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CABINET REAFFIRMS PLEDGE TO COOPERATE WITH ASSEMBLY

MPs give 'thumbs up' to work plan

Program mirrors '2035 Vision'

KUWAIT CITY, July 18, (KUNA): Kuwait's parliament on Tuesday approved a number of suggestions pitched by lawmakers dealing with the government's newly-unveiled work plan, which mainly include the launch of a website providing the intricacies behind the strategy.

Another suggestion requires the government to provide parliament with a trimonthly report detailing the progress of the work plan, in addition to other ideas dealing with the feasