees, announced by the Public Institution for Social Security and established by the Kuwait Medical City Company for the purpose of supervising the study, design, construction and operation of this project, might face similar delays as the health insurance hospitals.

Al-Kharafi highlighted that this project, which aims to provide high-quality health services for Kuwaiti retirees, could remain in the preparation phase for many years if not prioritized.

Economic

Al-Kharafi praised the recent economic initiatives, including the Kuwaiti-Chinese Memorandum of Understanding, which was issued by an Amiri Decree and focuses on enhancing cooperation in the field of electrical and renewable energy.

He commended the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for its coordination with the Chinese delegation and the Ministry of Electricity, and their regular meetings to discuss the implementation of agreements related to the third and fourth phases of the solar energy project.

Al-Kharafi also lauded the state's efforts to revive the railway link project between Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, as well as other recently-announced government projects, all of which are important and require widespread support as well as implementation due to their significant economic and societal benefits.

State-of-the-art facility marks a leap in healthcare standards

Kuwaiti and Saudi Funds power new hospital in Mauritius

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 22: In a momentous ceremony, the Sir Anirudh Jagnauth Hospital in Mauritius was officially inaugurated, marking a significant milestone in the island nation's healthcare development, reports Al-Jarida Daily.

The grand opening was a testament to international collaboration, featuring prominent dignitaries and key figures from both Mauritius and Kuwait.

Prime Minister Pravind Kumar Jagnauth graced the event, alongside Dr. Kailash Kumar Singh Jagutpal, the Minister of Health. Their presence underscored the importance of the project, which was designed to elevate healthcare standards

in the Flacq District.

The Kuwaiti delegation was led by Acting Deputy Director General Iman Al-Abdul-Razzaq and included Iyad Al-Gharabally from the Operations Department for Central, South, and East Africa.

This ambitious project was a joint endeavor, financed by both the Kuwaiti Fund for Arab Economic Development and the Saudi Fund.

The goal was clear: to enhance healthcare infrastructure in Mauritius, meeting the increasing demand for modern medical services. The hospital represents a significant leap forward,

equipped with cutting-edge technology and a robust infrastructure.

In 2018, the Mauritian government secured a loan from the Kuwaiti and Saudi Funds, laying the foundation for this state-of-the-art facility. With a capacity of 550 beds, the Sir Anirudh Jagnauth Hospital stands as a beacon of advanced healthcare.

The hospital boasts high-quality medical equipment and approximately ten high-tech operating rooms, poised to provide comprehensive care for around 200,000 residents. It is particularly well-equipped to address complex heart diseases and other critical medical needs.

The financial scope of the project was substantial, with a combined investment of approximately \$127 million from both funds. The Kuwaiti Fund contributed around \$24 million, reflecting its commitment to supporting health development in the region.

The new hospital significantly expands capacity compared to the previous Flacq Hospital, which had only 350 beds.

As the ribbon was cut and the doors of the Sir Anirudh Jagnauth Hospital opened, it symbolized not just a new healthcare facility but a strengthened bond between nations dedicated to improving global health standards.



Photo taken during the inauguration. Al-Jarida photo

Ministry cites foreign shareholders

Gulf firm's Kuwait entry halted

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 22: The Ministry of Commerce and Industry has denied a Gulf company's application to open a branch in Kuwait, citing the involvement of non-Gulf shareholders as a reason, reports Al-Rai daily.

The ministry's stance is based on the requirement that Gulf companies must

be fully owned by Gulf nationals to open a branch in Kuwait.

The company argued that it holds a Gulf license and should be treated as a Gulf entity under legal and Gulf agreements, emphasizing that most of its shareholders are from the licensing country.

They have requested the Fatwa and

Legislation Department's opinion, claiming that the rejection violates the principle of reciprocity, as the licensing country allows Kuwaiti companies to operate within its market.

The ministry has forwarded the company's legal documents to the relevant authorities for further review.

Kuwait Municipality rejects proposed 'ad fee' revisions

Current structure remains

By Inaas Awadh

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 22: Kuwait Municipality has confirmed that the proposal of Municipal Council member Fahad Al-Abduljader to revise some fees stipulated in Advertisement Regulation No. 599/2023 contradicts Ministerial Resolution No. 599/2023 and its amendments, particularly Article 20 on the licensing fees for advertisements.



Al-Abduljader

The newspaper obtained a copy of the official statement of the Municipality in this regard, in which it revealed that its Advertising Committee reviewed the proposal that includes increasing the fees for advertising temporary construction projects and mobile vehicles licensed by the Ministry of Commerce to KD10 per square meter annually.

The committee pointed out that Article 20 on advertising license fees and Clause One for advertising temporary construction projects stipulate a fee of KD5 per square meter per month; while the fee for identification advertisements (specifically advertisements without a trademark) is KD10 per

PAHW offers 28 low-cost rental housing allocation

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 22: The Public Authority for Housing Welfare announced the availability of 28 government rental housing, "low-cost homes," in Sulaibiya, Taima, and Sabah Al-Salem Apartments, for applicants who had registered in 2000 and earlier, reports Al-Jarida daily.

This is in addition to allocating some of these homes to the "disabled Kuwaiti women." In a statement, the PAHW said on its official account on the "X" platform, today, that it has invited those wishing to apply who have an application for government housing rented in the year 2000 or before, to apply from Aug 28 to Sept 19.

square meter annually, KD15 per square meter annually for advertisements with commercial trademark, and KD30 per square meter annually for important advertisements.

It added that Article 20 of Ministerial Resolution No. 599/2023 and its amendments state that if the size of the advertisement is five meters maximum, the fee is KD50 annually. If the advertisement is larger than five meters and a maximum of 10 meters, the fee is KD100 annually and KD20 annually for each square meter in excess of the maximum of 10 meters, and KD150 annually for licensing the maximum area of 10 meters for important advertisements. If the advertisement is larger than 10 meters, the fee is KD20 annually for each square meter in excess of the maximum of 10 meters.

Digital transformation advances

PAMA board 'approves' 2023 profit distribution and reserve allocation

By Abdul Nasser Al-Aslami
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff



Al-Anba photo

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 22: The Board of Directors of the Public Authority for Minors Affairs (PAMA) on Wednesday approved the distribution of profits for the year 2023.

Minister of Justice, Awqaf and Islamic Affairs and Board Chairman of PAMA Dr. Mohammed Al-Wasmi presided over the meeting.

During the meeting, the board agreed on the distribution of 11.735 percent profits to the funds of minors under its care and to put 25 percent of its net profits for the fiscal year ending Dec 31, 2023 to the reserve account for protecting these funds.

Al-Wasmi stressed the need to continue the programs to increase the funds, while mitigating the risks; including the diversification of investments to continue the achievement of appropriate returns. He pointed out this is part of the authority's strategy in taking into account the market performance expectations in view of the regional and international developments.

He added the board tackled many items in the agenda and was reassured about the

progress of work and performance of the authority. He said they also reviewed the certified minutes of the previous board meeting, as well as the board decisions that were implemented in various fields.

He was briefed on the latest developments in the digital transformation of the authority, its services on Sahel application, its new website and electronic link with the concerned authorities. He praised the authority for its achievements in the field of digital transformation, as it is among the first entities to contribute to the launching of Sahel application.

On the other hand, Director General of PAMA Eng. Hamad Abdullahif Al-Barjas said the board reviewed the recommendations of the authority's specialized committees and their reports; such as the Audit Commit-

tee, Deductions Calculation Committee, Charitable and Social Assistance Committee, Minors' Funds Development Committee, Estates Committee and Sharia Committee.

Al-Barjas confirmed that the authority has witnessed growth in terms of the volume and quality of services provided directly or through its website or the Sahel application to accommodate the increasing number of beneficiaries from various categories as per the directives of the board and specialized committees.

The board appreciated the efforts of the director general and all employees at PAMA in carrying out the noble mission of serving minors under the patronage of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and the entire leadership.

Kuwait sends 4th aid plane to Sudan

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 22, (KUNA): Kuwait's fourth plane carrying 10 tons of relief aid, donated by the Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) departed to Sudan on Thursday to help those affected by the war and floods.

The Director General of the KRCS, Abdulrahman Al-Aoun, told KUNA that this trip represents part of several operations to transport relief supplies to the brotherly Sudanese people, explaining that this shipment consists of relief and food supplies provided by the Association.

Al-Aoun added that the operation of these planes loaded with humanitarian aid comes in implementation of the directives of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, and as an embodiment of the Kuwaiti people's solidarity with their brothers in Sudan.

He also expressed his deep appreciation to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Embassy of the State of Kuwait in Sudan, and the Kuwaiti Air Force for their efforts in coordinating and following up on the delivery of relief aid to those who deserve it.



KUNA photo

The fourth plane within the Kuwaiti air bridge of humanitarian aid takes off, carrying food and relief supplies to Sudan.

AUGUST

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95% complete, set for year-end launch

Ahmadi Governor calls for speedy completion of Shadadiya project

Interior Ministry introduces stricter driving test with 75% passing score

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 22: The Education Department at the Traffic Sector in the Ministry of Interior has launched a six-stage driving test with 75 percent as the passing mark, reports Al-Jarida daily quoting sources.

Sources revealed Assistant Undersecretary for Traffic and Operations Affairs Major General Yousef Al-Khudda has approved the new form for the driving test. Sources revealed that the form covers all types of driving tests -- private, public, construction and motorcycles. Sources said the test consists of six stages; starting with fastening the seat belt, focusing on the road while driving, stopping correctly on parking spaces adjacent to the sidewalk, stopping at a red light, turning the vehicle in a limited space, and using the manual transmission when starting off and while moving.

Sources said the test score is calculated as follows: 10 percent for each stage, except for stopping at a red light and turning the vehicle in a limited space as 30 percent is allocated for each of them. If the applicant does not obtain 75 percent, he



Al-Jarida photo
Major General Yousef Al-Khudda, Assistant Undersecretary for Traffic and Operations Affairs.

is considered to have failed the test, sources explained.

Sources added the staff assigned in the testing area will fill out the form and evaluate the applicant's answers according to the new system, and then it will be approved by the practical test officer and the head of the Driver Test Department.

Sources pointed out that the test departments previously relied on the examiner recording the test result -- whether passed or failed -- in the applicant's form.

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 22, (KUNA): Ahmadi Governor Sheikh Humoud Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah affirmed the importance of dealing with all obstacles facing the Shadadiya Industrial City project, and finding effective solutions to expedite progress and complete the project.

The governor issued this statement on Thursday during his visit to the Shadadiya Industrial Area project site. He was accompanied by officials from the Ministry of Public Works, the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy, the Public Authority for Industry, and the Public Authority for Roads and Transportation (PART).

Sheikh Humoud explained that the Shadadiya Industrial City is a vital project of the New Kuwait 2035 vision and is receiving significant attention and direct follow-up from the political leadership. Clear and precise directives have been given on several occasions to prioritize, unify efforts, and align energies based on a specific work plan and timetable for all development projects in the country.

He said, "When we followed up the project with officials from the Public Authority for Industry, it was evident that the project was facing obstacles that were hindering its launch and operation. We accordingly conducted the field visit with all relevant parties to find and implement appropriate solutions for its official launch."

Sheikh Humoud praised the concerned government agencies for their cooperation and commitment to resolving the challenges facing this industrial initiative, and expressed hope that it will be opened soon.

He highlighted its role in supporting and enhancing the Kuwaiti economy in line with the New Kuwait 2035 vision.

Meanwhile, the acting Director General of the Public Authority for Industry Shamlan Al-Jahedli announced in a press statement that 95 percent of the project has been completed, and it is scheduled to be completed in the last quarter of this year.

He indicated that the project would be completed during the current fiscal year, after extending the electricity supply with the cooperation of the Ministry of Electricity and Renewable Energy, and linking some main roads to the site in collaboration with the Ministry of Public Works.

Al-Jahedli explained that the Shadadiya project is one among the first fully integrated industrial cities in Kuwait. Spanning over five square kilometers, it has approximately 1,036 industrial plots and is equipped with the latest technologies. The project is divided into three main sectors - chemical (approximately 242 plots), food (about 299 plots), and various industries (around 495 plots), with plot sizes ranging from 1,000 to 10,000 square meters.

The project will provide necessary infrastructure to enhance Kuwait's business environment. It will help in pushing for industrial development, increasing the contribution of non-oil manufacturing industries to the gross domestic product (GDP), and creating productive job opportunities for the national workforce through the support of small and medium-sized enterprises.



Ahmadi Governor speaking during the visit.

KUNA photo

Energy imports rise as demand hits new peak

July sees unprecedented power and water usage

By Mohammed Ghanem
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 22: The statistical report issued by the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy for the month of July revealed that the ministry imported 415.144 megawatts from the Gulf Interconnection Network, with an average of 500 megawatts per day.

According to the report, the highest electrical load recorded in the ministry's history was 17,360 megawatts on Saturday, July 13, while the lowest load was 11,880 megawatts on July 5.

The highest net consumption of fresh water reached 504.383 million imperial gallons on July 18, while the lowest net consumption was 481.405 million imperial gallons

on July 16.

Meanwhile, the report explained that the ministry extended electricity to 726 customers with a total production capacity of 96,379.240 kilowatts during the same month.

The largest share of these extensions went to the private housing sector with 674 customers, followed by the industrial sector with 20 customers, agricultural sector with 11 customers, investment sector with 10 customers, government sector with seven customers, and commercial sector with four customers.

The number of employees in the ministry increased by 804 Kuwaitis who joined in July, raising the total to 35,145 employees from 34,341 in June.

The percentage of Kuwaiti employees in the ministry now stands at 97.6 percent of the total employees.

In addition, the ministry announced the launch of electricity services in Mutlaa Residential City, N4 district covering parts of Block 2 and 3, with the cooperation of the Public Authority for Housing Welfare. The ministry will now receive requests to connect electricity to 870 plots.

Quarter ton of unsafe potatoes seized

PAFN issues 20 citations in Souk Mubarakiya

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 22: An inspection tour held by the Public Authority for Food and Nutrition (PAFN) in the Capital Governorate resulted in the issuance of 20 citations, reports Al-Anba daily.

Head of the Al-Mubarakiya Center at PAFN Mohammad Al-Kandari explained that the inspection of Souk

Mubarakiya resulted in confiscation of food items that were deemed unfit for human consumption due to changes in their color, shape, and smell. They also discovered violations related to food handling by workers without health certificates, the employment of unlicensed workers, and failure to adhere to general hygiene standards. Additionally, some

food facilities were found operating without obtaining a health license from PAFN, and there were breaches of personal hygiene rules.

Al-Kandari indicated that a quarter ton of potatoes unfit for human consumption was destroyed, adding that anyone who dares to harm consumers will be held accountable.

Registration starts Aug 25 until Sept 4

Ali Al-Sabah Military College seeking medical specialist officer applicants

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 22, (KUNA): The General Staff of the Army (Ali Al-Sabah Military College) announced the opening of registration for medical specialties as specialist officers, starting from August 25 until September 4 through the college's website (ascportal.kuwaitarmy.gov.kw).

The Staff said in a press statement, Thursday, that the date for receiving applicants who registered electronically will be determined later. They explained that the required specialties are:

- Neurosurgery
- Neurology
- Plastic, Burns, and Restorative Surgery
- Orthopedics, Fractures, and Joint Replacement
- Urology
- Additionally, the required specialties include:
 - General Surgery
 - Gastroenterology and Hepatology
 - Endocrinology and Diabetes
 - Cardiology
 - Nephrology
 - Pulmonology and Allergy
 - Hematology
 - General Internal Medicine
 - Nuclear Medicine
 - Pediatrics
- The specialties also include:
 - Ophthalmology



KUNA photo
Ali Al-Sabah Military College logo

- Dermatology
- Family Medicine
- Emergency Medicine
- Psychiatry
- Medical Imaging (Musculoskeletal System)
- Medical Imaging (Breast and Gynecology)
- Medical Imaging (Physical and CT)
- Preventive Medicine and Infection Prevention
- Infectious Diseases
- Intensive Care Medicine
- Physical Medicine and Health Rehabilitation
- Pediatric Dentistry
- Orthodontics

Risk factors

Continued from Page 1

The study highlighted that certain medications, such as birth control pills, antihistamines, some epilepsy and depression medications, and cortisone therapy, can contribute to weight gain. Also, diseases and medical conditions that cause prolonged immobility, such as joint diseases and fractures, can also lead to obesity.

It highlighted the importance of quitting smoking for which there are dedicated clinics at primary health care centers, as this is the most effective approach.

The study cautioned against the use of electronic cigarettes as a method to quit smoking regular cigarettes, because they are just as harmful as regular cigarettes.

It explained that electronic cigarettes contain nicotine, which can cause addiction and negatively impact brain development and function in young people. The nicotine content in the e-cigarette tank can be equivalent to that found in 20 or more regular cigarettes, making it difficult for smokers to gauge the actual nicotine intake.

In conclusion, the study commended the efforts exerted by the event participants, and appreciated Sheikhha Sheikhha Al Abdullah's keenness to attend such awareness events.

Kuwait's rating

Continued from Page 1

Meanwhile, Kuwait Finance House (KFH) expanded its regional footprint by acquiring Bahrain-based Ahli United Bank in 2022, extending its presence to Bahrain, Egypt, and the UK, though KFH-Bahrain was sold to Al Salam Bank in May 2024. Boubiyani Bank also diversified by acquiring a majority stake in the Bank of London and the Middle East in 2020.

Despite these strategic moves, the Kuwaiti banking sector faces challenges. Political deadlock, institutional constraints, and delayed reforms--such as the stalled public debt and mortgage laws--are impeding growth.

Minister vows

Continued from Page 1

Concerned bodies are searching for those responsible for the collapse to refer them to competent bodies and take

legal actions against them, it added.

For his part, Acting Chief of KFF Maj. Gen. Khaled Abdullah told KUNA in a statement that a force rushed to the site of the collapse as soon as they received a report about it.

The force finished a 3-hour search operation, and there were not any injuries, he added.

Earlier in the day, the KFF announced that a six-storey building collapsed in Jabriya while being demolished.

A KFF team rushed immediately to the site of the building as soon as a report was received to deal with the matter, KFF media and public relations department said in a statement to KUNA.

New Entertainment

Continued from Page 1

The goal is to attract specialized foreign companies to invest, contribute to the city's development and operation, and transfer the required expertise.

The team conducted opinion polls among citizens and expatriates, and analyzed the results to determine the components and feasibility of the new Entertainment City project.

The study estimates the total cost of the project at approximately KD 200 million, with KD 120 million allocated for capital expenditures and KD 80 million for infrastructure.

The project is expected to contribute about KD 85 million to the GDP by 2035 and create around 4,000 new job opportunities.

The number of potential visitors to the Entertainment City is projected to reach 900,000 by 2030.

Hajj registration

Continued from Page 1

5. One resident companion may be added (i.e., the spouse of a Kuwaiti citizen, children of a Kuwaiti woman, or the mother)

6. One non-citizen companion may be added (i.e., the spouse of a Kuwaiti citizen, children of a Kuwaiti woman, or the mother).

The ministry explained that if the applicant is a Bedouin resident, the following requirements must be met:

1. Have not previously performed Hajj
2. The group size must not exceed three people
3. The group must consist of rela-

PADA system disruptions under review

By Fares Al-Abdan
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 22: The Minister of Social Affairs, Family and Childhood Affairs Dr. Amthal Al-Huwailah announced the formation of an investigation committee to determine the cause of the malfunction that occurred in

the systems of the Public Authority for the Disabled Affairs following the recent power outage.

This announcement was made during a tour the minister conducted of the authority yesterday morning with the aim to inspect the automated systems that were disrupted for four days due to the recent power

outage in Hawally.

The Acting Director General of the Public Authority for the Disabled Affairs Al-Humaidi Al-Mutairi stated that the data of the disabled individuals and their families were not affected by the power outage in Hawally.

He expressed appreciation for

the joint efforts exerted by the Minister of Social Affairs, the Minister of Commerce and Industry, the Central Agency for Information Systems, the Information Systems Management team, and the companies involved in swiftly restoring the authority's automated systems after the outage.

Safeguarding student health

Ministry of Education tightens safety measures on schools drinking water

By Abdulrahman Al-Shammari
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 22: Assistant Undersecretary for Public Education Mansour Al-Dhafiri has instructed the directors general of educational districts, director of the Religious Education Department and director of the Special Education Schools Department to ensure the safety of drinking water in schools; as part of preparations for the academic year 2024/2025.

Al-Dhafiri ordered sending a circular to all schools to take the necessary measures to guarantee the maintenance of drinking water networks in schools by coordinating with the engineering affairs departments in the educational districts, starting from the drinking water tanks up to the point of consumption. He stressed the need to replace water cooler filters after cleaning and washing the water tanks in order to ensure the supply of water that is suitable for drinking and free of pollutants.

Educational sources stated that the maintenance of drinking water networks in schools to ensure that the water is pure and potable is essential in protecting the health of students, because contaminated water could lead to serious diseases, especially since children are more susceptible to infection.

Sources explained that a safe educational environment is not limited to the educational aspects, as it includes the provision of clean drinking water. They pointed out that regular main-

tenance of water networks, cleaning tanks and installing filters prevent the accumulation of pollutants and bacteria, which may cause health problems in the long run. Sources reiterated this requires coordination with the engi-

6 new areas in Mutlaa set for 'infrastructure development'

By Mohammad Al-Musleh
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 22: The Public Authority for Housing Welfare (PAHW) is preparing to establish infrastructure and road networks for six areas in Mutlaa Residential City.

Sources told the newspaper that eight construction and contracting companies participated in the bidding for the above-mentioned networks, indicating the lowest bid was KD 6.9 million. Sources affirmed the bids are being studied from the legal, accounting and organizational standpoints in preparation for awarding the tender in the near future.

On the other hand, the PAHW announced the availability of 28 low-cost houses (government rented) in Sulabiya, Taima and Sabah

Al-Salem for citizens who submitted their housing grant applications in the year 2000 or earlier.

It indicated that a disabled Kuwaiti woman, who registered for a rented housing request as per the last paragraph of Article 14 of Law No. 47/1993 and Article 27 of the Housing Care Regulations, will be allocated housing within this category in accordance with the applicable laws and regulations.

The authority announced that the application period for the above-mentioned houses will be from Aug 25 to Sept 19. It added that the schedule for receiving citizens applying for these houses will be from 4:00 pm to 7:00 pm at the Citizen Service Department (main building) and from 8:30 am to 12:30 pm at the external centers (Liberation Tower, Jahra, Qurain, Avenues and Sabah Al-Ahmad).

neering affairs departments to ensure that maintenance operations are carried out in accordance with the best practices and health standards to guarantee the effectiveness of procedures and to reduce the risks.

World News Roundup

Europe

Modi, Tusk hold talks

Ukraine president visits border area

KYIV, Ukraine, Aug 22, (AP): Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy toured the northeastern Ukrainian region of Sumy on Thursday in his first visit to the border area since his forces entered Russian territory more than two weeks ago.

After a meeting with Ukraine's military commander, Zelenskyy said Ukrainian forces have claimed control of another settlement in the Russian region of Kursk and taken more Russian prisoners of war whom he hopes to exchange for captured Ukrainians. He referred to that as Ukraine's "exchange fund."

"Another settlement in the Kursk region is now under Ukrainian control, and we have replenished the exchange fund," Zelenskyy wrote on the social media platform X after hearing a report from the military commander, Col Gen Oleksandr Syrskyi.

But the gains there come as Ukraine continues to lose ground in its eastern Donetsk region. The Russian Defense Ministry announced Thursday that its military has claimed control of the village of Mezhevo.

Ukraine's push into Russia marks the first capture of Russian territory since World War II.

It comes as both sides in the war use drones to attack far within enemy lines.

Attack
A Ukrainian drone attack Thursday sparked a fire at a military facility in southern Russia as Kyiv pushes its offensive in the Kursk region and struck key infrastructure including bridges.

Andrei Bocharov, governor of the Volgograd region, said Thursday that a "defense ministry facility" was on fire after being attacked by drones in the area of Marinovka, in a sign that Ukraine is not letting up on its attacks. He did not specify what was damaged.

Ukraine attacked Russia overnight with 28 drones, Russia's Ministry of Defense said. Thirteen were shot down over the Volgograd region, seven over the Rostov region, four over the Belgorod region, two over the Voronezh region, and one each over the Bryansk and Kursk regions, the ministry said.

Russian Telegram channels said drones attempted to attack a military air base near Marinovka in the village of Oktyabrsky. Videos shared on Russian social media showed an explosion in the night sky, reportedly near the base.

Modi urges efforts to end Ukraine war: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi urged diplomatic efforts to end the war in Ukraine during a visit to neighboring Poland on Thursday, pledging India's support and saying that no conflict can be solved on a battlefield.

"We support dialogue and diplomatic effort" for the restoration of peace and stability "as soon as possible," Modi said following talks with Poland's Prime Minister Donald Tusk.

Tusk stressed that India can play a very important role in bringing an end to the war that is raging on other side of Poland's eastern border.

Sitting on the eastern flank of NATO and the European Union, Poland is concerned about the two-year-old war across its eastern border. It's offered political, humanitarian and defense support to Ukraine.

Modi and Tusk met for talks on security, the war on Ukraine by India's strategic partner Russia, and invigorating bilateral ties. Later, the Indian leader was to meet with Poland's President Andrzej Duda.

The two leaders said that the visit, which marks 70 years of official bilateral relations, raised the ties to a strategic level, covering a wide range of cooperation, including in the IT, security and defense industries.

Ahead of his visit, Modi said Poland was India's key economy partner in Central Europe.

An agreement was signed to facilitate the mobility of specialized workers between the two countries.

Rescuers recover 5th body from yacht: Rescuers searching the wreck of a superyacht that sank off Sicily brought ashore a fifth body on Thursday, leaving one person still unlocated, as investigators sought to learn why the vessel sank so quickly.

Rescue crews brought the body ashore at Porticello port while divers continued to search for the sixth missing person, whom the coast guard identified as a woman. That suggested that the recovered bodies included that of British tech magnate Mike Lynch.

Also among the six missing passengers were Lynch's 18-year-old daughter and associates who had successfully defended him in a recent US federal fraud trial.

No signs of life have emerged over four days of searching the yacht's hull on the seabed 50 meters (164 feet) underwater.

The Bayesian, a 56-meter (184-foot) British-flagged yacht, went down in a storm early Monday as it was moored about a kilometer (half mile) offshore. Civil protection officials said they believe the ship was struck by a tornado over the water, known as a waterspout, and sank quickly.

Hungary to provide free tickets: Hungary's anti-immigration government is prepared to provide free one-way tickets to Brussels for migrants and asylum seekers attempting to enter the European Union, a minister said Thursday in response to hefty fines recently imposed on the country over its restrictive asylum policies.

Speaking at a news conference in Budapest, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's chief of staff, Gergely Gulyás, criticized a June ruling by the European Court of Justice that ordered Hungary to pay a fine of 200 million euros (\$216 million) for persistently breaking the bloc's asylum rules, and an additional 1 million euros per day until it brings its policies into line with EU law.

"Brussels wants to force us at any cost to let migrants in," Gulyás said, referring to the EU's headquarters in Belgium.

He said that if the EU continues to force regulations on Hungary that "does not make it possible to detain migrants at the border," his country will offer every migrant "transport to Brussels free of charge."

Hungary's anti-immigrant government has taken a hard line on people entering the country since well over 1 million people entered Europe in 2015, most of them fleeing conflict in Syria. The country built fences protected by razor wire on its southern borders with Serbia and Croatia and a pair of transit zones for holding asylum seekers on its border with Serbia. Those transit zones have since closed.



Democratic vice presidential nominee Minnesota Gov Tim Walz celebrates with his family during the Democratic National Convention on Aug 21 in Chicago. (AP)



Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, (left), is greeted by his Polish counterpart Donald Tusk, before talks in Warsaw, Poland on Aug 22. Modi and Tusk met for talks on security, the war on Ukraine by India's strategic partner Russia, and invigorating bilateral ties. (AP)



Pascrell



Biden

America

Congressman Pascrell dies: New Jersey Democratic Rep Bill Pascrell Jr., a 14-term incumbent and a fixture in his hometown of Paterson for more than four decades, died Wednesday. He was 87.

Pascrell had been in and out of the hospital with an illness recently. He died Wednesday morning at Cooperman Barnabas Medical Center in Livingston, New Jersey, according to his long-time chief of staff, Ben Rich.

"It is with deep sadness that we announce that Bill Pascrell Jr., our beloved husband, father, and grandfather, passed away this morning," a statement posted on Pascrell's X account said. "Bill fought to his last breath to return to the job he cherished and to the people he loved." Pascrell was slated to run for a 15th term in the fall.

President Joe Biden hailed Pascrell as "a devoted patriot, a gentleman, and an exemplary leader." (AP)

Ex-politician says he's innocent: In his first words to a jury, a former Las Vegas-area Democratic elected official declared Wednesday that he didn't kill an investigative reporter who wrote articles critical of him and his workplace conduct. Then he promised to tell them his story.

"This is the day I've been waiting for," Robert Telles said after his attorney received permission from the trial judge to let Telles testify "by way of narration" instead of a standard question-and-answer format.

The attorney, Robert Draskovich, then sat down. He had strongly advised his client not to take the stand and risk questioning under oath from two prosecutors who rested their murder case Monday after four days, 28 witnesses and hundreds of pages of photos, police reports and video evidence that weigh heavily against Telles. Telles could face life in prison if he is convicted.

"Unequivocally I'm innocent," Telles said, speaking softly and turning in the witness box to face 12 jurors and two alternates who each leaned forward to face him. Some held notebooks, pens poised. The hushed courtroom was packed with media and spectators, including several members of slain reporter Jeff German's family. (AP)

'Prosecutors want to slime Biden': An attorney for Hunter Biden accused prosecutors Wednesday of wanting to introduce salacious details about partying and

Politics

Trump speaks from behind bulletproof glass in NC

Walz accepts VP nomination at DNC

CHICAGO, Aug 22, (Agencies): Minnesota Gov Tim Walz accepted his party's nomination for vice president Wednesday night, using his Democratic National Convention address to thank the packed arena for "bringing the joy" to an election transformed by the elevation of his running mate, Vice President Kamala Harris.

"We're all here tonight for one beautiful, simple reason: We love this country," Walz said as thousands of delegates hoisted vertical placards reading "Coach Walz" in red, white and blue.

Many Americans had never heard of Walz until Harris made him her running mate, and the speech was an opportunity to introduce himself. He leaned into his experiences as a football coach, his time in the National Guard and his recounting of his family's fertility struggles - all parts of his biography that Republicans have questioned in the days since Harris picked him.

While it's unclear if the speech will attract new voters, he further charmed Democratic supporters with his background and helped to balance Harris' coastal roots as a cultural representative of Midwestern states whose voters she needs this fall.

The Harris campaign said Walz had worked on his speech for multiple days and he used a teleprompter for the first time, practicing to ensure he was prepared. He told the crowd, "I haven't given a lot of speeches like this but I've given a lot of pep talks."

Good

"Some folks just don't understand what it takes to be a good neighbor," Walz said. "Take Donald Trump and JD Vance."

Trump, the Republican presidential nominee, bashed the convention as a "charade" earlier Wednesday and noted that he has been a frequent topic of conversation. He also singled out his predecessor, former President Barack Obama, for a highly critical convention speech Tuesday night, saying Obama had been "nasty."

Walz described his upbringing in Nebraska and teaching and coaching football in Minnesota and told the crowd, "Thank you for bringing the joy to this fight."

But he also criticized Trump and his running mate, JD Vance, and took several swipes at Republican poli-

cies. "While other states were banning books from their schools, we were banishing hunger from ours," he said.

Walz has been accused of embellishing his background. His wife this week clarified that she did not undergo in vitro fertilization, as Walz has repeatedly claimed, but used other fertility treatments. Republicans also have criticized Walz for a 2018 comment he made about carrying weapons in war. Though he served in the National Guard for 24 years, he did not deploy to a war zone.

Walz has made his family's struggle with fertility a central part of his narrative, a tangible way to connect with voters alarmed at the erosion of reproductive rights in the US. But Gwen Walz on Tuesday issued a statement that detailed the experience more comprehensively and disclosed that they relied on a different process known as intrauterine insemination, or IUI.

Held

His daughter, Hope, made a heart with her hands and held it over her chest.

His son, Gus, openly wept throughout the speech, wiping his eyes with tissues while watching from the front row.

Through tears he mouthed, "That's my dad."

Two prominent Harris boosters on Wednesday were people Trump has crossed paths during their shared decades in public life: Bill Clinton, the nation's 42nd president, and Oprah Winfrey, the iconic talk-show host.

Ironically, she suggested years ago that Trump could be president one day, while Clinton was once close enough to Trump that he attended his 2005 wedding to his wife Melania.

In a convention designed to needle Trump, Clinton and Winfrey portrayed Trump as selfish and Harris as focused on the needs of everyday Americans rather than her own.

"We've got a pretty clear choice it seems to me. Kamala Harris, for the people. And the other guy who has proved, even more than the first go-around, that he's about me, myself and I," Clinton said.

Clinton returned to a place he knows well, the Democratic convention stage, firing up his party with his trademark off-the-cuff flourishes. He spoke about 10 minutes longer than Walz did in the headliner's spot.

Now 78 - the same age as Trump

- Clinton's delivery was sometimes halting, his movements slower, and he mispronounced Harris' first name twice. His left hand often shook when he wasn't using it to grip the lectern.

Also:

ASHEBORO, NC: At his first outdoor rally since last month's attempted assassination, Donald Trump spoke from behind bulletproof glass Wednesday in North Carolina at an event focused on national security. On politics, he called his predecessor Barack Obama "nasty" for his comments the night before at the Democratic National Convention.

Trump blamed President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris for the deadly Afghanistan withdrawal and for wars in Ukraine and the Middle East while returning repeatedly in his remarks to the Democratic gathering in Chicago, where speaker after speaker has assailed Trump as a threat to the country should he return to the White House.

The former president, now the GOP nominee, asked the crowd gathered at the North Carolina Aviation Museum & Hall of Fame whether they had seen the speeches given Tuesday by former President Obama and former first lady Michelle Obama.

"He was taking shots at your president. And so was Michelle. You know, they always say, 'Sir, please stick to policy. Don't get personal.' And yet they're getting personal all night long, these people," he said, asking: "Do I still have to stick to policy?"

Trump, who is facing Harris in the November election after Biden stepped aside, spoke from behind a podium surrounded by panes of bulletproof glass that formed a protective wall across the stage - part of ramped-up security measures aimed at keeping him safe after the attack by a Pennsylvania gunman on July 13.

Storage containers were stacked around the perimeter to create additional walls and block sight lines. Snipers were positioned on roofs at the venue, where old aircraft were sitting behind the podium and a large American flag was suspended from cranes.

The event, billed as focused on national security issues, was part of Trump's weeklong series of counter-programming to the Democratic National Convention, which is underway in Chicago.

spending by President Joe Biden's son to smear his character in front of jurors at his upcoming trial on federal tax charges. During a lengthy hearing in Los Angeles

federal court, Hunter Biden's lawyer said special counsel David Weiss' team was intent on "character assassination" by seeking to bring in evidence of spending on things

like strippers in the case alleging a scheme to avoid paying at least \$1.4 million in taxes. (AP)



This snapshot taken from a video posted on Aug 20, 2024 shows rescuers searching for survivors off the coast near the shore of Porticello on the island of Sicily, southern Italy. Rescuers searching the wreck of a superyacht that sank off Sicily brought ashore a fifth body on Aug 22, leaving one person still unlocated, as investigators sought to learn why the vessel sank so quickly. (Xinhua)

Summer heat scorches Texas: Summer heat scorched Texas and the Southwest on Wednesday, pushing Phoenix to nearly 90 consecutive days of triple-digit temperatures and putting millions of people under excessive heat warnings.

Meanwhile, energy demand in Texas hit an unofficial all-time high Tuesday, according to data from the state's grid operator.

A major heat alert is in place for Texas, reflecting what the weather service called "rare and/or long-duration extreme heat with little to no overnight relief." An extreme heat alert was issued for eastern New Mexico.

This area of high pressure, sometimes referred to as a heat dome, is a slow moving, upper-level high pressure system of stable air and a deep layer of high temperatures, meteorologist Bryan Jackson said.

Record high temperatures were expected in cities such as Corpus Christi, San Antonio and Amarillo. In Phoenix, monsoon rains have provided brief respites since Sunday, although daytime highs continue to top 100 degrees Fahrenheit (37.8 degrees Celsius). (AP)

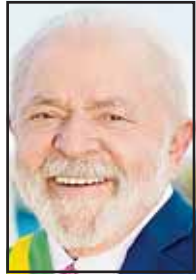
Lat/Am

Brazil to restrict entry to some Asian nationals: Brazil will begin imposing restrictions on the entry of some foreigners from Asia who use the country as a launching point to migrate to the United States and Canada, the justice ministry's press office said Wednesday.

The move, which starts on Monday, will affect migrants from Asian countries who require visas to remain in Brazil. It does not apply to people from Asian countries currently exempt from visas to Brazil. US citizens and many European nationals also do not require visas for Brazil.

A Federal Police investigation has shown these migrants often buy flights with layovers in Sao Paulo's international airport, en route to other destinations, but stay in Brazil as a place from where they then begin their journey north, according to official documents provided to The Associated Press.

More than 70% of requests for refuge at the airport come from people with either Indian, Nepalese or Vietnamese nationalities, one of the documents says. The African nations of Somalia, Cameroon, Ghana and Ethiopia are among the remaining 30% of refuge seekers. Brazil's President **Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva** decided in January 2023, in the early days of his administration, to bring his country back to the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, an intergovernmental agreement. (AP)



Lula

'Peacemaking effort losing steam in Venezuela': It was a rare diplomatic gamble when the three leaders of Latin America's largest democracies inserted themselves into the high-stakes standoff between Venezuela's Nicolas Maduro and his opponents over who won the country's presidential election.

Dubbed the three amigos - all dyed-in-the-wool leftists who have been friendly with Maduro - the presidents of Brazil, Colombia and Mexico broke from decades of hands-off diplomacy toward Venezuela and their own reluctance to meddle in a neighbor's sovereign affairs in a region where US military interventions during the Cold War still generate resentment.

But some experts say the peacemaking effort is losing steam before barely getting off the ground. They cite misgivings by Mexico's outgoing president, divisions among Latin America's left and pressure from the US on Maduro to recognize defeat and step aside. The main outcome so far, they say, has been to grant Maduro precious time to consolidate his rule and jail more opponents since the July 28 vote. (AP)

Mexico to bring charges against capo: The strange saga of how two Mexican drug lords were detained after landing in a plane in the United States in July just got stronger.

The Mexican government now says it is bringing charges against Joaquín Guzmán López, but not because he was a leader of the Sinaloa drug cartel founded by his father, Joaquín "El Chapo" Guzmán.

Instead, Mexican prosecutors are bringing charges against the younger Guzmán for apparently kidnapping Ismael "El Mayo" Zambada - an older drug boss from a rival faction of the cartel - forcing him onto the plane and flying to an airport near El Paso, Texas.

The younger Guzmán apparently intended to turn himself in to US authorities, but may have brought Zambada along as a prize to sweeten any plea deal.

But it also cited another charge under an article of Mexico's criminal code that defines what he did as treason. That section of the law says treason is committed "by those who illegally abduct a person in Mexico in order to hand them over to authorities of another country." (AP)

Pressure mounts against Mexico judicial overhaul: President Andrés Manuel López Obrador is facing mounting pressure against his controversial proposal to overhaul the Mexican judicial system, which would have judges be elected.

Judges and magistrates on Wednesday joined a strike begun early this week by federal court employees to oppose the proposal, while Morgan Stanley and other financial institutions warned that the overhaul could pose serious market consequences and risks for potential investors in Mexico.

In a response to rising criticism, President-elect Claudia Sheinbaum joined her political ally López Obrador in defending the proposal Wednesday.

"Investors shouldn't be worried. On the contrary, we will have a better justice system in Mexico," Sheinbaum said.

He contends judges are part of a "mafia" against him, and says the proposal is meant to clean up corruption. He has gone on winding rants against the judicial system, ignored court orders and publicly sparred with judges whose rulings he has disagreed with. (AP)

11 cartel gunmen convicted in Mexico: Mexican prosecutors finally won convictions - and 50-year prison sentences - Wednesday against 11 drug cartel gunmen for the 2010-2011 massacre of 122 passengers who were pulled off passing buses and forced to fight each other to the death with sledgehammers.

The sentences announced Wednesday involved one of the most gruesome chapters of Mexico's drug war, so horrific it was hard to believe until scores of bodies were found in unmarked graves with their skulls bashed in. Federal prosecutors said the 11 suspects were arrested between 2015 and 2017, and have been held in prison since that time.

Prosecutors in Tamaulipas state said at the time that members of the now-splintered Zetas cartel began pulling male passengers off buses headed to the border city of Reynosa, across the border from McAllen, Texas, or Matamoros, further east. (AP)

Guatemala police arrest 7 accused of trafficking: Guatemalan police on Wednesday arrested seven Guatemalans accused of having smuggled 53 migrants from Mexico and Central America who died of asphyxiation in 2022 in Texas after being abandoned in a tractor trailer in the scorching summer heat. They were the latest arrests after years of investigation into the deadliest tragedy of migrants smuggled across the border from Mexico. The dead included eight children.

Interior Minister Francisco Jiménez told The Associated Press the arrests were made possible after 13 raids in three of the country's departments. They included Rigoberto Román Miranda Orozco, the alleged ringleader of the smuggling gang whose extradition has been requested by the United States.

"This is a collaborative effort between the Guatemalan police and Homeland Security, in addition to other national agencies, to dismantle the structures of human trafficking, one of the strategic objectives of the government President Bernardo Arévalo in order to take on the phenomenon of irregular migration," Jiménez said. (AP)

Registry of disappeared persons in El Salvador: Several nongovernmental organizations on Wednesday launched a registry of disappeared persons in El Salvador, a tool meant to help families with relatives who disappeared during the country's extended state of emergency that was declared to battle street gangs.

Under the state of emergency, originally declared in 2022 and still in effect, the government of President Nayib Bukele has rounded up more than 81,000 suspected gang members in sweeps that rights groups say are often arbitrary and based on a person's appearance or where they live.

Authorities have had to release about 7,000 people because of a lack of evidence. While the government is accused of committing mass human rights abuses in the crackdown, Bukele remains highly popular in El Salvador because homicide rates sharply dropped following the detentions. (AP)



An aerial drone photo taken on July 21, 2024 shows the night view of the sub-area of Heilongjiang pilot free trade zone (FTZ) in Harbin, northeast China's Heilongjiang Province. Known as China's 'Ice City', Harbin has a reputation for its cool weather and diversified attractions, even during the summer months, which helps it remain attractive to tourists throughout the year. (Xinhua)

Asia

Protests across Indonesia

Beijing, Moscow deepen relations

MOSCOW, Aug. 22, (Agencies): Russian President Vladimir Putin met with Chinese premier Li Qiang Wednesday, hailing growing trade relations as Moscow becomes increasingly dependent on Beijing for political and economic support.

"Our trade relations are developing, developing successfully ... The attention that the governments of the two countries on both sides are paying to trade and economic ties is yielding results," Putin said at the meeting in the Kremlin.

He also said that Russia and China have developed "large-scale plans" for economic and other projects.

"Chinese-Russian relations are at an unprecedentedly high level," said Li, who earlier had met with his Russian counterpart, Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin.

The meeting took place as Russia struggled to push back a Ukrainian incursion into the Kursk region now in its third week. And overnight, Moscow experienced one of the largest waves of drone attacks on the Russian capital since the start of the Ukraine conflict.

Russian news reports did not indicate whether Putin and Li discussed Ukraine. China has tried to position itself as neutral in the Ukraine conflict, but it shares with Russia high animosity toward the West.

After Western countries imposed heavy sanctions on Russian oil in response to Russia sending troops into Ukraine in February 2022, China strongly stepped up its purchase of Russian oil, increasing its influence in Russia. Putin underlined the importance of China by meeting in Beijing with Chinese leader Xi Jinping soon after being inaugurated for a fifth term in the Kremlin.

Protests across Indonesia: Indonesian police fired tear gas and water cannon to disperse thousands of protesters who attempted to storm parliament on Thursday after they tore down a section of fence and threw stones at police. The unrest forced the legislature to delay a vote on controversial changes to election laws that could further enhance the political influence of outgoing President Joko Widodo.

Parliament met in an emergency session to overturn one decision made by the Constitutional Court on election procedures, while amending another. Protesters occupied roads in front of the parliament building. Some held banners and signs, while others started

a fire and burned tires.

The Constitutional Court on Tuesday dismissed a challenge to an age limit that prevents people under 30 from running for regional governorships, which would prevent Widodo's youngest son, Kaesang Pangarep, 29, from running in a regional contest in Central Java.

The court also made it easier for political parties to nominate candidates by cutting back a requirement that they hold 20% of a local legislature.

SKorea, US to build capabilities:

South Korea and the US will continue efforts to enhance practical capabilities and readiness to respond to "any type" of North Korean nuclear threats, Seoul's Foreign Ministry said Thursday, Yonhap News Agency reported.

The ministry made the statement after The New York Times reported that US President Joe Biden approved a secret strategy in March to focus on China's growing nuclear threats and prepare his country for possible coordinated nuclear challenges from North Korea, China and Russia.

When asked to comment with regard to the news report, a ministry official said the allies are continuing to enhance the effectiveness of extended deterrence, citing the Nuclear Consultative Group, in response to the North's advancing nuclear and missile threats. "Going forward, the US and South Korea will continue to develop practical capabilities and readiness to effectively deter and respond to any type of North Korean nuclear threats," the official was quoted as saying.

The two countries launched the Nuclear Consultative Group last year to strengthen the US' commitment to using the full range of its capabilities, including nuclear, to defend its ally.

As part of its efforts, the defense officials of the two sides signed a set of nuclear deterrence guidelines in July.

Cambodia welcomes artifacts:

Cambodia's prime minister on Thursday led a celebration of the return of dozens of precious artifacts from museums and private collectors abroad, and said his government will continue working to bring more home.

Hun Manet, who became prime minister last year when he succeeded his long-serving father Hun Sen, said the 70 returned statues symbolically reunited the Cambodian people with their ancestral souls. The artifacts were

displayed at the Peace Palace, the seat of the country's government.

Many, if not all, the pieces were looted during a long period of civil war and instability while Cambodia was ruled by the brutal communist Khmer Rouge regime in the 1970s.

Cambodia has benefited from a trend in recent decades that has seen the repatriation of art and archaeological treasures taken from their homelands. These include ancient Asian artworks as well as pieces lost or stolen in turmoil in places such as Syria, Iraq and Nazi-occupied Europe.

NZ car crash kills 3 SKoreans:

A head-on collision of vehicles on a New Zealand highway killed three South Korean skiers and seriously injured two other people, local police and South Korean sports officials said.

The van and a four-wheel-drive vehicle were traveling in opposite directions before crashing at an intersection near the rural South Island town of Geraldine, the district's police inspector Vicki Walker said.

The collision Wednesday killed three of the van's passengers and critically injured another person who was traveling with them, Walker said. The driver of the four-wheel-drive was also seriously injured and both survivors were airlifted to Christchurch Hospital, she said. New Zealand and South Korean authorities didn't identify the crash victims.

Man held at Australia airport:

A passenger was arrested at an Australian airport after he left a stationary airliner through an emergency exit, walked along a wing, and then climbed down a jet engine to the tarmac on Thursday, officials said.

Jetstar Flight JQ507 had arrived at Melbourne Airport from Sydney and had parked at a terminal gate when the man left the plane by the right-side exit, officials said.

Opening the exit automatically deployed a slide from the back of the wing at the fuselage to the ground, a Jetstar statement said. But the man instead walked along the wing and climbed down one of the Airbus A320's two engines, an official said.

Passenger Audrey Varghese said passengers screamed and shrieked as the man began "erratic" behavior shortly before he opened the hatch.

"The man was exhibiting some quite strange behavior," Varghese told Melbourne Radio 3AW.



People navigate a flooded street following incessant rains in Agartala, north eastern Tripura state, India on Aug 22. (AP)



Zardari



Naqvi

Subcontinent

India plant explosion kills 18: A big explosion triggered a fire at a pharmaceutical plant in southern India, killing at least 18 workers, police said Thursday.

The death toll rose from 15 as three of the 40 injured in the fire Wednesday in the chemical reactor of the plant in Andhra Pradesh state died in hospital on Thursday, police officer M. Deepika said, adding that some of the injured were in critical condition.

The Press Trust of India news agency reported distressing scenes with the skin of several workers peeling off. Ambulances transported them to the hospital.

Officials suspect the fire was caused by an electrical fault at the plant, according to media reports. State authorities have ordered an investigation.

The explosion occurred at the Escientia Company in the Anakapalle district. The plant is about 350 kilometers (220 miles) northeast of Amaravati, the capital of Andhra Pradesh.

The plant is in the state's special economic zone at Atchutapuram village, which was established in 2009 with over 200 companies. (AP)

Floods maroon many in B'desh:

Floodwaters have stranded hundreds of thousands of people in India's northeast and neighboring Bangladesh's eastern region, causing at least 15 deaths as rescuers struggled to reach those who needed help, officials and media reports said Thursday.

At least 11 people were killed and thousands displaced from homes as floods and mudslides have ravaged India's northeastern Tripura state, bordering Bangladesh, since Wednesday.

Another four were killed in Bangladesh as upstream India and downstream Bangladesh share common rivers along their border. India's Meteorological Department issued a "red" alert in Tripura on Wednesday, forcing authorities to announce a two-day closure of schools after heavy rains inundated several regions, including the state's capital, Agartala.

Of the 11 dead since the rains intensified Monday, seven drowned or washed away while four were buried by mudslides. (AP)

Gunmen kill 2 in Pakistan: Gunmen opened fire on a school van in Pakistan's eastern Punjab province Thursday, killing two children and wounding six other people, police and officials said.

Authorities said the driver, who was among the wounded, seemed to be the target of the attack. "Our initial investigations indicate that the driver had an enmity with someone," Mohammad Shakil, a local police official, said. He provided no further details. Police were still investigating to determine who was behind the firing, and no one has claimed responsibility.

The dead and wounded were transported to a nearby hospital, said Ghias Gull, a district police chief in Attock, where the shooting occurred.

Pakistan's President **Asif Ali Zardari** and Interior Minister **Mohsoin Naqvi** de-

nounced the attack and ordered the best possible medical treatment be provided to the wounded.

Militant attacks have surged in Pakistan in recent years, mostly in the northwest bordering Afghanistan. (AP)



Men stand near damaged vehicles at a crash site near Geraldine, New Zealand, where three South Korean skiers are involved in a fatal accident on Aug 22. The van and a four-wheel-drive vehicle were traveling in opposite directions before crashing at an intersection near the rural South Island town of Geraldine, the district's police inspector Vicki Walker said. (AP)

Climbers reach hospital: Two Russian climbers were injured on the slopes of one of northern Pakistan's highest mountains reached a hospital in Peshawar on Thursday, a week after they were stranded after being hit by falling ice.

The climbers were part of a five-member team of Russian climbers that was attempting to climb one of Gasherbrum's peaks to retrieve the body of a fellow climber who died there last year when it was hit by a pile of ice on Friday.

Rescuers airlifted two of the mountaineers Monday, but two others remained stuck on the base camp because of their injuries and bad weather until Wednesday. Akhtar Hussain, a police official in Skardu, a city in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provinces, said the Russians were transported to a hospital by ambulance, and were in stable condition.

Karrar Haidri, the secretary of the Alpine Club of Pakistan, told The Associated Press that climbers Mikhail Mironov and Sergei Mironov are getting the best medical care at a hospital in Skardu. He said the search for the fifth climber, Sergei Nilov, had been called off as he is presumed dead. (AP)

Hussain said doctors provided medical care to the two injured climbers. "They are sad over the death of their fifth colleague, but are thankful to the Pakistani rescuers and the army for making efforts to save their life," he said. (AP)

oil prices dip amid rising US crude inventories & Middle East tensions easing

Oil prices experienced a decline as new data pointed to increasing US crude inventories, combined with a potential easing of Middle Eastern tensions following diplomatic efforts, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Brent crude futures dropped 9 cents, or 0.1 percent, settling at \$77.11 per barrel. Meanwhile, US West Texas Intermediate crude fell by 12 cents, or 0.2 percent, to \$73.05 per barrel.

Recent figures from the American Petroleum Institute revealed a rise of approximately 347,000 barrels in US crude inventories last week.

However, gasoline stocks fell by 1.043 million barrels and distillate inventories decreased by 2.247 million barrels. The increase in crude inventories indicates a potential oversupply that could exert downward

pressure on prices. The US government is expected to release its official inventory estimates soon.

In the geopolitical arena, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken concluded his visit to the Middle East, where he aimed to facilitate a ceasefire in Gaza.

The visit, supported by mediators from Egypt and Qatar, has generated optimism for a US-proposed peace initiative that could bridge the gap between conflicting parties in the prolonged Gaza conflict.

On the supply side, Libya's Sharara oil field has ramped up production to approximately 85,000 barrels per day, targeting supply for the Zawiya oil refinery.

This is a notable recovery after the field's production was reduced to a trickle due to a blockade by protesters, which led to a force majeure dec-

laration on August 7. The field, which typically produces around 300,000 barrels per day, had faced significant disruptions.

Looking ahead, Goldman Sachs has forecasted that Brent crude prices could fall to \$68 per barrel by late 2025 if China's oil demand remains stable through the end of next year.

The analysts at Goldman Sachs attribute this bearish outlook to weak Chinese oil demand and downside risks to China's GDP growth. They note that the transition from oil to electricity and LNG for road fuel is largely responsible for the slowdown in demand growth in China.

In recent trading, oil futures have declined for the third consecutive session, reflecting a combination of easing supply concerns from the Middle East and rising inventories in the US.

Market Movements

22-08-2024

Change Closing pts

	Change	Closing pts
SAUDI - TASI	+6.99	12,194.43
DUBAI - DFMGI	+14.18	4,309.08
JAPAN - Nikkei 225	+259.21	38,211.01
PHILIPPINES - PSEI	+61.34	6,961.96
EGYPT - EGX 30	+226.79	30,141.08
PAKISTAN - KSE 100	+524.14	78,819.63

Business

Kuwait faces economic risks from non-renewable energy utilization

Fuel subsidies drain 10% of Kuwait's oil revenues

By Mohammad Ghanem

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 22: A government report has confirmed the negative economic effects of using non-renewable energy; as it could lead to the loss of a huge quantity of oil due to increased local consumption, instead of exporting the product.

The newspaper obtained a copy of the report that also cited the enormous investment in environmentally harmful power plants as one of the negative consequences of non-renewable energy consumption. The report explained that the fuel subsidy needed to operate power plants is estimated at more than 10 percent of the country's annual oil revenues, stressing the importance of using renewable energy in view of the increasing consumption globally.

It warned that the use of non-renewable energy has serious environmental impact; since ecosystems are exposed to many problems like all kinds of pollution and the accompanying deterioration of the environment, taking into consideration their nature, potential, geographical location, management mechanisms, and the violations and irrational human practices they face.

It stressed that the steady increase in population and rapid urban, industrial and social developments contribute to rising pollution rates; especially air pollution caused by power plants, refineries, growing number of vehicles, and the expansion of industrial facilities.

'Potential gains dependent on recovery'

Market sentiment & supply-demand dynamics drive stock price changes

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 22: When stock prices decline, it's a common question to wonder where the "lost" money goes and whether it benefits someone else, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The reality of stock markets is that they operate on the principles of supply and demand, and money isn't literally "transferred" in a straightforward way from one person to another.

When stock prices fall, it's important to differentiate between the value of a company and its stock price. The stock price reflects the market's current perception of the company's value, which can be influenced by various factors including market sentiment, economic conditions, and company performance.

The stock prices are determined through trading, which is influenced

According to the report, it is expected that the solid and liquid waste problem resulting from human activities will exacerbate. It pointed out that Kuwait, like other countries, will be affected environmentally; because air pollution is one of the serious environmental problems in the country now. The concentration of some pollutants has increased - more than the limit; such as falling dust, suspended particles, gasses, hydrocarbon vapors, volatile organic compounds, ammonia

and lead dust, it added. Some air pollutants exceeded the limit within a short period like sulfur dioxide from power plants, water and oil industries; and nitrogen dioxide and carbon monoxide from heavy traffic, the report clarified.

It indicated that Kuwait is an arid country relying on oil and natural gas products to generate electricity, in addition to its massive production of desalinated seawater.

It went on to say that the country

is disproportionate to the actual performance or news about a company, leading to more extreme price movements. For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, oil futures prices briefly turned negative due to a surge in supply combined with a significant drop in demand and storage capacity constraints.

In essence, when stock prices decline, the perceived value of investments decreases rather than money moving directly from one investor to another.

The principles of supply and demand drive price changes, and extreme market conditions can lead to significant price volatility. The "lost" value is not physically transferred but represents a decrease in the market valuation of the stocks in question.

intends to increase the percentage of natural gas-powered power plants in the future. However, due to the weak development of gas production, Kuwait is currently an importer of liquefied natural gas, it asserted.

The report affirmed that the aim is to study the future of renewable energy in the country in order to achieve the major goal set by HH the late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad to reach 15 percent of energy production from renewable and clean sources by 2030.

Cash economy rises to 45% of GNP

Forum in Lebanon warns of cash economy threats to banking sector

BEIRUT, Aug 22, (KUNA): The Annual Forum of Combating Money Laundering and Terror Financing warned on Thursday against the repercussions of cash economy on the banking sector.

Speaking at the opening of the two-day forum, Acting Governor of the Bank of Lebanon Wissam Mansouri said boosting cooperation amongst Arab banks to face economic challenges was a must, stressing that the economic woes felt by Lebanon in recent years had affected the confidence of depositors in the banking sector.

The lack of confidence had diverted economic activities away from the banking sector and led to the prevalence of the cash economy, which threatens all through acts of money laundering and other questionable actions, said Mansouri.

Lebanon continues its efforts to avoid being put on the "gray list", which would affect banking op-

erations and would lead to more illicit activities, he added.

He stressed Lebanon's need to find a collaborative plan gathering several national entities to bolster money policies and help prevent whitewashing and funding terrorism.

On his part, the chairman of the executive council of Union of Arab Banks (UAB) Joseph Torbey affirmed that counter money laundering and funding terror was a global issue that requires cooperation amongst all countries.

Arab banks' sponsoring of forum and dialogue with international banking entities was essential to create a strategic coalition to counter illicit acts, he affirmed.

Touching on the Lebanese economic crisis, he said that proliferation of cash economy was a threat to the country, noting that the World Bank indicated that

such economy had jumped in Lebanon from USD 9.9 billion in 2022, which is about 45 percent of the Gross National Product.

Meanwhile, the Secretary General of the Special Investigation Commission in Lebanon Abdul Hafeez Mansour said that cash economy led to several worrisome consequences including inability to carry out large monetary transactions, increase circulation of forged currencies and increase in whitewashing.

Former Economic Minister Alan Hakim told KUNA that his participation in the forum was to find solutions and combat money laundering and funding of terror through the increase use of cash economy.

The woes facing the economic sector in Lebanon, namely banking, must come through regaining confidence of the public and decreasing the impact of cash economy, he affirmed.

Stock soared 150% this year

Nvidia's quarterly report could impact S&P 500 performance

NEW YORK, Aug 22, (AP): How much hype is left in Nvidia's stock? Anyone with an S&P 500 index fund is hoping to get an answer to that weighty question next week.

Nvidia has ridden Wall Street's mania around artificial intelligence to become one of the stock market's most massive companies, with a total value topping \$3 trillion. Real money has backed the rise, and tech companies keep gobbling up Nvidia's chips to train their AI models.

When Nvidia reports its latest quarterly results on Wednesday, analysts are looking for its revenue to have surged to \$28.65 billion in the spring, up 112% from a year earlier. That would tower over the 5% growth in revenue that S&P 500 companies overall are likely to deliver for the quarter, according to FactSet.

The problem, critics say, is such stellar growth has set off too much euphoria among investors. Through the year's first six months, Nvidia's stock soared nearly 150%. At that point, the stock was trading at a little more than 100 times the company's earnings over the prior 12 months. That's much more expensive than



The New York Stock Exchange is shown on Wednesday, Aug. 21, 2024, in New York. (AP)

it's been historically and than the S&P 500 in general.

Combined with Nvidia's big size, the blistering performance meant the chip company accounted for nearly 30% of the S&P 500's total return for the first six months of the year. All that from just one of the 500 companies in the index, or 0.2% of its membership.

Such outsized heft showed its downside this summer, when Nvidia's stock tumbled 27% from a peak

in late June into early August. Wall Street worried that Nvidia and other Big Tech stocks had simply grown too expensive in a runup reminiscent of the 1990s tech boom, even with the caveat that they were making much more in profit than any dot-com was in the late 20th century.

Nvidia's slide helped drag the S&P 500 down nearly 10% from its all-time high set last month. On some days, the S&P 500 fell even though the majority of stocks

across Wall Street were rising. Drops for Nvidia and other influential Big Tech stocks on those days simply overwhelmed everything else.

The drops wrung out "some of the excesses" after traders crowded into bets on Nvidia and a handful of other Big Tech stocks, according to Lisa Shalett, chief investment officer at Morgan Stanley Wealth Management.

Nvidia's earnings report next week could show how much, if any, excess may be left. A good performance by Nvidia does not guarantee more gains for the stock. Just look at what happened with the parent company of Google earlier this reporting season.

Alphabet's stock dropped even though it delivered both profit and revenue that topped analysts' forecasts, a signal of just how difficult it would be for its stock to rally further.

That's why, even when the market's eye was on Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell's highly anticipated speech on Friday about interest rates, its mind was on Nvidia's upcoming report, according to Bank of America strategists led by Ohsung Kwon.



Gold bars are stacked in a vault at the U.S. Mint in West Point, N.Y., on July 22, 2014. (AP)

Experts caution on gold's volatility

Gold prices surge amid weak US dollar & inflation concerns

NEW YORK, Aug 22 (AP): A gold rush is here. The precious metal hit an all time high this week.

The spot price for gold closed Tuesday above \$2,514, according to data from FactSet. That's the highest closing price recorded for the commodity to date. Here's what you need to know.

The spot price of gold closed Tuesday at just over \$2,514 per Troy ounce - the standard for measuring precious metals, which is equivalent to 31 grams. That would make a gold bar or brick weighing 400 Troy ounces worth more than \$1 million today.

This week's record high means that the price of gold has climbed hundreds of dollars per Troy ounce over the last year. Tuesday's price is up nearly \$620 from this time in 2023.

There are a few factors behind the recent gains.

Interest in buying gold often comes at times of uncertainty - with potential concerns around inflation and the strength of the U.S. dollar, for example, causing some to look for alternative places to park their money. Gold also saw a surge in the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Giovanni Staunovo, a commodity analyst at UBS Global Wealth Management, said the main drivers of recent gold gains have been the weaker U.S. dollar and expectations that the Federal Reserve will cut its benchmark interest rate next month. With particular concern focused on the health of the job market, all eyes will be on a Friday speech from Fed Chair Jerome Powell in Jackson Hole, Wyoming.

Another factor is strong demand from central banks - which is currently well-above the five year average, notes Joe Cavatoni, senior market strategist at the World Gold Council. Cavatoni says this "reflects heightened concern with inflation and economic stability." He

also pointed to ongoing geopolitical tensions, among other factors, that have caused some to buy more gold recently.

The wars in Ukraine and Gaza have notably fueled uncertainty around the world. And numerous countries, including the United States, are also in the midst of a tumultuous election year - which could prove crucial to future economic policy.

Advocates of investing in gold call it a "safe haven," arguing the commodity can serve to diversify and balance your investment portfolio, as well as mitigate possible risks down the road. Some also take comfort in buying something tangible that has the potential to increase in value over time.

Staunovo's team at UBS forecasts the price of gold will reach \$2,600 by this year's end - and \$2,700 by mid-2025. UBS sees lower U.S. interest rates and the weaker dollar supporting inflows into gold ETFs, or exchange traded funds, consequently boosting investment demand.

Still, future gains are never promised and not everyone agrees gold is a good investment. Critics say gold isn't always the inflation hedge many say it is - and that there are more efficient ways to protect against potential loss of capital, such as through derivative-based investments.

The Commodity Futures Trade Commission has also previously warned people to be wary of investing in gold. Precious metals can be highly volatile, the commission said, and prices rise as demand goes up - meaning "when economic anxiety or instability is high, the people who typically profit from precious metals are the sellers."

If you do choose to invest in gold, the commission adds, it's important to educate yourself on safe trading practices and be cautious of potential scams and counterfeits on the market.

Consumer prices rose 61.8% YoY in July

Türkiye central bank maintains policy rate at 50% for 5th consecutive month

ANKARA, Aug 22, (Xinhua): Türkiye's central bank held its policy rate steady at 50 percent on Tuesday, marking the fifth consecutive month of unchanged rates, in line with market expectations.

In a statement, the bank's monetary policy committee noted a slight increase in the underlying trend of monthly inflation in July, though it remained below the second-quarter average.

The statement indicated that indicators for the third quarter point to a continued slowdown in domestic demand, accompanied by a diminishing inflationary impact.

While inflation for goods is easing, improvements in services inflation are expected to lag, the committee added.

The bank highlighted persistent risks from high and sticky services inflation, inflation expectations, and geopolitical factors. It emphasized the growing importance of aligning inflation expectations and pricing behavior with projections to aid the disinflation process.

"The commitment to a tight monetary stance will help reduce the underlying trend of monthly inflation through moderated domestic demand, real appreciation of the Turkish lira, and improved inflation expectations," the bank said.

Despite considering the delayed effects of monetary tightening, the committee opted to keep the policy rate unchanged, reiterating its vigilance regarding inflation risks.

The tight monetary stance will remain in place until a significant and sustained decline in the underlying trend of monthly inflation is observed, and inflation expectations align with the projected forecast range.

In March, the central bank raised its policy rate from 45 percent to 50 percent to combat rising prices and has maintained this level since.

Consumer prices increased by 61.8 percent year-on-year in July, down from 71.6 percent in June, according to the Turkish Statistical Institute.

here's what to buy as used EV prices continue to drop

Now is a great time to purchase a used electric vehicle. The average price for a used EV has dropped about 20% compared to this time last year, according to Edmunds transaction data. To top it off, you can qualify for a federal tax credit of up to \$4,000 if you purchase an EV for \$25,000 or less. To help with your search, Edmunds' car experts have rounded up five of their favorite used EVs. The average prices below are what you can expect to pay at a nationwide no-haggle dealership such as CarMax or Carvana.

The Chevrolet Bolt EV could be a great choice if you're searching for an inexpensive used EV. Older Bolts can be quite affordable, especially if you get

one that qualifies for the \$4,000 tax credit. Chevy produced the Bolt through 2023. The Bolt EV boasts a spacious cabin and an EPA-estimated driving range of 259 miles, which is quite good for an older EV. On the downside, the Bolt can't charge very fast at public fast-charging stations.

Look for: Bolts from 2022 and 2023 received fresh styling and improved tech features. There's also a SUV model called the Bolt EUV that was available from 2022 to 2023. 2017-2022 models have a battery recall, so make sure it's been addressed in the one you're interested in.

2017-2023 pricing: approximately \$15,000 to

\$25,000

The Ioniq 5 isn't an average-looking SUV; it almost resembles a futuristic Volkswagen GTI with its sporty retro-modern look. But it still performs SUV duties thanks to ample passenger space, available all-wheel drive, and a user-friendly comfortable interior. It's also one of the quickest-charging electric SUVs at a public fast-charging station. We just wish it had a larger cargo area.

Look for: The Ioniq 5 came out for the 2022 model year. There are plenty of used examples but not as many as the Tesla Model Y. Ideally, you'll want to get any Ioniq 5 that isn't the Standard Range model.

This entry-level version is the slowest and has the least range.

2022-2023 pricing: approximately \$28,500 to \$38,000

The popular Model Y flexes its SUV prowess with lots of available cargo space and roomy seating. Some used models have a third row, but it's small. The majority of used examples are Long Range models that deliver about 300 miles of range; Standard Range and Performance models provide less. Having access to Tesla's national charging network is a huge plus, but smartphone connectivity options are limited. (AP)

Revenue was up on last year

UK public borrowing in July hits higher-than-expected 3.1 bln pounds

LONDON, Aug 22, (Xinhua): Public borrowing in the United Kingdom surged to 3.1 billion British pounds (about 4.03 billion U.S. dollars) in July, marking the highest level for the month since 2021, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) has said.

The borrowing, the difference between spending and tax income, is 3 billion higher than the projection made by the government's spending watchdog, the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR). In July 2023, the UK borrowed 1.3 billion to cover the gap between the state's revenue and its spending.

"July borrowing was almost 2 billion pounds higher this year than in 2023.

Revenue was up on last year, with income tax receipts in particular growing strongly," said Jessica Barnaby, deputy director for Public Sector Finances of the ONS.

"However, this was more than offset by a rise in central government spending where, despite a reduction in debt interest, the cost of public services and benefits continued to increase," Barnaby noted.

Data showed that public sector net debt excluding public sector banks was estimated at 99.4 percent of GDP at the end of July. This was 3.8 percentage points more than at the end of July 2023 and remains at levels last seen in the early 1960s, said the ONS.

The think-tank Resolution Foundation said further deterioration in the public finances underlines fiscal challenges for the Autumn Budget in October, the first budget from the new Labour government.

"The fiscal inheritance facing the Chancellor is one of rising taxes, increasing spending challenges, and very little wriggle room in the event of bad economic news. This combines to create a challenging backdrop for the new government to realize its ambitions of boosting growth while putting the public finances on a sustainable path," said Cara Pacitti, Senior Economist at the Resolution Foundation.

Fed minutes

Most officials favored a rate cut in Sept if inflation continued to cool

WASHINGTON, Aug 22, (AP): Most Federal Reserve officials agreed last month that they would likely cut their benchmark interest rate at their next meeting in September as long as inflation continued to cool.

The minutes of the Fed's July 30-31 meeting, released Wednesday, said the "vast majority" of policymakers "observed that, if the data continued to come in about as expected, it would likely be appropriate to ease policy at the next meeting."

In July, the policymakers kept their benchmark rate at 5.3%, a near-quarter-century high, where it's stood for more than a year.

Wall Street traders had already considered it a certainty that the Fed will announce its first interest rate cut in four years when it meets in mid-September, according to futures prices. A lower Fed benchmark rate would lead eventually to lower rates for auto loans, mortgages and other forms of consumer borrowing and could also boost stock prices.

The minutes of the Fed's meetings sometimes reveal key details behind the policymakers' thinking, especially about how their views on interest rates might be evolving. Further guidance on the Fed's next steps is expected when Chair Jerome Powell gives a highly anticipated speech Friday morning at the annual symposium of central bankers in Jackson Hole, Wyoming.

A rate cut in September, coming less than two months before the presidential election, could bring some unwelcome political heat on the Fed, which seeks to avoid becoming entangled in election-year politics. Former President Donald Trump has argued that the Fed shouldn't cut rates so close to an election. But Powell has repeatedly underscored that the central bank would make its rate decisions based purely on economic data, without regard to the political calendar.

Several Democratic senators, led by Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts, had urged Powell to cut rates at the

Fed's July meeting and have argued that delaying a cut when it's warranted by the inflation data would itself be a political act.

Inflation, according to the Fed's preferred measure, has tumbled from a peak of 7.1% in 2022 to just 2.5% now. In recent interviews with The Associated Press, two Fed officials noted that as inflation slows, inflation-adjusted interest rates - which businesses closely track - rise. That trend supports a rate cut in the near term, according to both Raphael Bostic, president of the Fed's Atlanta branch and Austan Goolsbee, president of the Chicago branch.

"We might need to shift our policy stance sooner than I would have thought before," Bostic said.

Most analysts think Powell will signal in his speech Friday that the Fed has become confident that inflation is headed back to its 2% target and might even give some hint about how many rate cuts could happen this year. When he held a news conference after last month's Fed meeting, Powell had suggested that a broad range of policy moves were possible, from "zero cuts to several cuts," by year's end.

Two days after the Fed met late last month, the government released a jobs report for July that showed that hiring was far weaker than expected and that the unemployment rate rose for a fourth straight month, to a still-low 4.3%. The sluggish hiring data triggered a sharp two-day drop in the stock market, with traders suddenly fearing that a recession might be nearing.

But last week, the government reported that sales at retail stores and restaurants rose at a healthy pace in July, evidence that consumers were still willing to spend and help power the economy. And a separate report showed that the number of people seeking unemployment benefits - a proxy for layoffs - slipped during the previous week, a sign that most businesses are still holding on to their workers.

EU's tariff move needs reality check on 'EV industrial chain'

BEIJING, Aug 22, (Xinhua): The European Commission's latest draft decision to slap hefty import duties on Chinese electric vehicles (EVs) will definitely hurt European businesses, as the decision ignores a bare truth: the shared weal and woe along industrial chains.

Some politicians are busy stoking fears over the supposed risk of relying too much on China-made products while trumpeting the de-risking narrative, but they have lost sight of the fact that China's EVs are increasingly manufactured globally, which means that erecting a tariff barrier will not benefit local industries in Europe.

China's EV industry has a long industrial chain and involves extensive participation from the United States and Europe. From assembly robots and car chips to tires and steers, the auto parts and components of a China-made EV demonstrate the close cooperation among global companies across various industries.

As with an iPhone, one can hardly say with complete certainty that it is made or not made in the United States, as every product coming off the production lines has taken a global journey that involves multiple suppliers in multiple countries.

This reality check echoes well the response of the China Association of Automobile Manufacturers (CAAM) on Wednesday, which warned that the commission's move could "severely impact the EU's automotive industry, employment, and efforts toward green and sustainable development."

CAAM urged the European side to uphold dialogue and cooperation to foster a "fair, non-discriminatory and predictable market environment" conducive to the automotive industry's development.

The automotive industries of China and Europe are highly complementary, a fact that has been proved repeatedly by BMW, Volkswagen, Faurecia and other EU companies with their expanding new energy ve-

hicle (NEV) business in China.

Foreign brands, in fact, hold an important position in China's EV exports. One example is Tesla, which ranked a steady first in China's export volume of NEVs in 2023.

In the meantime, Chinese companies such as CATL, NIO and BYD have built factories in European countries including Germany and Hungary, contributing to the competitiveness of the EU electric vehicle industry.

The draft decision to impose definitive countervailing duties, however, has heightened the concerns of Chinese EV manufacturers over the possible risks of investing in Europe.

Industrial analysts have criticized using "overcapacity" as a pretext to pan-politicize economic and trade issues to restrict China's EV industry. Such actions not only fail to address relevant countries' own industrial challenges, but will further drag down the growth of global trade and the recovery of the world economy.

As the commission's investigation advances, it is worth noting that the probe on Chinese EVs that started last October was not initiated by the EU's industries, but was an ex-officio action, meaning it was initiated by the commission grounded on the threat of damage.

The China Chamber of Commerce for Import and Export of Machinery and Electronic Products responded on Wednesday that there was a serious lack of procedural transparency in the commission's probe, which failed to provide objective analysis of the indicators of damage to the EU industry.

Standing in sharp contrast to the repulsion of some EU politicians over China's EV industry is the welcome from the broader market. For instance, Chinese EV manufacturers have tapped into the Southeast Asian markets, including Thailand and Indonesia, forming partnerships with local companies and establishing production facilities.

Labor dispute stops major Canadian freight railroads

Action could cause major economic disruption in US

TORONTO, Aug 22, (AP): Both of Canada's major freight railroads have come to a full stop because of a contract dispute with their workers, an impasse that could bring significant economic harm to businesses and consumers in Canada and the U.S. if the trains don't resume running soon.

Canadian National and CPKC railroads both locked out their employees after the deadline of 12:01 a.m. Eastern Thursday passed without new agreements with the Teamsters Canada Rail Conference that represents some 10,000 engineers, conductors and dispatchers.

All rail traffic in Canada and all shipments crossing the U.S. border have stopped, although CPKC and CN's trains will continue to operate in the U.S. and Mexico. Billions of dollars of goods each month move between Canada and the U.S. via rail, according to the U.S. Department of Transportation.

"If rail traffic grinds to a halt, businesses and families across the country will feel the impact," Jay Timmons, president and CEO of the National Association of Manufacturers, said in a statement. "Manufacturing workers, their communities and consumers of all sorts of products will be left reeling from supply chain disruptions."

There will be other impacts as well, including on the more than 30,000 commuters in Vancouver, Toronto and Montreal who will be scrambling to find a new way into work because their trains won't be able to operate over CPKC's tracks while the railroad is shut down.

Business groups had urged the government to intervene, but Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has declined to force both sides into arbitration yet.

CN said it was waiting for a response on one final offer made late Wednesday when it locked the workers out. CPKC spokesperson Patrick Waldron said the union rejected its last offer that CEO Keith Creel made at the table in person. Both railroads have said they would end the lockout if the union agreed to binding arbitration.

"Despite the lockout, the Teamsters remain at the bargaining table with both companies," the union said in a statement.

CN had been negotiating with the Teamsters for nine months while CPKC had been trying to reach an agreement for a year, the unions said.

Many companies across all industries rely on railroads to deliver their raw materials and finished products, so without regular rail service they may have to cut back or even close.

That's why the U.S. government kept rail workers from going on strike two years ago and forced them to accept a contract despite their concerns about demanding schedules and the lack of paid sick time.

Canada's railroads have sometimes shut down briefly in the past during



A worker climbs aboard a locomotive at a CPKC rail yard Wednesday, Aug. 21, 2024, in Kansas City, Mo. (AP)

US economy added 818,000 fewer jobs than 1st reported in the year that ended in March

WASHINGTON, Aug 22, (AP): The U.S. economy added 818,000 fewer jobs from April 2023 through March this year than were originally reported, the government said Wednesday. The revised total adds to evidence that the job market has been steadily slowing and likely reinforces the Federal Reserve's plan to start cutting interest rates soon.

The Labor Department estimated that job growth averaged 174,000 a month in the year that ended in March - a drop of 68,000 a month from the 242,000 that were initially reported. The revisions released Wednesday were preliminary, with final numbers to be issued in February next year.

The downgraded estimate follows

a jobs report for July that was much worse than expected, leading many economists to suggest that the Fed had waited too long to begin cutting interest rates to support the economy. The unemployment rate rose for the fourth straight month, to a still-low 4.3%, and employers added just 114,000 jobs.

The Fed raised its benchmark rate 11 times in 2022 and 2023 to fight inflation, which hit a four-decade high more than two years ago. Year-over-year inflation has since plummeted - from 9.1% in June 2022 to 2.9%, clearing the way for the Fed to begin cutting rates when it next meets in mid-September.

The revised hiring estimates released Wednesday are intended to

contract negotiations - most recently CPKC was offline for a couple days in March 2022 - but it is rare for both railroads to stop at the same time. The impact on businesses will be magnified because both CN and CPKC have stopped.

Both CN and CPKC had been gradually shutting down since last week ahead of the contract deadline. Shipments of hazardous chemicals and perishable goods were the first to stop, so they wouldn't be stranded somewhere on the tracks.

As the Canadian contract talks were coming down to the wire, one of the biggest U.S. railroads, CSX, broke with the U.S. freight rail industry's longstanding practice of negotiating jointly for years with the unions. CSX reached a deal with several of its 13

unions that cover 25% of its workers ahead of the start of national bargaining later this year.

The new five-year contracts will provide 17.5% raises, better benefits and vacation time if they are ratified. The unions that have signed deals with CSX include part of the SMART-TD union representing conductors in one region, the Transportation Communications Union, the Brotherhood of Railway Carmen and the Transport Workers Union. TCU President Artie Maratea said he's proud that his union reached a deal "without years of unnecessary delay and stall tactics."

Trudeau has been reluctant to force arbitration because he doesn't want to offend the Teamsters Canada Rail Conference and other unions, but he urged both sides to reach a deal Wednesday

better account for companies that are either being created or going out of business.

"This doesn't challenge the idea we're still in an expansion, but it does signal we should expect monthly job growth to be more muted and put extra pressure on the Fed to cut rates," said Robert Frick, economist at the Navy Federal Credit Union.

In the revisions, new professional and business services jobs - a broad category that includes managers and technical workers - were reduced by 358,000 in the 12 months that ended in March. Leisure and hospitality employers - including hotels and restaurants - added 150,000 fewer than first reported.

because of the tremendous economic damage that would follow a full shutdown.

"It is in the best interest of both sides to continue doing the hard work at the table," Trudeau said to reporters in Gatineau, Quebec. "Millions of Canadians, workers, farmers, businesses, right across the country, are counting on both sides to do the work and get to a resolution."

Numerous business groups have been urging Trudeau to act.

Trudeau said Labor Minister Steven MacKinnon met with both sides in the CN talks in Montreal on Tuesday and would be on hand for the CPKC talks in Calgary, Alberta. MacKinnon later said he wrapped up his meetings with the rail companies and the Teamsters.

China opens investigation into EU dairy exports

BEIJING, Aug 22, (AP): European milk and cheese producers have become the latest target in a simmering trade war with China.

The Chinese Commerce Ministry said Wednesday that it would launch an investigation into subsidies given by the European Union and EU member countries for dairy products that could lead to tariffs on their export to China.

The announcement came one day after the EU released a draft decision to finalize tariffs on electric vehicles made in China, in a follow-up to provisional tariffs announced last month. The tariffs have been denounced by the Chinese government and automakers

and threaten to set back the industry's efforts to go global.

The dairy investigation will cover a range of products including fresh and processed cheese, blue cheese and milk and cream with a fat content of more than 10%, a Commerce Ministry notice said. It will look at subsidies under the EU's Common Agricultural Policy as well as those given by eight European Union countries including Italy, Finland and Croatia.

The Commerce Ministry previously opened investigations into European brandy and pork exports at various stages of the EU investigation into Chinese subsidies for electric vehi-

cles. The tit-for-tat investigations have raised fears that a full-blown trade war could be gradually emerging.

"Regrettably, the use of trade defense instruments by one government is increasingly being responded to seemingly in kind by the recipient government," the European Union Chamber of Commerce in China said in a statement.

China also filed a complaint with the World Trade Organization after the EU announced the provisional tariffs on China-made EVs. The EU Commission said Tuesday that it is confident that its investigation and provisional tariffs comply with WTO rules.

The EU's draft decision on final EV tariffs made mostly minor modifications to the provisional rates. Autos exported by BYD, the largest EV maker in China, would face a 17% tariff, while those from Shanghai-based SAIC Motor would be hit with the highest rate of 36.3%. Tesla, which exports autos from China, was given a tariff of 9% "at this stage" after it requested an examination of the specific subsidies it had received, the EU Commission said.

The tariffs are subject to the approval of the EU member states. A final decision must be made by early November, four months after the July 5 effective date of the provisional tariffs.



Photos during the concert.

'Guests taken on spectacular musical journey'

Indian Idol winner Salman Ali stars in Independence Day concert in Kuwait

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 22: Salman Ali, winner of Indian Idol 10 and celebrated Bollywood playback singer, gave a scintillating live performance to a packed Al Baraka Hall at the Crowne Plaza Hotel on 15th August. This landmark event was organized by SaaZ Events and Artistic Group and exclusively sponsored by Pyramid Infratech Pvt.Ltd.

Held to commemorate India's 78th Independence Day, the performance was a spectacular musical feast for guests who were taken on a journey of some of Bollywood's best songs.

Guests showed their excitement and enjoyment with foot tapping and clapping as Salman raised the tempo during the evening with a mix of chart-topping Bollywood tracks and a selection of famous Sufi renditions, ranging from energetic numbers to soulful ballads some popular songs that had the

audience in awe.

Bringing both energy and melody to the evening Salman's non stop three hour performance was a delight to audiences who were able to experience a live performance of the highest standard. The evening not only showcased his musical prowess but also highlighted the growing cultural exchange between India and Kuwait.

Kicking off the event H E Dr. Adarsh Swaika, Ambassador of India expressed his delight to attend a celebration of India's 78th Independence Day. A host of diplomats present at the event also praised the performance of such a talented singer.

Dr. Shabbir Qamar, Founder and MD of the SaaZ Group, the key driver of this event, joined by esteemed guests, presented a token of appreciation to Salman Ali, Ashwini

Kumar, CEO of Pyramid, and Crowne Plaza Hotel, as the hospitality partner for the successful evening. Ravita Dalal Mishra, International Sales Director of Pyramid Infratech Pvt. Ltd presented the Vote of Thanks.

The evening was gracefully hosted by Kuwait's well known emcees, Nita Bhatkar Chogle and RJ Rachana.

Salman Ali, who hails from a small town in Haryana, came to Mumbai to make his family proud. He comes from four generations of professional singers, who made a living off singing.

Salman became popular in 2011 after participating in the Indian reality show Sa Re Ga Ma Pa Li'l Champs where he emerged a runner up. In 2018, he catapulted to fame after his Indian Idol win and went on to Bollywood playback, even lending his voice to Salman Khan for a song in Dabangg 3.

Currently, he also mentors other upcoming singers in reality shows like Singing Superstar.

Known for his powerful and emotive voice, Salman is extremely soft spoken, simple and courteous in person. However, from the moment he took the stage, he commanded the audience's attention with his charismatic presence and powerful vocals.

In an exclusive interview, Salman shared, "I loved performing for the audience in Kuwait. They enjoyed all of my songs without leaving their seats throughout. They also sang along enthusiastically, which was so good to experience."

Totally mesmerized, the crowd, kept singing along and swaying to the rhythms all evening. Needless to say, Salman Ali's stupendous performance was a resounding success.

'Instant issuance and digital wallet integration'

NBK launches Kuwait's first cashback prepaid card for parents & youngsters

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 22: In keeping with its pioneering efforts in providing customers from all segments with an exceptional banking experience that meets their needs and expectations, National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) has unveiled the revamped NBK UEFA Champions League Platinum Mastercard Prepaid Card, which is the first-of-its-kind to feature the "Double Earning" concept in Kuwait, through exclusive benefits and rewards to customers.

The revamped card is available to all family members with starting age as low as 7 years old, and is the first prepaid cashback card of its kind in Kuwait available for and offering its benefits to both parents and youngsters.

Cardholder earns 3 points for every KD 1 spent locally as well as internationally and 3 points for every KD 1 loaded into the card. Earned points can be redeemed with cashback direct to the card, or with e-vouchers/gift cards redeemable at more than 185 merchants locally and globally in all shopping categories related to the youth and youngsters segment such as PlayStation, Xbox, etc.

Youngsters would have a seamless redemption process through a dedicated web portal using their own credentials without the need for parents to view their earned points balance or to redeem. They also would have unlimited free visits to more than 25 lounges while traveling with their parents, as well as exclusive offers from Mastercard.

The card is issued instantly through NBK Mobile Banking App and can be added immediately to any digital wallet such as Apple Pay, Samsung Wallet, or Google Pay.

"Our goal is to help the next generation develop strong financial literacy skills in a way that is easy and beneficial. By



NBK cashback prepaid card.

rewarding cashback offered by NBK UEFA Champions League Platinum Mastercard Prepaid Card, we aim to incentivize smart spending and savings from an early age," Anwar Al Ballam Senior Products Manager, Consumer Banking Group at National Bank of Kuwait, commented on unveiling the revamped card.

"Launching Kuwait's first cashback card for parents and youngsters aligns with our constant efforts to promote financial literacy and to be always closer to our customers from all segments, by offering innovative products packed with unmatched benefits and rewards," he remarked.

NBK provides an array of prepaid cards which offer numerous benefits, while helping customers spend their money confidently and conveniently, making sure they never go over their budget.

Next Alfouz monthly draw scheduled for Aug 26

ABK reveals Mohammad Yaqoub Boshehri as KD 10,000 'Alfouz' weekly draw winner

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 22: Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) is excited to announce MOHAMMAD YAQOUB BOSHEHRI as the winner of Alfouz KD 10,000 weekly draw on Monday 19 August, 2024. The draw took place in the presence of a Ministry of Commerce and Industry representative, ensuring transparency.

From the highly coveted mega annual draw of a KD 5,000 monthly salary for 10 years to its KD 10,000 weekly prize, the Alfouz account has already attracted the attention of the Kuwaiti market. Based on the account's great success, ABK decided to go above and beyond to reward customer loyalty.

By introducing a KD 100,000 quarterly draw, in addition to an exciting KD 20,000 monthly draw, the Alfouz offering has continued to surpass expectations and deliver even more customer satisfaction.

To top it off, ABK has simplified the ability to open the account and win! Customers can enter the draws and get extra entry chances for every KD 10 deposited as opposed to KD 100 previously. The more you save, the higher your chance to be the next Alfouz winner!

ABK encourages everyone to open an Alfouz draw account or increase their balance to participate in the upcoming monthly draw, which is scheduled to take place on Monday 26 August, 2024.

Open an Alfouz account today and enjoy increased oppor-



ABK Alfouz account

tunities to win the lifestyle you've been waiting for!

To learn more about the Alfouz account and its range of exciting draws and prizes, please follow the ABK's Instagram account @abk_kuwait, visit eahli.com, contact Ahlan Ahli 1 899 899 or visit one of the Bank's branches across Kuwait.

Earn up to 100,000 Baitak bonus points

KFH launches 'You Deserve' Campaign

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 22: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) continues its campaign (You Deserve) that encourages Kuwaiti customers to transfer their salaries and enjoy the exceptional benefits.

The campaign offers a variety of rewards and competitive offers. These include a guaranteed cash gift of up to KWD 400 for transferring salary to AlRabeh account, and the chance to earn up to 100,000 Baitak bonus points redeem-

able for purchases at popular brands.

Additionally, customers can receive a KWD 500 cash gift for referring a new Kuwaiti customer to transfer their salary. AlRabeh account holders also have the chance to win cash prizes and a gold biscuit in a drawing with 536 winners. The campaign boasts the Emergency Cash service, allowing customers to withdraw a portion of their salaries in advance directly through the KFH app - with no fees.

This campaign reflects KFH's ongoing dedication to meeting customer expectations by upholding the highest standards of excellence and quality. By transferring their salaries to the KFH AlRabeh account, customers can unlock the account's many benefits throughout the year. Customers can open AlRabeh account without any fees or cost, with an ATM card free for the first year. AlRabeh is a saving account for salary transfer which offers annual distributions and opportunities to win K.D 1,500 weekly for ten winners, a chance to win 1 kilo of Gold per month for one winner, and K.D 25,000 for one winner every quarter. The customer may enter the weekly, monthly and quarterly draws when a minimum of three salary transfers are deposited in the account three months prior to the draw date.

It is worth noting that KFH prioritizes continuous improvement to its banking system and products. This dedication ensures it caters to the diverse needs and aspirations of its customers by offering innovative services while improving customer satisfaction. KFH's commitment has resulted in a qualitative shift and clear distinction in its service level. This is achieved by leveraging advanced technological tools and market research to precisely match the needs of each customer segment.



'You Deserve' Campaign.



Photo during the event.

Pakistan's Independence Day celebrated with Youth Wing Summer Camp closing ceremony

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 22: Pakistan's Independence Day was celebrated with great enthusiasm organized by Youth Wing Islamic Education Committee Kuwait. The highlight of the program was to mark the closing ceremony of the school children's "Summer Camp 2024" organized by the Youth Wing.

Muhammad Ayan started the program by reciting the Holy Quran. President Youth Wing Abdul Ghaffar expressed his views regarding Independence Day, Summer Camp 2024 and Youth Wing. Hamad Nadeem mesmerized the audience by singing the patriotic song. Muhammad Ehsanullah delivered an impactful speech on the topic of "Pakistan and its objectives" in connection with Pakistan Day. Muhammad Ibrahim and Abdul Hadi also expressed their thoughts regarding the dear country of Pakistan which were applauded by the audience. A detailed documentary about the annual activities of the Youth Wing was also presented in the program.

The chief guest of the program was the First Secretary of the Embassy of Pakistan Faisal Majeed and accompanied by Muhammad Usman Nawaz, the Director of Passports. The program was chaired by Mr. Hafiz Hafeezur Rahman, President of Islamic Education Committee Kuwait.

The Chief Guest, Mr. Faisal Majeed, while expressing his views, said that looking at the regional situation, we should now believe that the future of Pakistan is in the hands of the youth, so the youth should get more knowledge and skills.

Hafiz Hafeezur Rahman expressed in his closing address on the challenges facing Pakistan and our responsibilities. He specifically mentioned Palestine and said that Palestine and Jerusalem are very important for us Muslims. Emphasizing the need for unity, he advised the youth to pay special attention to this.

Parents expressed that the Youth Wing team taught, trained and cared for our children in the summer camp in a way that we would not have been able to do on our own. The parents said that due to this summer camp, our children are having a very positive effect and the children are learning very good and useful things, they mentioned that this should continue so that we can send our children to this training center.

In the end, Javed Iqbal concluded the program with Dua and lavish dinner was served. The program was moderated by Dr. Ahsan Hanif and Muhammad Asif. Certificates were given to the teachers, youth wing and children serving in the summer camp.

Singer explains her silence

Swift calls Vienna show cancellations 'devastating'

LONDON, Aug 22, (AP) - Two weeks after organizers scrubbed Taylor Swift's concerts in Vienna amid a foiled terror plot, the singer issued her first statement on the cancellations.

"Having our Vienna shows cancelled was devastating," she wrote in a statement posted to Instagram on Wednesday. "The reason for the cancellations filled me with a new sense of fear, and a tremendous amount of guilt because so many people had planned on coming to those shows."

She thanked authorities - "thanks to them, we were grieving concerts and not lives," she wrote - and said she waited to speak until the European leg of her Eras Tour concluded to prioritize safety.

"Let me be very clear: I am not going to speak about something publicly if I think doing so might provoke those who would want to harm the fans who come to my shows," she wrote.

In the wake of the cancellations, Swift's representatives did not respond to multiple requests for comment from The Associated Press and other news organizations and her social media pages had gone dormant.

"In cases like this one, 'silence' is actually showing restraint, and waiting to express yourself at a time when it's right to. My priority was finishing our European tour safely, and it's with great relief that I can say we did that," she added.

Concert organizer Barracuda Music had said it canceled the three-night Vienna run that would have begun Aug. 8 because the arrests made

in connection to the conspiracy were too close to showtime. Authorities said a 19-year-old suspect had planned to target spectators outside the Ernst Happel Stadium with knives or homemade explosives, hoping to "kill as many people as possible." Austrian officials said they appeared to have been inspired by the Islamic State group and al-Qaeda.

Allegations

That suspect and another 17-year-old were taken into custody on Aug. 6, the day before the shows were announced as canceled. A third suspect, 18, was arrested Aug. 8. The 19-year-old's lawyer has said the allegations were "overacting at its best," and contended Austrian authorities were "presenting this exaggeratedly" in order to get new surveillance powers.

Tens of thousands of Swifties from around the world had traveled to Vienna for the shows.

Swift's Instagram post also commemorated the end of the European leg with a tribute to her five nights at London's Wembley Stadium, which she said factored into her decision to wait to speak out and ultimately "felt like a beautiful dream sequence."

"I decided that all of my energy had to go toward helping to protect the nearly half a million people I had coming to see the shows in London," she wrote the day after her last Wembley concert. "My team and

I worked hand in hand with stadium staff and British authorities every day in pursuit of that goal."

The shows in London, the next stop scheduled after Vienna, also came on the heels of a stabbing at a Swift-themed dance class that left three little girls dead in the U.K. In a statement issued after the Southport attack, Swift said she was "just completely in shock" and "at a complete loss for how to ever convey my sympathies to these families." News outlets reported that Swift met with some of the survivors backstage in London.

The record-smashing tour is on hiatus until October, when it resumes in Miami.

Also:

LOS ANGELES: It has been 24 years since the Softies - the minimalist indiepop duo of **Rose Melberg** (also of Tiger Trap, Gaze, Go Sailor) and **Jen Sbragia** (Pretty Face) - have released a new album. In that time, there have been generations of music obsessives who have learned and loved their back catalog, working to understand their powers. How can two electric guitars and sugar-rush harmonies hit with such humanity? But a magician never reveals her tricks, and in the case of "The Bed I Made," the Softies' forthcoming album, there's more magic to experience.

Variety



This image released by Amazon/MGM Studios shows Channing Tatum from 'Blink Twice.' (AP)

Film

Zoë Kravitz's film is great-looking but vexing

Style triumphs over logic in 'Blink Twice'

By Jocelyn Noveck

Love means never having to say you're sorry, somebody once famously said in the movies. It made utterly no sense in 1970, but even less so now. In recent decades, the apology has become all the rage.

So at the beginning of Zoë Kravitz's "Blink Twice," when her tech-mogul protagonist, Slater King, sits on a TV couch and says "I'm sorry" for some unexplained transgression, well, it's a familiar scene. Pick your offender, pick your year: Famous person issues ritual apology, gets off grid for a bit (in this case, a remote island with chickens) and returns, presumably forgiven. We've seen it all before.

Not that it isn't fun to watch here - especially because Channing Tatum is so delightfully, charmingly smarmy in the role. "Blink Twice" is a big swing for him as an actor and even a bigger one for Kravitz, his life partner, as director and co-writer of this stylish, ambitious, buzzy film that seems to aspire to be a gender-themed "Get Out," or a #MeToo-era thriller with echoes of "Promising Young Woman."

And Kravitz almost pulls it off. With the help of a terrific cast, she offers strikingly confident, brashly entertaining filmmaking, until everything seems to break down in a mess of porous storytelling. It's not the sudden intrusion of gore that's the issue - this is a horror film, duh. It's the sudden departure of logic. Perhaps you won't be able to turn away - but, unlike in Jordan Peele's or Emerald Fennell's above-mentioned films, you won't necessarily be able to explain what you saw, either.

But it sure is crackling fun, until it isn't - which is a pretty apt way to describe the experience that Frida (Naomi Ackie, excellent) has. A cocktail waitress who designs nail art, Frida lives in a rundown apartment with roommate Jess (Alia Shawkat). When the two get a waitressing gig at a fundraiser, they cleverly plot to change into slinky dresses midway so they can mingle with wealthy guests.

Turns out, it's a fundraiser for Slater's firm, and when Frida trips, it's the billionaire himself who helps her up. He introduces her to his friends, and soon, Frida and Jess can't believe their luck -

they're on Slater's plane, en route to his very own Fantasy Island.

The water is sparkling. The champagne is, too. Frida and Jess' closets are filled with resort wear in stylish white, matching those given the other female guests: the flaky and/or stoned Camilla and Heather, and hard-nosed, sharp-elbowed Sarah, who has eyes on Slater and thus daggers out for Frida.

Confiscate

The food, prepared by Slater's buddy Cody (Simon Rex), is impeccable. (His other pals are played by Christian Slater, Haley Joel Osment and Levon Hawke, and his therapist by Kyle MacLachlan.) Alcohol is plentiful, sheets are soft, and there's drugs, too - to be used "with intention," according to Slater, whatever that means. Days are long, nights are longer, and soon nobody knows what day it is anyway.

But why is that, exactly? Well, all phones were confiscated upon arrival by Stacy, Slater's ditzzy assistant - Geena Davis, a hoot but somewhat underused (and one should never underuse Geena Davis). But something deeper seems at play. We're trying to avoid spoilers, but as Jess tells Frida, "There is something wrong with this place."

That would be easy enough to figure out just by looking at the oddly terrifying faces of the resort workers (shades of "Get Out") who are surely hiding something. Also: why does Frida have dirt under her fingernails? And what happened to a red stain on her dress? Weird stuff is happening.

But Frida, still, is angry that Jess is balking. They're on a gorgeous island, and someone important is courting her. "For the first time in my life I'm here and I'm not invisible, so please," she admonishes her friend.

And so the pretense continues - that pretense, familiar in the Instagram era, of always having a good time. "Are you having a good time?" Slater asks more than once. "Yes!" says Frida, less convincingly as time goes on.

And when everything has gone to utter bloody, gory chaos, someone still suggests, eerily: "There's a version of this where we're all having a good time."

There's a deeper undercurrent here. Women,

Kravitz has posited, are always expected to smile, play the game, pretend they're having a good time - and, she says, to "forget" the bad stuff. And so forgetting is a prominent element in her film, one we won't spoil.

In any case, there's indeed a version of Kravitz's film in which we're all having a great time - most of it, actually. She just needs to stick the landing. We'll all be eager to see what comes next.

"Blink Twice," an Amazon/MGM release, has been rated R by the Motion Picture Association "for strong violent content, sexual assault, drug use and language throughout, and some sexual references." Running time: 103 minutes. Two and a half stars out of four.

Also:

NEW YORK: The Directors Guild of America (DGA) will pay tribute to **Francis Ford Coppola** at its 25th DGA Honors in October.

Coppola will be honored Oct. 17 at a ceremony at the DGA Theater in New York, the guild was set to announce Monday. It will be the first such ceremony for the DGA since 2018.

Coppola, 85, has been nominated by the DGA five times before and won its award for outstanding directorial achievement twice, for 1972's "The Godfather" and for its 1974 sequel. His latest film and first feature in 13 years, "Megalopolis," opens in theaters Sept. 27.

"Megalopolis," which Coppola financed himself, premiered in May at the Cannes Film Festival to mixed reviews. It will make its North American debut at the Toronto International Film Festival.

The Directors Guild will also honor the former CBS News executive **Susan Zirinsky**, and brother-and-sister team of **Tony and Gina Argento** of Broadway Stages, and the arthouse film company Criterion.

"We are incredibly proud to celebrate the 25th anniversary of DGA Honors, and to recognize the accomplishments of visionary storytellers who have greatly influenced American culture through their tremendous contributions to film and television," said **Lesli Linka Glatter**, DGA president, in a statement. (AP)

NEW YORK: Veteran PBS correspondent **Judy Woodruff** apologized on Wednesday for comments she had made on the air regarding former President **Donald Trump** and negotiations for a cease-fire in Gaza between **Israel** and **Hamas**.

Woodruff, during PBS' Democratic national convention coverage on Monday, repeated a story she had read in Axios and Reuters that Trump had allegedly been encouraging Israeli Prime Minister **Benjamin Netanyahu** to put off peace talks until after the US election in the belief that a deal could help Democrat **Kamala Harris'** campaign.

But Woodruff said in a post on X Wednesday that she had not seen later reporting that the story had been denied by the Trump campaign and Israel. She said her remarks had not been based on any original reporting on her part.

"This was a mistake, and I apologize for it," Woodruff said.

Woodruff's long career in journalism has included time at CNN and NBC News. She was host of PBS' "NewsHour" between 2013 and 2022, before stepping down for a reporting project. (AP)

NEW YORK: The Democratic National Convention transformed what should have been the driest part of the evening - the roll call - into a party Thursday, complete with lively music and several celebrity appearances.

Although the Democratic party previously held a virtual vote on Aug. 6 that made Harris the party's official nominee, she held a "celebratory" roll call vote to reaffirm her nomination. As each state called out the number of delegates who cast votes for Harris, several states boasted appearances from their famous residents and natives.

The evening already included several headliners, with **Patti LaBelle** and Common performing and **Barack** and **Michelle Obama** set to speak.

Here are all the celebrities who appeared at the convention for the roll call.

Director **Spike Lee**, known for films including "Do the Right Thing" and "Malcolm X," joined New York Democrats to deliver the state's 298 votes to Harris. Lee has become an iconic figure of New York, as he has become a staple courtside at the Knicks games and created a short film titled "New York New York" as

an ode to the city.

Lee didn't speak but joined in chants of "New York" alongside Gov. **Kathy Hochul** and Sens. **Chuck Schumer** and **Kirsten Gillibrand**.

Actor **Sean Astin**, best known for playing the titular Notre Dame football player in "Rudy," joined the Indiana delegation to help cast



LaBelle



Woodruff

its 86 delegates for Harris and Walz.

"I want what's best for Indiana and that means electing Kamala Harris the first woman president of the United States of America," Astin said.

Actor **Wendell Pierce** joined the delegates from his home state of **Louisiana** to express his

personal endorsement of Harris and help the state announce its 47 votes for Harris.

"I'm a proud son of Louisiana and Louisiana is about family, and I'm surrounded by my family of the delegates of Louisiana," Pierce said.

"The Wire" star has been outspoken about his support for

Democratic candidates for years.

The rapper, who hails from **Atlanta**, fired up the crowd with a performance of his hit song "Turn Down for What" before **Georgia** delivered 123 votes for Harris.

"We are here tonight to officially nominate **Kamala Harris**," he said before he erupted into the song. (AP)

People & Places

Music

Celebrates tradition

Triqui artist brings his roots to 'modern rap'

MEXICO CITY, Aug 22, (AP): Backstage at a celebration of Indigenous peoples in Mexico City's sprawling central square, Carlos CGH traced his fingers across a black and red "gabán," which is similar to a poncho.

The garment, native to the Triqui people in western Oaxaca, is a source of pride for the 24-year-old rapper and reserved for special occasions. Its textured surface was decorated with intricate needlepoint patterns of multicolored corn husks.

As the rapper - whose full name is **Carlos Guadalupe Hernández** - prepared for his performance, Oaxacan muralist Alberto Sebastián Bautista Figueroa brainstormed details. He crafted a drawing with the word "Raices," or "Roots," in twisting strokes, for a mural he planned to create during the performance.

"We're always proud," Guadalupe later said on stage, wearing the gabán. "This goes out to all craftspeople who are here, people don't know all the history and all the resistance behind one garment."

Such details are an important part of his identity as a musician, representing his origins as a descendant of the Triqui nation. His verses are reflective of his culture, and he aims to conserve his native tongue, Triqui, through contemporary rap.

Triqui is one of many Mixtec languages spoken in Oaxaca and has four variants. One variant, Xñánj nu'a, is particular to Guadalupe's hometown of San Juan Copala.

"To my Triqui brothers - farmworkers, students, doctors and all the women," Guadalupe rapped in Spanish. "We fight every day for a better future." He held up a shirt that said "Triqui Nation Resists!" while his DJ dropped a series of trap horns.

The Indigenous Triqui people, numbering about 20,000, have struggled with political and social conflicts going back more than 80 years. The area also has become a hot spot for arms trafficking, drug trafficking and illegal logging.

Growing internal disputes for territorial control, including dozens of killings, have led to forced displacement for many in the community.

Conserve

Many Triquis have moved to Mexico City but push to return to their homes. Guadalupe is originally from the municipality of Santiago Juxtlahuaca, which many Triquis were forced to leave. At the age of 6, he relocated to another Oaxacan city, Huajuapán de León, about two hours away.

He got his start in music at age 12 as a percussionist with a local band, surrounded by Oaxaca-Mixteca artists he admired. He started rapping in 2013, inspired by the local scene. "Like love at first sight," he recalled after seeing local lyricists perform.

He sees rap as a way to conserve his mother tongue. "It's a language that is at risk of disappearing. Parents and grandparents are no longer teaching it to their kids," he said. "We learned that through rap we can make songs that would interest the new generations to speak it (Triqui) again."

In Oaxaca, the variety of rap is abundant. To mark the 50th anniversary of hip-hop's birth, Oaxaca's Sound Archive, an independent project to demonstrate the state's musical diversity, created a "sonic" map of the region's most influential rappers earlier this year. Carlos CGH was among them.

With about a dozen Indigenous languages, Oaxaca has nurtured a diverse scene. Among Guadalupe's peers are rappers who take pride in rapping in Mixtec, Zapotec, Cuicatec and other languages.

But the scene has suffered from the violence in Oaxaca. Last month, Rosty Bazendu, a passionate lyricist in the Zapotec language, was killed.

"When you look up the Triqui community on the internet, a lot of things are going to come up regarding some of the problems we have," Guadalupe said. "Here in Mexico City, I come to talk about what's within my community - the celebrations, the craftsmanship, the children, everyone who has stood out."

On stage, Guadalupe's vision of Triqui culture comes to life.

"Where are my people from the Triqui nation?" he shouted. A family in the front row raised their hands.

His last song, dedicated to the people of Santiago Juxtlahuaca, opened with playful arrangements of traditional Oaxacan banda music.

The crowd cheered for "El Baile del Diablo," or "Devil's Dance," a traditional dance from the Oaxacan coast. The muralist Bautista exchanged his cans of spray paint for the traditional garb of the devil, wearing a handcrafted wooden mask and stomping across the stage. Throughout the track, Guadalupe seamlessly wove Spanish verses with Triqui rhymes.

Also:

NEW YORK: In the 1980s and '90s, **Ron Spitzer** played bass and drums in rock bands - Tot Rocket and the Twins, Western Eyes and Band of Susans. He sang and wrote songs, toured the country and recorded albums. When the bands broke up, he continued to make music with friends.

But a stroke in 2009 put Spitzer in a wheelchair, partially paralyzing his left arm and leg. He gave away his drum kit. His bass sat untouched. His voice was a whisper.

Now music is part of his healing. Spitzer sings each week in a choir for people recovering from stroke at the Louis Armstrong Center for Music and Medicine at Mount Sinai in New York.

"I've found my voice, quite literally," Spitzer said. Scientists are studying the potential benefits of music for people with dementia, traumatic brain injuries, Parkinson's disease and stroke. Music lights up multiple regions of the brain, strengthening neural connections between areas that govern language, memories, emotions and movement.

And music seems to increase levels of a specific protein in the brain that's important for making new connections between neurons, said **Dr. Preeti Raghavan**, a stroke rehabilitation expert at Johns Hopkins Medicine and volunteer for the American Stroke Association. "It increases the possibility that the brain will rewire," Raghavan said.

Choirs like the one at Mount Sinai offer the hope of healing through music while also providing camaraderie, a place where stroke survivors don't have to explain their limitations.

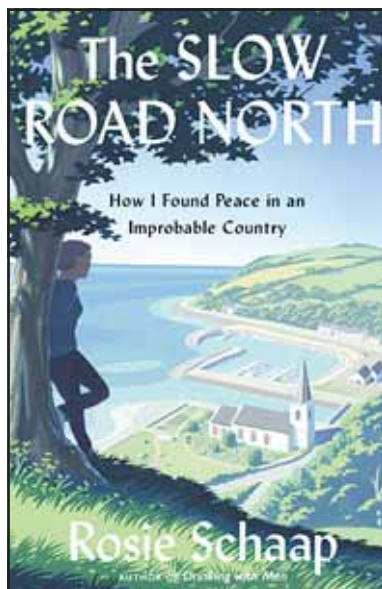
"We're all part of the same tribe," Spitzer said. Strokes often damage cells in the brain's left-hemisphere language center, leaving survivors with difficulty retrieving words, a condition called aphasia. Yet the ability to sing fluently can remain, said Jessica Hariwijaya, a research fellow at Mount Sinai who is studying the stroke choir.



Hernández



Sheila E., (left), and John Legend perform during the Democratic National Convention Wednesday, Aug. 21, in Chicago. (AP)



This cover image released by Mariner Books shows 'The Slow Road North: How I Found Peace in an Improbable Country' by Rosie Schaap. (AP)



Gallagher Jr



Coppola

Variety

LOS ANGELES: Lionsgate recalled its new trailer for **Francis Ford Coppola's** "Megalopolis" Wednesday amid revelations that critics' quotes were fabricated.

"Lionsgate is immediately recalling our trailer for Megalopolis," a Lionsgate spokesperson said in a statement to The Associated Press. "We offer our sincere apologies to the critics involved and to Francis Ford Coppola and American Zoetrope for this inexcusable error in our vetting process. We screwed up. We are sorry."

The trailer, released earlier Wednesday, included quotes from critics like **Pauline Kael** and **Roger Ebert** of other Coppola films that did not actually appear in their reviews. The intent, it seems, was to highlight the critical divisiveness of now-classics like "The Godfather" and "Apocalypse Now," leaning into some of the more negative reactions to "Megalopolis," the self-financed \$120 million epic opening in September.

The trailer attributed a quote to Kael that "The Godfather" was "diminished by its artiness." But Kael loved "The Godfather," and this phrase was not used in her March 1972 review of the film for The New Yorker. Ebert also did not write that Coppola's "Bram Stoker's Dracula" was "a triumph of style over substance." Quotes from **Rex Reed** and **Vincent Canby**, about "Apocalypse Now," did not appear in their reviews either. (AP)

GABORONE, Botswana: Botswana says one of the largest diamonds ever found has been unearthed at one of its mines and will be put on show on Thursday.

The Botswana government believes the huge 2.492-carat stone is the biggest discovered in the country, and the second-biggest ever brought out of a mine.

Canadian mining company Lucara Diamond Corp. said in a statement Wednesday that it recovered the "exceptional" rough diamond from its Karowe Mine in western Botswana. Lucara said it was a "high-quality" stone and was found intact. It was located using X-ray technology.

The weight would make it the largest diamond found in more than 100 years and the second-largest ever dug out of a mine after the Cullinan Diamond discovered in South Africa in 1905. The Cullinan was 3,106 carats and was cut into gems, some of which form part of the British Crown Jewels.

A bigger black diamond was discovered in Brazil in the late 1800s, but it was found

Books

Mystery and culture intertwine in 'Spirit Crossing'

Writer's tale of healing thru change

NEW YORK, Aug 22, (AP): Can what looks like running away from grief and sadness actually be a way to heal?

In "**The Slow Road North**," writer **Rosie Schaap** chronicles her circuitous route from spending most of her life as a dyed-in-the-wool New Yorker to finding herself settling down far away in a small town in Northern Ireland.

Schaap, an established journalist, teacher and occasional bartender in Brooklyn with a cozy apartment she'd lived in for decades, seemed set as a New York lifer. But she is dealt a crushing loss when her husband dies of cancer in 2010, leaving her a widow at 39.

A little more than a year later, her mother, with whom she had a complicated relationship, dies, too. Faced with conflicted feelings that she isn't dealing with her grief in the "right" way, she begins to ache for change.

Schaap has a longtime fascination with Ireland and its poets, writers and history, and after returning there over several years, she decides to attend a creative writing program in Belfast in 2019. She soon settles in Glenarm, a coastal town north of Belfast.

Facing loads of skepticism - from her friends wondering why she would give up her perfect Brooklyn apartment, from Irish neighbors wondering why an American would move to Glenarm, and even her own fear that she might be running away from her problems - Schaap dedicates herself to becoming involved with Glenarm's community. She finds solace in the people, the countryside, and establishes her place among new friends. She even embarks on a new love.

Peppering her own story with snippets of Irish poetry, folktales, colorful descriptions of small-town characters, and the history of Irish travesties like the potato famine of the 1800s and the later decades of the sectarian conflict known as The Troubles, Schaap's memoir details how Glenarm and Northern Ireland's nuanced relationship with grief helps her face her own.

"Moving would not 'fix' me, but another way of living, here, in this quiet and healing place, might start to heal me, too," she writes.

□ □ □

on the surface and was believed to have been part of a meteorite. (AP)

□ □ □

NEW YORK: The four stars who helped shape the new musical "Swept Away" - **John Gallagher Jr.**, **Stark Sands**, **Adrian Blake Enesco** and **Wayne Duvall** - will steer the nautical tale to the commercial waves of Broadway.



Joe Wright, (left), and Hayley Bennett pose upon arrival at the special screening for the film 'Widow Clicquot' on Wednesday, August 21, in London. (AP)

The tale about four men stranded in the Atlantic Ocean after a 19th-century shipwreck features songs from The Avett Brothers - especially their 2004 album "Mignonette" - and drops anchor at the Longacre Theatre in October.

"This musical, much like our relationship, revolves around the theme of brotherhood. Being able to watch **John**,

"Spirit Crossing" returns to three of the author's familiar themes: the rape of the natural world in the pursuit of profit, the mistreatment of Native Americans, and, with emphasis this time, that thousands of Native American women and girls are missing and not much ever seems to be done about it.

The author puts this thought in the mouth of one of Cork's relatives: "To be an Indian is to walk with loss. It goes before us and it follows us. It is our shadow self."

Also:

NEW YORK: Retired Supreme Court Justice **Anthony M. Kennedy** has a two-volume memoir coming out this fall, tracking his life from growing up in California to his 30 years on the court, when he cast key votes on landmark cases ranging from abortion to gay marriage to campaign finance.

Simon & Schuster announced Tuesday that Kennedy's "Life and Law: The Early Years" and "Life and Law: The Court Years" will be published Oct. 1, as a boxed set and in individual editions, each around 320 pages. Kennedy was widely regarded as a moderate conservative who wrote the majority opinion on such closely divided cases as *Obergefell v. Hodges*, which found a constitutional right to same-sex marriage, and *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission*, which allowed corporations and other outside entities to spend unlimited money on election campaigns.

"In 'Life and Law,' he explains the why's and how's of judging," Simon & Schuster's announcement reads in part.

"The second volume is filled with moving portraits of Justices **O'Connor**, **Rehnquist**, **Scalia** and **Ginsburg** that go along with the account of how Kennedy decided his views in the landmark cases. But it is the first volume about his youth in **Sacramento** and his decade as a practicing lawyer that explains the judicial giant. Readers will see the child who turns into the man, who shaped **America** as much as any Washington figure in the 21st century," Kennedy, 87, noted in the preface to the first volume that his memoirs proved more expansive than originally planned.

Krueger has no Native American blood himself, but as usual he treats native culture and mysticism with understanding and respect. His prose and character development are superb, and his vivid descriptions bring Minnesota's north woods to life.

Stark, Adrian and Wayne team up in the development of "Swept Away" over these years has been the precise definition of brotherhood," The Avett Brothers said in a statement.

The show has a story by **John Logan**, the Tony Award-winning playwright of 2009's "Red" and screenwriter behind "Gladiator," "The Aviator" and "Skyfall." It premiered at Berkeley Repertory Theatre in early 2022 and then went to Arena Stage in Washington, D.C.

The Washington Post said the show "aligns with such boundary-pushing musicals as 'Next to Normal' and 'Dear Evan Hansen,'" while MD Theatre Guide said: "With themes of sacrifice, absolution, and confession, 'Swept Away' unfolds like Christian parable, albeit one better aligned with Easter than Christmas." (AP)

NEW YORK: Veteran producer **Almin Karamehmedovic**, who's been the top behind-the-scenes executive at "World News Tonight" since 2014, has been named ABC News president, the network announced on Monday.

He replaces **Kim Godwin**, who retired after three years in May. Godwin faced some internal strife, in part, because she was an outsider: she came to ABC News from an executive role at CBS. Karamehmedovic, by contrast, has worked at ABC News since he was a freelance video editor based in London in 1998. (AP)

Drinking water contains more than 1.5 mg of fluoride per liter

Fluoride above safe limit tied to lower IQ in kids: US report

NEW YORK, Aug 22, (AP): A US government report expected to stir debate concluded that fluoride in drinking water at twice the recommended limit is linked with lower IQ in children.

The report, based on an analysis of previously published research, marks the first time a federal agency has determined - "with moderate confidence" - that there is a link between higher levels of fluoride exposure and lower IQ in kids. While the report was not designed to evaluate the health effects of fluoride in drinking water alone, it is a striking acknowledgment of a potential neurological risk from high levels of fluoride.

Fluoride strengthens teeth and reduces cavities by replacing minerals lost during normal wear and tear, according to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The addition of low levels of fluoride to drinking water has long been considered one of the greatest public health achievements of the last century.

"I think this (report) is crucial in our understanding" of this risk, said Ashley Malin, a University of Florida researcher who has studied the affect of higher fluoride levels in pregnant women on their children. She called it the most rigorously conducted report of its kind.

Review

The long-awaited report released Wednesday comes from the National Toxicology Program, part of the Department of Health and Human Services. It summarizes a review of studies, conducted in Canada, China, India, Iran, Pakistan, and Mexico, that concludes that drinking water containing more than 1.5 milligrams of fluoride per liter is consistently associated with lower IQs in kids.

The report did not try to quantify exactly how many IQ points might be lost at different levels of fluoride exposure. But some of the studies reviewed in the report suggested IQ was 2 to 5 points lower in children who'd had higher exposures.

Since 2015, federal health officials have recommended a fluoridation level of 0.7 milligrams per liter of water, and for five decades before the recommended upper range was 1.2. The World Health Organization has set a safe limit for fluoride in drinking water of 1.5.

The report said that about 0.6% of the US population - about 1.9 million people - are on water systems with naturally occurring fluoride levels of 1.5 milligrams or higher.

"The findings from this report raise the questions about how these people can be protected and what makes the most sense," Malin said.

The 324-page report did not reach a conclusion about the risks of lower levels of fluoride, saying more study is needed. It also did not answer what high levels of fluoride might do to adults.

The American Dental Association, which champions water fluoridation, had been critical of earlier versions of the new analysis and Malin's research. Asked for comment, a spokeswoman late Wednesday afternoon emailed that the organization's experts were still reviewing the report.

Cavities

Fluoride is a mineral that exists naturally in water and soil. About 80 years ago, scientists discovered that people whose supplies naturally had more fluoride also had fewer cavities, triggering a push to get more Americans to use fluoride for better dental health.

In 1945, Grand Rapids, Michigan became the first US city to start adding fluoride to tap water. In 1950, federal officials endorsed water fluoridation to prevent tooth decay, and continued to promote it even after fluoride toothpaste brands hit the market several years later. Though fluoride can come from a number of sources, drinking water is the main source for Americans, researchers say.

Officials lowered their recommendation for drinking water fluoride levels in 2015 to address a tooth condition called fluorosis, that can cause splotches on teeth and was becoming more common in US kids.

Separately, the Environmental Protection Agency has maintained a longstanding requirement that water systems cannot have more than 4 milligrams of fluoride per liter. That standard is designed to prevent skeletal fluorosis, a potentially crippling disorder which causes weaker bones, stiffness and pain.

But more and more studies have increasingly pointed to a different problem, suggesting a link between higher levels of fluoride and brain development. Researchers wondered about the impact on developing fetuses and very young children who might ingest water with baby formula. Studies in animals showed fluoride could impact neurochemistry cell function in brain regions responsible for learning, memory, executive function and behavior.

Misleading 'claims'

60 pct of US baby foods fail nutrition standards: study

SACRAMENTO, Aug 22, (Xinhua): A new study raised significant concerns about the nutritional quality of infant and toddler foods currently sold in the United States with misleading marketing claims.

A staggering 60 percent of these products failed to meet international nutrition requirements and all of them failed to meet promotional guidelines, according to the study published Wednesday in the journal *Nutrients*.

Researchers from Australia, the United States and Brazil scrutinized 651 infant and toddler food products sold in 10 major US grocery store chains, including Walmart, Kroger, and Costco.

These products were evaluated against the World Health Organization (WHO)'s Nutrient and Promotion Profile Model, a rigorous benchmark introduced in 2022 for foods intended for children aged 6 to 36 months.

The findings revealed that only 43.1 percent of products met all relevant nutritional criteria, with over 70 percent failing to meet protein requirements and 44 percent exceeding total sugar recommendations.

The researchers also found that none of the snack-size products met protein requirements, 87.1 percent failed to comply with total sugar standards, and 71 percent contained added sugars or sweeteners.

"The frequent use of free sugars and the high levels of sugar in infant and toddler food products in the United States is concerning, given that excess sugar consumption is a primary cause of obesity and related diseases, including diabetes, heart disease, and some cancers," said the researchers in the report.

The study also exposed the widespread use of misleading marketing claims on product packaging.

Doctors encouraged to discuss pain-relief options

CDC guidelines urge 'improved' pain relief in gynecological care

NEW YORK, Aug 22, (AP): Federal officials affirmed this month that the pain people might feel when getting an IUD can be more than doctors' promises of "just a pinch."

The local anesthetic lidocaine "might be useful for reducing patient pain" when inserting intrauterine devices, according to new guidance from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, which also encourages doctors to have a conversation with patients about pain management.

Women have used social media to advocate for more pain-management options, even recording and posting videos to document their grimaces, screams and tears as IUDs are put in. But complaints of pain are not limited to the small, long-lasting birth control device.

Many relatively quick outpatient procedures can cause pain, including biopsies and examinations of the uterus and cervix. Gynecologists and patients say there need to be more conversations about options for local anesthetics - as well as other pain-relief options for these procedures.

Treatments

Lidocaine spray or gel used as a local anesthetic and other pain treatments - think ibuprofen or an injection of an anesthetic - are safe for most patients and can be effective, gynecologists say.

The CDC's new guidance is just that - not a hard rule. And the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists spokesperson Rachel Kingery said in an emailed statement that there's no timeline for the group to provide clearer guidance on pain management for in-office procedures.

All of Dr. Cheruba Prabakar's patients who get an IUD also get a local anesthetic spray at minimum. The owner of Lamorinda Gynecology and Surgery in Lafayette, California, near Oakland, also books patients for 45-minute appointments in which she can thoroughly answer their questions and talk through concerns.

Some practices offer even stronger choices. After requests from their patients, Planned Parenthood League of Massachusetts added in March sedation options for IUD insertions and certain procedures in which doctors cut out possible cancers. Patients are not fully asleep, but drowsy.

Dr. Luu Ireland, an OB-GYN at



Dr. Susan Gorman displays the Skylla IUD, (left), and the Mirena IUD, at High Lakes Gynecology in Redmond, Ore., Jan. 14, 2015. (AP)

Planned Parenthood League of Massachusetts and UMass Memorial Hospital, said there are lighter pain-management offerings, including anxiety pills and local anesthetic.

"I can't tell you how many patients I've seen choose less effective methods of birth control or forgo birth control (entirely) because they're afraid to undergo the procedure," she said of IUDs.

Prabakar believes that the biggest barrier to more patients having their pain taken seriously isn't cost or equipment. It's time and trust.

Trauma

"There are a lot of patients with a history of trauma, history of shame," said Prabakar, who serves as an advisor to the Alliance for Women's Health and Prevention. "They barely can tolerate a speculum, let alone some of these other procedures."

Gynecology students should be taught on "Day One" about how trauma affects patients, said Dr. Deborah Bartz, an OB-GYN at Brigham and Women's Hospital who also teaches at Harvard Medical School.

That can include how anxiety levels and trauma can affect the level of pain a patient feels at the gynecologist, and how people who have never given birth may be at higher risk for pain during these sorts of visits, she said.

Research shows providers regularly underestimate the pain of IUD insertions. Women of color are less likely to have their pain taken seriously by providers; ample research shows Black people are undertreated for pain relative to white patients.

"If women have had their pain dismissed forever, since they were little kids having their periods, they're probably going to be more primed to experience trauma in the health care system," said Kate Nicholson, executive director of the National Pain Advocacy Center, a nonprofit focused on policy changes.

When the guidelines - or gynecologists - fall short, the onus may fall on the patient to speak up.

"(In obstetrics and gynecology,) there is that culture of: 'Women are strong. We can do this without pain medicine.' But why? Why is that?" said Sarah Friedberg, a Massachusetts mother of three who first experienced pain at the gynecologist since she got an IUD insertion 20 years ago - despite taking an over-the-counter pain reliever.

Friedberg's periods had always been exceptionally heavy, and after having three children, her doctors recommended removing her uterus. In August 2022, she went in to have blood drawn and other tests run in preparation for a hysterectomy.

Tomato virus ID'd

Australia probes dangers of PFAS

CANBERRA, Aug 22, (Xinhua): A Senate inquiry has been established to investigate the dangers posed by "forever chemicals" to the Australian public.

The governing Labor Party on Thursday agreed to support independent Senator Lidia Thorpe's proposal for a parliamentary inquiry into the health and environmental impacts of per- and polyfluoroalkyl (PFAS) chemicals.

Also known as "forever chemicals" due to their persistence in the environment and human body, PFAS encompasses over 10,000 synthetic chemicals used in products including firefighting foam, food packaging, non-stick pans, cosmetics and clothing.

According to Australia's Department of Health, exposure to certain PFAS chemicals including perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) and perfluorooctanesulfonic acid (PFOS) has been linked to an increased risk of testicular and kidney cancer.

The inquiry will be chaired by Thorpe, who said it would examine the sources that expose Australians to PFAS, the extent of their presence in the environment, consumer goods and food systems, their health, environmental, social, cultural and economic impact and how regulation can be strengthened to protect Australians.

"These chemicals already affect every single person in the world, yet not enough is being done to manage our exposure to them and reduce the risks," she said in the Senate.

"We've already seen worrying instances of cancer clusters with suspected links to PFAS chemicals. We cannot take them seriously enough."

Sydney Water on Tuesday confirmed that testing conducted in June and July detected PFAS at several drinking water catchments across the city for the first time.

Tomato virus: As New Zealand greenhouse tomato growers are concerned about a virus found in Australia, New Zealand's biosecurity department has placed import restrictions on tomato seed imports from Australia.

The department has stepped up biosecurity requirements in response to the Tomato Brown Rugose Fruit Virus (ToBRFV) recently detected at two South Australian growing properties, Stuart Anderson, Biosecurity New Zealand deputy director general, said on Thursday.

"Imported seeds for sowing from Australia will now require testing for the virus prior to arrival in New Zealand, which is a requirement that is already in place for other countries where the virus is present," Anderson said.

New Zealand has also temporarily suspended tomato imports from all Australian states except Queensland, where there is no evidence of the disease or links to the affected properties in South Australia, he said, adding the situation continues to be monitored closely to ensure New Zealand growers are protected.

Leqembi proven to slow disease progression

UK approves first Alzheimer drug for early use

LONDON, Aug 22, (Agencies): Britain's Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) approved on Thursday, a product license for the medicine Leqembi for use in the early stages of Alzheimer's, after proving that it slows the progression of disease by 27 percent.

The medicine works by removing the amyloid protein that accumulates in the brain of Alzheimer's patients and is administered via intravenous injection every two weeks for approximately 18 months, said the agency in a statement.

The statement added that the medi-

cine proved in treating patient who carry one or two of ApoE4 gene.

Alzheimer's disease is the most common type of dementia and is one of the leading causes of death in the United Kingdom.

This drug has also been licensed in the United States, Japan, and China.

Leqembi is the first medicine to show some impact in slowing the progression of the neurodegenerative disease.

But the UK government likely won't be paying for it after an independent agency separately issued draft guidance concluding that the benefits of

Leqembi "cannot be considered good value for the taxpayer."

In addition to the cost of the drug, providing Leqembi requires that patients be hospitalized every two weeks to receive it and be closely monitored for side effects. Experts also noted the lack of data regarding the long-term effectiveness of Leqembi, made by Japanese drugmaker Eisai.

"The reality is that the benefits this first treatment provides are just too small to justify the significant cost," said Dr. Samantha Robers, chief executive of the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence, or NICE.

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Leverkusen set a record by remaining unbeaten

German league claims to be most thrilling competition in Europe

Lynx race past Aces 98-87



Minnesota Lynx guard Kayla McBride, right, guards Las Vegas Aces guard Jackie Young (0) during the first half of a WNBA basketball game in Las Vegas. (AP)

Dream dismiss Mercury

LAS VEGAS, Aug 22, (AP): Napheesa Collier scored 23 points, Courtney Williams added a season-high 22 and the Minnesota Lynx raced past the Las Vegas Aces 98-87 on Wednesday night.

Minnesota scorched the two-time defending champions at home for the second time this season, winning its June game in Las Vegas 100-86.

BASKETBALL

The Lynx shot 55.2% in the first win, 59.4% in this one with Williams, who also had 10 assists and seven rebounds, providing the clincher. Las Vegas cut a 15-point deficit with 4:40 to play to 93-85 on a layup by Jackie Young with 1:37 left. Williams then drilled a 3-pointer from the left wing.

Bridget Carleton added 12 points, Kayla McBride had 11 and Alanna Smith 10, giving the Lynx (20-8) five starters in double figures for just the second time, the first coming in the other win over the Aces. Myisha Hines-Allen, acquired in a trade on Tuesday, had eight points off the bench.



Las Vegas Aces guard Tiffany Hayes (15) drives between Minnesota Lynx forward Cecilia Zandalasini (9) and forward Diamond Miller (1) during the first half of a WNBA basketball game in Las Vegas. (AP)

Dream 72, Mercury 63

In College Park, Tina Charles became the second all-time leading scorer in WNBA history while posting 12 points and 17 rebounds, and Atlanta defeated Phoenix. Allisha Gray had 21 points and Rhyné Howard 19 to lead the Dream (10-17), who won their season-best third straight after going into the Olympic break on an eight-game losing streak.

Charles, the No. 1 overall pick in the 2010 draft out of UConn, opened the fourth-quarter scoring with a 3-pointer from the top of the key that moved her past Tina Thompson's 7,488 points. Charles' 7,491 points are more than 3,000 behind Diana Taurasi (10,500), who was held to a late 3-pointer in this game.

Charles' basket broke a 48-48 tie and started a 17-2 run that broke the game open. Reserve Maya Caldwell had all six of her points following Charles' 3.

BERLIN, Aug 22, (Xinhua): As the German Bundesliga prepares to kick off its 62nd season, it has gained ground in the race against international competitors such as the English Premier League, the Italian Serie A, Spain's La Liga, and France's Ligue 1.

Aside from Bundesliga-employed strikers having scored the most goals at the 2024 UEFA Euro (26), a summer of intense international activities is said to increase the German league's appeal on the global stage.

Dortmund CEO and 1997 UEFA Champions League winner Lars Ricken called the German league the "most thrilling competition" in European football ahead of the 2024/25 season opener, which will see 2024 Champions League winners Bayer Leverkusen face Moenchengladbach this Friday evening.

SOCCER

With six clubs, including Augsburg, Dortmund, Frankfurt, Leipzig, Bayern, and Stuttgart, touring the US, South Africa, South Korea, Thailand, and Japan, the upcoming season's open title race is attracting significant attention.

"We have been more active than every other leading league," noted Peter Naubert, Chief Marketing Officer of Bundesliga International, mentioning that over 1,000 activities were conducted abroad.

With five clubs - Leverkusen, Stuttgart, Bayern, Leipzig, and Dortmund - participating in the Champions League, all are expected to play crucial roles in the race for the 2024/25 national title.

For the first time in over a decade, Leverkusen, rather than the 2020 treble winner Bayern, is opening the season with an away game following Bayern's eleven consecutive title wins.

Leverkusen set a record by remaining unbeaten throughout their league games last season. A total of 985 goals scored secured the Bundesliga's position among the leading European leagues.

Series winner Bayern launched a squad overhaul, investing over 100 million euros in players such as Michael Olise (Crystal Palace), Joao Palhinha (Fulham), and Hiroki Ito (Stuttgart), while also appointing 42-year-old Vincent Kompany (Burnley) as the new coach.

Bayern's dominance seems challenged by Leverkusen, with three other clubs joining the title race alongside the Bavarians.

While Leverkusen claimed last season's title, the team, led by Spanish star coach Xabi Alonso, now faces the added challenge of competing in the Champions League. The 2023/24 champions appear well-prepared after securing the 2024 pre-season Super Cup title in a penalty shootout against runner-up Stuttgart.

The Bundesliga field is completed by newcomers such as Holstein Kiel and St. Pauli, while Bayern dreams of reclaiming their dominance following Leverkusen's triumphant march last season.

Like Bayern, Dortmund also made changes by appointing their former midfielder, 35-year-old Nuri Sahin, as coach, alongside new arrivals such as Serhou Guirassy, Waldemar Anton (Stuttgart), and German international Maximilian Beier (Hoffenheim).

The announcement by Bayern sporting director Max Eberl of their intent to win back the league title, coupled with Leverkusen's determination to repeat last season's success and Dortmund's talk of their first title in twelve years, seems to promise a campaign with an open end.

Warriors Hall of Famer

Al Attles, one of NBA's pioneer Black head coaches, dies at 87

OAKLAND, Aug 22, (AP): Al Attles, a Hall of Famer who coached the 1975 NBA champion Warriors and spent more than six decades with the organization as a player, general manager and most recently team ambassador, has died.

He was 87. The Warriors announced Wednesday that Attles had died in his East Bay home on Tuesday surrounded by family.

Nicknamed "The Destroyer" for his physical style of play, the Warriors were his love and his only team after they selected him in the fifth round of the 1960 draft. It marks the longest stint with a single franchise for one player in league history.

Attles, one of the first Black head coaches in the NBA, was witness to some of the greatest games spanning different eras. He played in Wilt Chamberlain's 100-point game for the Philadelphia Warriors in Hershey, Pennsylvania, on March 2, 1962. Attles made all eight of his field-goal tries for 17 points.

He also coached Hall of Famer Rick Barry the day he scored 64 against Portland on March 26, 1974, then watched Clay Thompson drop 60 points over three quarters in December 2016.

"My heart is heavy today with the loss of my mentor and friend. Al was my roommate during my rookie season in the league. He taught me valuable lessons on being a professional that couldn't be learned on the court," Barry said in a statement released by the Warriors. "Later, as our coach during the 1975 championship season, he exemplified leadership, togetherness and a keen strategic ability that enabled us to succeed at the highest level."

This is another heartbreaking blow for the Bay Area sports community after the recent deaths of Giants baseball Hall of Famers Willie Mays and Orlando Cepeda.

Attles coached the Warriors to their first championship since moving West in 1975, then Golden State finally won again 40 years later in 2015. His 557 coaching wins are most in franchise history.

Attles never compared all the great performances he cherished getting to see up close. Different basketball times, different challenges. So many special milestones to celebrate and appreciate, he insisted.

"I've seen a 100-point game," Attles said from his seat during a late timeout on Thompson's big night. "Rick was such a great player and he cared about winning. In order to score the number of points he scored you have to have help from your teammates. I try to look at them individually because once you start comparing, someone is always going to be No. 2. Let's give him his credit."

Attles would joke how he passed to Chamberlain for all those points. He actually had six assists, while Guy Rodgers had 20 of the team's 39 overall in the 169-147 win against the Knicks.



In this file photo, former Golden State Warriors head coach Al Attles is seen during the first half of Game 2 of basketball's NBA Finals between the Warriors and the Cleveland Cavaliers in Oakland, Calif. (AP)

"I think 50," Attles said with a chuckle of his assists total in the record-setter. "I don't know. Guess what? We won the game. That's all that matters."

"Because I played with Wilt, people always ask, 'What do you think about Wilt scoring 100 points?' I say, 'Give him credit for what he did then.' It's like apples and oranges. They're both good fruit. It's a matter of what you like. I was very close to Wilt, but you have to enjoy what they did that night. I enjoy any great performance."

As a player, Attles averaged 8.9 points, 3.5 rebounds and 3.5 assists in 11 seasons with the Warriors.

The Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame honored him with the John W. Bunn Lifetime Achievement Award in 2014.

Then, in the months leading up to his Hall of Fame enshrinement as part of the Class of 2019, Attles remained his usual modest self. He always preferred to give out the compliments, not accept credit for his own accomplishments.

"They made a mistake," Attles joked with a big grin, still showing that quick wit. "They haven't caught up to me yet."

Long known for his fashionable suits on the sidelines and even later once watching in the stands, Warriors coach Steve Kerr once paid tribute to Attles by wearing one.

"He's the face of the franchise," Kerr said. "He's been so for 60 years, so he's an incredible presence."

After missing games for most of the 2018-19 season - his smiling face had been such a reliable part of the team's former Oracle Arena - Attles returned for Game 4 of the 2019 NBA Finals against Toronto to cheers and fanfare.

It wasn't the same when Attles was away. Former center Clifford Ray considered Attles a "father figure to all of us," and noted that Black NBA players often felt more comfortable learning from the coach because of their similar cultural background.

Indonesia 'hosts' int'l youth soccer tourney

JAKARTA, Aug 22, (Xinhua): Indonesia kicked off on Thursday the 2024 Garuda International Cup youth soccer tournament at the Sentul training ground in West Java Province.

The event, which runs until Sunday, has attracted 48 teams from across Asia. In addition to the host nation, the participating countries and regions include China, Japan, Malaysia, Thailand, the Philippines, Cambodia and Singapore. These teams are divided into three age groups based on age categories.

According to the organizers, a number of elite Asian academy teams are participating, including Guangzhou and Zhejiang from China, Shonan Bellmare and Tokyo Selection from Japan, ASIOP from Indonesia, and Johor Darul Ta'zim from Malaysia.

The event's chief organizer, Wahyu Budiarto, said in the opening ceremony that the tournament is the largest youth soccer championship Indonesia ever held, and it is the fourth time the country has hosted the event, following the tournaments in 2015, 2022 and 2023.

"This year the tournament carries the slogan of 'The Season is Coming. Let's Have Fun'. We hope this can be a new pride for Indonesia," Budiarto said.

Max Verstappen says he's closer to end of his F1 career than the start

ZANDVOORT, Netherlands, Aug 22, (AP): Heading into his 200th career Formula 1 race, Max Verstappen is clear he doesn't want to stick around for No. 400.

At the age of 26, Verstappen is the youngest F1 driver to reach the 200-race milestone, and he's doing it in front of his home crowd at the Dutch Grand Prix on Sunday.

"No," Verstappen said bluntly, when asked Thursday if he could imagine another 200 F1 races - equivalent to just over eight more seasons - in his future.

"So we passed halfway for sure, but it's been already of course an incredible ride," he added. "It doesn't feel like 200, but of course we're doing a lot of races now in a year, so you add them quite quickly."

No driver has yet reached 400

Hasjim Djojohadikusumo, Garuda International Cup Advisory Board member, said the tournament was expected to give

experience for young Indonesian footballers to compete with foreign teams.

"I believe by investing in youths, experience for young Indonesian footballers to compete with foreign teams."

even in '26, '27, there's a lot of time to decide what happens. So I just keep everything open. But yeah, I'm quite easygoing about it."

Verstappen has been in F1 since making his debut at the record age of just 17 in 2015 with Red Bull's junior team Toro Rosso. A keen online racer, Verstappen said he'd be interested in trying other real-life race series, as long as they're less demanding than F1's record 24-race schedule.

"Once I stop in Formula 1, I would like to do other stuff a bit more," he said. "Relaxed, less races in general, but with relaxed I mean that you have also a bit more (time at) home, because I know that once I compete in something, of course I want to be good. I want to win. But let's see what opportunities will come by."

like this kind of event, Indonesia can open up huge economic opportunities and increase sports tourism," he said.

Change Name

I, Ramasamy Madakkan Nadar, holder of Indian Passport number T8767294 residing at Mangaf, block-4, Kuwait, have changed my name to Ramasamy Madakkan and henceforth I will be known as Ramasamy Madakkan for all purposes.

Spanish table tennis duo look for medals in Paralympics

MADRID, Aug 22, (Xinhua): Iker Sastre and Ander Cepas will both be in the Spanish table tennis team at the Paralympic Games, which are due to start in Paris in just over a week. Sastre, who is from Bilbao, has been confirmed to a wheelchair since suffering a back injury while surfing when he was 23-years old, while Cepas, who is from nearby San Sebastian, was born with limited movement down his right-hand side after suffering

oxygen deprivation when he was born. Cepas plays left-handed and recent results have been excellent, with a gold medal in the Brazil Open which was celebrated in February this year, which followed on from silver in the Egyptian Open and a third place in the team event.

"It's another of my characteristics, but it hasn't stopped me from developing," he said in an interview with the Basque TV network, EITB.

He admitted that he felt "pressured to win a medal, but I'm very motivated to win a medal and looking forward to starting." He also said that the straight knock-out format of the Olympic competition was daunting as it means you "can go out in the first round, or win the tournament," adding he needed to "be calm and try and play my best." "I hope my level on the day and the efforts I have made can allow me to win a medal," he said.

Sastre has medals in European and World Championships and said his ambition is "now to look for an Olympic medal." "I don't mind that much what color it is," he said, explaining he was "focusing slightly more on doubles as we are very strong in doubles, and being realistic, we have a better chance there." qqq Myanmar will compete in athletics at the 2024 Paralympic Games in Paris, France, an official from the Myanmar Paralympic

Sports Federation said on Thursday. "Myanmar's para-athlete Soe Pay, together with his coach and manager, left Yangon for the Paris Paralympic Games yesterday," U Tun Naing Uo, secretary of the federation, told Xinhua on Thursday. "For the Paris Paralympics, only Soe Pay from Myanmar will be competing. As it is not easy to participate in the Paralympic Games, we are proud to have him represent Myanmar," he said.

BAA blocked from naturalizing more athletes

Bahrain's track team sanctioned over doping

MONACO, Aug 22, (AP) — Bahrain's track team will have to pause its successful strategy of naturalizing athletes from Africa after accepting a package of sanctions related to doping.

World Athletics said Thursday that Bahrain had been restricted to a maximum of 10 athletes in the track and field events at the Paris Olympics — which wasn't announced at the time — and at next year's world championships in Tokyo.

Bahrain's team in Paris included Kenya-born Winfred Yavi, who won gold in Paris in the women's 3,000-meter steeplechase, and Nigeria-born sprinter Salwa Eid Naser, the silver medalist in the 400. Neither athlete was accused of any wrongdoing in the case announced Thursday.

ATHLETICS

The Bahrain Athletics Association admitted a charge of "conducting itself in relation to doping, negligently and/or recklessly and/or so as to prejudice the interests of World Athletics or bring the sport of athletics into disrepute," and another related to its employment of staff to work with athletes, governing body World Athletics said.

That followed an investigation into allegations two athletes used blood transfusions at the Tokyo Olympics in 2021 and into the BAA having "engaged" a coach who was under a doping-related ban, World Athletics added.

Bahrain has agreed not to recruit any more foreign athletes until 2027, World Athletics said. The next Summer Olympics are in Los Angeles in 2028. Bahrain has also committed to fund a "talent academy" to develop local athletes and has set up a new national anti-doping body.

It's not the first time Bahrain has faced scrutiny over doping, particularly among its roster of athletes who were naturalized.

Naser missed the Tokyo Olympics while serving a ban for not being available for drug testing. Kemi Adekoya, a former world indoor champion in the 400, got a four-year ban in 2019 in a steroid case. Marathon runner Marius Kimutai was banned for three years in April after failing a drug test.

Leon quits as NZ 'assistant' coach

WELLINGTON, New Zealand, Aug 22, (AP) — Leon MacDonald quit as assistant coach of the All Blacks ahead of the squad's departure for two Rugby Championship tests in South Africa over what head coach Scott Robertson described as "differing views."

MacDonald is a former head coach of the Blues in Super Rugby and previously worked as an assistant to Robertson at the Christchurch-based Crusaders.

His departure, announced Thursday, was sudden and unexpected.

"Leon and I have been having some honest conversations with each other for a little while now," Robertson said. "As coaches we have differing views and both agreed it wasn't working. Leon and I both care deeply about the All Blacks and we believe we've made a decision that's best for this team."

"There's a huge amount of respect and appreciation for Leon in the group and the work he's put in to get us to this point in our journey. As a team we have acknowledged that contribution and our focus now needs to be on South Africa. It's going to be two tough test matches over there."

The nature of the differences between MacDonald and Robertson has not been revealed. But MacDonald's departure is the first sign of a crack in the substantial coaching set-up Robertson has created for New Zealand's national team.

NWSL reaches new CBA that ends draft

NEW YORK, Aug 22, (AP) — The National Women's Soccer League and its players have reached a deal on a new collective bargaining agreement that eliminates the draft, guarantees all contracts, provides for parental leave and childcare benefits and promises more money for the players.

SOCCER

The deal that extends the current contract with the NWSL Players Association by four years has no maximum salary; the minimum salary will rise from \$48,500 in 2025 to \$82,500 in 2030, the last year of the new CBA. It includes a base salary cap of \$3.3 million per team in 2025 that will rise to \$5.1 million in 2030 but also includes a revenue-sharing model that could increase the cap even more.

Mental health services and mental health leave policies will be broadened, and charter flights will be allowed for up to six legs per season. Team medical and training staffs will also increase.

"The NWSL prioritized terms to ensure that the league can attract, develop and retain the most talented players in the world," Chief Sporting Director Tatjana Haenni said. "Soccer is a uniquely global game with roots in every country, and the new CBA allows us to offer the world's most elite training and playing environment, giving players the ability to succeed at the top national and international competitions."

The league said nearly all end-of-season competition bonuses — such as

Mbappe set for Madrid home debut, Barca faces Bilbao test

Sevilla plays Villarreal

MADRID, Aug 22, (Xinhua) — The second round of matches in La Liga sees Kylian Mbappe make his home debut for Real Madrid, while FC Barcelona face a player they made a lot of noise about over this summer and Osasuna and Mallorca see a meeting of former heroes who have now changed clubs.

The first games are on Friday night when Celta Vigo play their second consecutive home match with Valencia visiting their Balaidos Stadium.

SOCCER

Celta won their opening match with a goal from Iago Aspas, who should probably have been sent off earlier in the game, while Valencia impressed for half an hour against Barcelona, before running out of gas in the second half.

Sevilla play Villarreal in Friday's second match, with both sides still adjusting after a busy summer in the transfer window and Sevilla still trying to sign a new left-back.

Saturday kicks off with Osasuna at home to Mallorca, with the visitors traveling after holding Real Madrid to a 1-1 draw on the opening day of the season. The team from the Balearic Islands are now coached by Jagoba Arrasate, who left Osasuna in



Real Madrid's Vinicius Junior, left, Aurelien Tchouameni, centre and Kylian Mbappe prepare to kick off after Mallorca's Vedat Muriqi scored his side's first goal during a Spanish La Liga soccer match between Mallorca and Real Madrid at the Son Moix Stadium in Palma de Mallorca, Spain. (AP)

the summer after six seasons in charge, with Osasuna naming Vicente Moreno as his replacement.

Moreno had a brief spell at Almeria last season, but is best known for leading Mallorca to consecutive promotions and keeping them up in La Liga.

All eyes will be on Nico Williams when Athletic Bilbao visit FC Barcelona on Saturday evening.

The Spain international rejected a move to Barca over the summer, opting to stay at the club where he has spent all his career and who he helped win the Copa del Rey last season.

The fact that Barca have so far been unable to include new signing

Dani Olmo in their squad, coupled with the decision to allow Ilkay Gundogan to leave on a free transfer, shows the depths of Barca's financial problems against a rival that has got its house in order. It also implies that Williams made the right decision in staying at Athletic.

Real Sociedad disappointed in their opening day defeat to Rayo Vallecano and will again be without Arsenal-bound Mikel Merino for their visit to play Espanyol, although Martin Zubimendi should be in condition to start after being substitute last weekend.

Rayo travel to Getafe, who performed well in Bilbao last weekend,

despite financial issues limiting their squad for the moment before Sunday kicks off with Real Madrid at home to Valladolid.

The game sees Kylian Mbappe make his Real Madrid home debut and the Santiago Bernabeu will be full, despite the game being played at the hottest time of the day.

Carlo Ancelotti is without the injured Eduardo Camavinga while Fran Garcia will step in at left-back for the suspended Ferland Mendy. For all of their attacking talent, Real Madrid looked unbalanced in Mallorca last weekend, although that shouldn't be a factor against a recently promoted rival.

Leganes got a positive start to their return to the top flight as they drew away to Osasuna in their opening match, and they will fancy their chances of a win against Las Palmas on home soil.

Alaves take on Betis, hoping for better luck with the referee than in Vigo, while the weekend ends with a big game between Atletico Madrid and Girona.

Atletico have signed well over the summer, with Conor Gallagher the latest arrival this week, and the game will measure their potential against the team that finished third last season.

Girona have seen a lot of changes since the end of last season but did well to take a point from their visit to Betis, although this promises to be the biggest test of their top-four credentials against a rival who look to be the only credible rivals for Real Madrid this season.



Brian Luciatti of Argentina's Lanus, front, and Alex Arce of Ecuador's Liga Deportiva Universitaria vie for a header during a Copa Sudamericana round of 16 second leg soccer match at Ciudad de Lanus stadium in Buenos Aires, Argentina. (AP)

Medellin cruise into Copa Sudamericana quarters

Botafogo outlasts Palmeiras, books spot in Copa Libertadores last eight

RIO DE JANEIRO, Aug 22, (Xinhua) — Botafogo survived a late scare to draw 2-2 at Palmeiras and earn a place in the Copa Libertadores quarterfinals.

Having secured a 2-1 victory in the first leg, Botafogo appeared to take an unassailable lead when Igor Jesus and Jefferson Savarino scored early in the second half of the return fixture at Allianz Parque.

But Jose Lopez reduced the deficit with an 86th-minute strike before Rony netted in the 90th minute to ensure a tense finale to the all-Brazilian round of 16 tie.

Despite having 17 fewer shots on goal than their rivals, Botafogo held on to secure a berth in the competition's last eight for the first time since 2017.

"We had a very high-quality opponent and in both games we were superior," Botafogo manager Arthur Jorge said.

"We played a very good first half, very solid. In the second half, we were effective in what we created and had the opportunity to score more goals. And in those last five crazy minutes, we missed our chance to win both games, which is

what we wanted." In other round of 16 second-leg fixtures on Wednesday, Penarol advanced 4-1 on aggregate despite a 1-0 loss at The Strongest and River Plate progressed 3-1 overall after a 2-1 home draw with



Jefferson Savarino of Brazil's Botafogo celebrates scoring his side's second goal against Palmeiras during a Copa Libertadores round of 16 second leg soccer match at Allianz Parque stadium in Sao Paulo. (AP)

Talleres Cordoba.

In Bogota, Colombia's Independiente Medellin scored twice in each half to romp to a 4-0 home win over Chilean side Palestino and earn a place in the Copa Sudamericana quarterfinals.

Ivan Hurtado gifted the hosts an early lead in their round of 16 second-leg clash when he inadvertently turned the ball into his own net, and Jaime Alvarado doubled the advantage just before halftime.

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Leyser Chaverria converted from the penalty spot just after the hour and Baldomero Perla completed the rout with a 67th-minute goal.

The result at Hernan Ramirez Stadium in the western Colombian city of Pereira gave Independiente Medellin a 6-2 victory on aggregate.

In Argentina, Lanus cruised to a 3-1 home win over Ecuador's LDU Quito to advance 5-2 on aggregate.

And Brazil's Fortaleza reached the competition's last eight courtesy of a 3-1 home win over Argentine side Rosario Central. The result handed Fortaleza a 4-2 win on aggregate.

Best of the Rest

Navarro outlasts Osorio:

Second-seeded Emma Navarro of the United States rallied to beat Camila Osorio of Colombia 3-6, 7-5, 7-6 (2) early Thursday to reach the quarterfinals of the Monterrey Open.

The 23-year-old Navarro, the 2021 NCAA champion as a freshman at the University of Virginia, finally finished off Osorio at 12:35 a.m. — 2 hours, 48 minutes after they began play.

Navarro set up a match against ninth-seeded Magdalena Frech of Poland in the WTA 500 event on Sonoma Club's hard courts. Frech edged Lina Glushko 6-7 (2), 6-3, 6-1.

Navarro won in Hobart in January for her first WTA Tour title. She lost to Diana Shnaider in May in Paris in the Trophee Clarins final.

The 22-year-old Osorio won both of her WTA Tour titles on clay at home in Bogota, the first in 2021 and the second in April. She lost to Leylah Fernandez in the 2022 Monterrey final.

Earlier, third-seeded Ekaterina Alexandrova beat local favorite Renata Zarazua 6-3, 6-4. (AP)

Duplantis clears 6.15m:

Armand Duplantis was just excellent instead of record-breaking on Wednesday in his first pole vault competition since that stunning show at the Paris Olympics.

Duplantis cleared 6.15 meters on his third and final attempt despite strong gusts of wind blowing in off Lake Geneva as the sun set on a balmy 24 Celsius (75 Fahrenheit) evening.

"I need perfect conditions if I'm going to be able to jump the world record again this year," Duplantis told reporters.

The athlete known as "Mondo" was like a rock star in the 80,000-seat Stade de France two weeks ago, soaring over the bar at 6.25 meters (20 feet, 6 inches) to break the world record for the ninth time.

The 24-year-old Duplantis got the same adulation in a more intimate setting, competing in a pop-up venue circled by 5,000 fans next to the lake in Lausanne, the home city of the International Olympic Committee. (AP)

Neuer retires from int'l soccer:

Germany goalkeeper Manuel Neuer said Wednesday he is retiring from the national team after 15 years and 124 games. He is staying in club soccer with Bayern Munich.

The 38-year-old Neuer made his debut for Germany in 2009 and won the World Cup in 2014. His last game for the national team was the 2-1 extra-time loss to eventual champion Spain in the quarterfinals as Germany hosted Euro 2024.

Neuer said he was "tempted" by the prospect of staying on for the 2026 World Cup but decided against it after speaking with family and friends. That could open the door for Barcelona's Marc-Andre Stegen, who has played for Germany 40 times but never at a major tournament, to take over as starting goalkeeper. (AP)

Ajax bring in Rugani:

Ajax reached an agreement with Juventus and Daniele Rugani on the direct loan of the defender for one season, the Dutch soccer club announced on Wednesday.

The 30-year-old Rugani has a contract until 2026 at Juventus. The loan deal with Ajax until June 30, 2025 does not include a buy option.

Juventus took over Rugani from the Empoli academy in 2012 and loaned him back for two seasons one year later. Under coach Maurizio Sarri the young Rugani flourished in the Serie B and the following year in the Serie A for Empoli.

After Rugani returned to Turin he was able to become a regular starter at Juventus, but stayed the ideal back-up in the center of defense behind big names like Leonardo Bonucci, Andrea Barzagli and Giorgio Chiellini.

In the 2020-2021 season Rugani was loaned out to Stade Rennes and Cagliari and after he returned his situation remained unchanged, as the ideal back-up in the center of defense. (Xinhua)

Shaw happy in her work:

British swimmer Toni Shaw is looking to improve on her performance from Tokyo when she again represents her country in the Paralympics in Paris next week.

The 20-year-old from Aberdeen in the north of Scotland, won bronze in women's S9 400m freestyle in Tokyo, and has followed that with medals at World, European and Commonwealth level.

Nevertheless, she still views her Olympic medal as her biggest success.

"That is the biggest meet and to be able to be on the podium was just incredible," she said in an interview with the BBC.

Although she has been competing at top level since she was 14, Shaw said she still gets the "same feeling every time I go to a big competition as I did the first one, you are still super nervous, super excited and I don't think that feeling will ever go." "When it comes to swimming, how old you are doesn't really matter, everyone is in the same race. I was lucky to get to start young and I am hopefully still going to be able to keep going a while longer," she added.

The 20-year-old is part of the University of Aberdeen's Performance Swimming program and says it has been a big part of helping her train for Paris.

"It is like I get to go swimming with most of my best friends every day, so it is just a really nice thing to be part of. I am really happy where I am right now," she explained, adding that in times when mental health is such a key question for many athletes, she was happy with her work.



Kuwait senior soccer team coach poses with Kuwait Football Association official.

Sports

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Kuwait prepares for crucial World Cup qualifiers with training camp in UAE

By Khaled Al-Enezi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 22: The Kuwaiti national soccer team delegation will depart on Saturday, for the UAE to hold an external training camp, which will run until September 3. The team will then travel to Amman, Jordan, in preparation for its opening match against Jordan on September 5 in the decisive round of the 2026 World Cup qualifiers.

Kuwait's team is placed in Group B, alongside South Korea, Iraq, Palestine, and Oman.

The team is expected to return to Kuwait on September 6 before hosting Iraq on September 10 in the second round of the qualifiers.

Argentine coach Juan Pizzi is anticipated to announce the squad list

today, following the conclusion of the third round of the Zain Premier League. Pizzi has closely followed the league matches in recent rounds to select the best players for these crucial qualifiers.

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During the camp in the UAE, the Blues are scheduled to play a friendly match, though their opponents are yet to be confirmed.

Earlier this week, Pizzi addressed the media, acknowledging the challenges ahead in the qualifiers, given the strength of the teams in the group. However, he emphasized that Kuwait will compete for qualification, and if that goal is not met, the focus will shift to building a strong team for the future.

Chaos at the club

\$1.3 bln spending spree has left Chelsea fractured & vulnerable

LONDON, Aug 22, (AP): In the years to come, the experiment unfolding at Chelsea under their American investors will be a fascinating case study in how to run a soccer club.

Because no one in England has ever seen anything like what has been happening at Stamford Bridge over the last two years.

Just take this in: Chelsea has spent nearly \$1.3 billion on 39 players across five transfer windows since a consortium fronted by Los Angeles Dodgers part-owner Todd Boehly and Clearlake Capital bought the Premier League club from its long-time owner, Russian oligarch Roman Abramovich, for \$3.2 billion in May 2022.

Throw in the club having four different full-time managers in this period - plus another coach on a temporary basis - and the revolving door at Chelsea, a six-time English champion and two-time European champion, simply hasn't stopped spinning.



Maresca

"It's not a mess like it looks from the outside," Enzo Maresca, the latest Chelsea manager, said Wednesday as he attempted to explain the wisdom behind taking the number of players in the squad to 43 by signing two wingers - Pedro Neto and Joao Felix - for a combined \$130 million over the past week.

This while already having five wingers in the squad, including one - Mykhailo Mudryk - signed for more than \$100 million just last year and another - Raheem Sterling - who was the first signing of this unprecedented two-year trolley dash for nearly \$60 million.

Sterling has been stripped of his squad number following the arrival of Neto and is one of around 20 players "training apart," Maresca said. Among them is striker Romelu Lukaku, signed three years ago for a then-club record of \$135 million, and goalkeeper Kepa Arrizabalaga, the world's most expensive keeper signed for \$92 million.

Not much seemingly makes sense in Chelsea's brave new era.

"It's been a crazy one to follow so far," Dr. Dan Plumley, sports finance expert at Sheffield Hallam University, told The Associated Press, "and it shows no sign of slowing down."

Plumley said the Chelsea owners' initial "aggressive" play in the transfer market to overhaul the squad was not unexpected, even if spending \$280 million in the summer of 2022, \$350 million in January 2023 and more than \$400 million in the offseason of that year was unprecedented for a soccer club. In the current window, the outlay is more than \$250 million on 10 players.

"You are thinking, 'That's the initial burst but now you have to rein it in a

little bit,'" Plumley said in a phone interview. "But they seem to be carrying on, which raises a few question marks around what the actual strategy is there and what are the owners looking to do."

With their background in private equity and venture capital, Boehly and Clearlake are coming at soccer ownership very differently and have moved the goalposts in their efforts when dealing with the sport's financial fair-play constraints.

They've typically given contracts of seven-to-nine years to new signings to spread "amortization" costs of transfer fees across the whole deal. That prompted UEFA and then the Premier League to tighten their rules, and it's a risky strategy as a whole because it leaves Chelsea extremely vulnerable if the players recruited prove to be flops and can't be moved on.

They've focused on selling home-grown or academy players, essentially

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because they can be sold for pure profit in the annual accounts which facilitates the purchase of other more high-profile players on amortized deals. Hence the departures of Conor Gallagher, the team's vice-captain last season, this week and those of youngsters like Ian Maatsen, Lewis Hall and Omari Hutchinson late in the last financial year to balance the books in a way some find unseemly.

According to the most recent accounts, Chelsea's owners reportedly sold two hotels at Stamford Bridge to another company they own - a deal that is being scrutinized by the Premier League. They've also been looking at selling a stake in their successful women's team to raise money.

Plumley said Chelsea's strategy has left the club "very close ... if not over" the limit of the Premier League's profit and sustainability regulations. That might mean the team is liable to potential future points deductions, as suffered by Everton and Nottingham Forest last season.

It doesn't help Chelsea that it isn't currently in the lucrative men's Champions League, which deprives the club of approaching \$100 million a season.

"It was high-risk at the start and it's still high-risk now," Plumley said of the methods of Chelsea's owners. "There's a whole manner of things that could create problems down the road."

In the short term, however, the biggest problem lies at the door of Maresca, an inexperienced manager who has to deal with a bloated squad containing an increasing number of frustrated players who Chelsea is keen to offload, such as established internationals Lukaku, Sterling and Ben Chilwell.

"I'm working with 21 players. The other 15 or 20, they are training apart," Maresca said. "They are Chelsea players, but they are not working with me. I don't see them."

Derby delight for Al-Arabi



Al-Arabi and Al-Qadisiya players challenge for the ball during the Zain Premier League match.

KUNA photo

Al-Qadisiya under fire

By Hassan Musa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 22: The "derby" match between rivals Al-Qadisiya and Al-Arabi brought contrasting emotions: joy and celebration in the green fortress of Al-Arabi, and anger and disappointment in the yellow fortress of Al-Qadisiya.

Al-Arabi secured several "positives" with their 2-1 victory over Al-Qadisiya in the third round of the Zain Premier League, marking their third consecutive win and placing it at the top of the league standings. The league will now pause until September 13 for the Blues' participation in the 2026 World Cup qualifiers.

This marks the first time since the 2014-2015 season that Al-Arabi has achieved three consecutive league victories. Back then, it secured four wins before falling to Al-Salmiya 3-2 in the sixth round.

Al-Arabi's dominance in the match was evident, with the team's high fitness levels, particularly among young players like Ali Aziz, Khaled Al-Marshed, and substitute Youssef Majed, who scored the winning goal. The tactical acumen of coach Nasser Al-Shatti was also on display, as he effectively neutralized Al-Qadisiya's movements and imposed his style on the game.

Al-Shatti remarked, "Al-Akhdar was the hungrier team, which is why the players were able to score the winning goal in the final minute." He praised his players, especially the emerging talent Youssef Majed, for their ability to tip the scales against a team as formidable as Al-Qadisiya.

Following the victory, club president Abdulaziz Ashour rewarded the team, granting each player 300 dinars.

In contrast, Al-Qadisiya's struggles persist, continuing its trend of dropping points in the early rounds before gradually slipping out of the competition. The criticism has been directed at the team's coach, Mohammed Al-Mishaan, with fans and followers calling for his removal, alongside the board of directors. Some players, both local and professional, have also come under fire for failing to deliver convincing performances in recent rounds.

Former star Hamad Al-Enezi criticized the club's board of directors for the team's declining results, holding the head of the football apparatus, Sheikh Fahad Talal Al-Fahad, responsible. Al-Enezi stated, "Al-Qadisiya Club is in untrustworthy hands."

Musaed Neda lamented the loss of the team's former glory, stating that "Al-Qadisiya has lost its prestige" and is no longer feared by competitors as it once was. Neda pointed to the modest performance of the players, including professionals, as a reason for this decline. He urged the administrative apparatus, led by Sheikh Fahad Talal, to listen to the concerns of those who love the club, emphasizing the need for changes at both the player and administrative levels.

Kuwait Club targets top spot as it faces Khaitan

By Hassan Musa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 22: Kuwait Club aims to share the top spot with Al-Arabi in the Zain Premier League when it faces Khaitan at 6:50 pm today at the Friendship and Peace Stadium. The round will conclude with a clash between Al-Jarihan as Yarmouk takes on Al-Fahaheel at Abdullah Al-Khalifa Al-Sabah Stadium at 9:05 pm.

In the first match, the "Whites" are looking for their third consecutive victory, aiming to catch up with Al-Arabi at the top of the standings after the "Greens" put them under pressure with a 2-1 win over Al-Qadisiya.

Kuwait Club is coming off a solid 3-0 victory over Al-Fahaheel, a team that has posed challenges for the reigning champion in recent seasons and cost it valuable points.

However, Kuwait Club faces a tough challenge against Khaitan, who are coming off a 3-1 win over Al-Nasr in

the last round and are eager to compete with the top teams for higher positions.

In the second match, both Yarmouk and Fahaheel will be looking to bounce back after defeats to Al-Qadisiya (0-1) and Kuwait Club (0-3) respectively.

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Yarmouk showed promise in its opening match against Al-Tadamon, securing a draw in the final minutes, and put up a strong fight against Al-Qadisiya in the second round, narrowly missing out on a draw due to bad luck and the outstanding performance of the "Yellow" goalkeeper, Khaled Al-Rashidi.

As for Fahaheel, they delivered a strong performance against Khaitan in the opening round, winning 4-1, but paid the price for missed opportunities against Kuwait Club.



Kuwait Club player vies for the ball with an opponent during a league game.

Berge joins Fulham as Liverpool sells Clark

LONDON, Aug 22, (Agencies): Fulham completed the signing of Sander Berge from relegated Burnley for a reported 25 million pounds (\$32.8 million) on a five-year contract on Thursday, with the Norway international set to replace the departed Joao Palhinha as the club's holding midfielder.

Palhinha left for Bayern Munich in the transfer window.

"It's been a little bit back and forth the last few weeks," Berge said, "but I'm finally sitting here in the shirt in this beautiful stadium, knowing that my future is here, which feels great." Berge, who has also played for Sheffield United in the Premier League, could be in contention to make his debut for Fulham against Leicester on Saturday.

Liverpool sold 19-year-old midfielder Bobby Clark to Salzburg for a reported 10 million pounds (\$13 million).

Clark was one of the youngsters who helped Liverpool win the English League Cup last season.

Chelsea's former Liverpool, Manchester City and England winger, Raheem

SOCCER

Sterling, looks to be heading for the exit door after coach Enzo Maresca said he wants a "different kind of winger." Sterling hit the headlines on Sunday when he was left out of the squad that lost 2-0 at home to Man City, with his representatives publishing a communique demanding "clarity" over his future.

He has also been left out of their squad to play in their Conference League qualifying match against Servette, while his No. 7 shirt has been given to new signing Pedro Neto.

"I am not saying Raheem isn't a good player, but I prefer a different type of winger," added Maresca when quizzed over the subject.

"They are not working with me. I don't see them," responded Maresca, when asked about Sterling and defender Ben Chilwell, who has also been left out of the squad.

Sterling and Chilwell are currently training with a group of around 15 other players, who have not been chosen to play, as a result of Chelsea's bloated first-team squad, which currently includes around 40 players.

Sterling, who cost 50 million pounds (65.5 million U.S. dollars) two years ago, is thought to be especially annoyed by the situation after cutting his summer holiday short to begin pre-season training a fortnight early to convince Maresca of his worth.



In this file photo, Chelsea owner Todd Boehly looks dejected after losing the English Carabao League Cup Final soccer match between Liverpool and Chelsea, at Wembley Stadium, London, England. (AP)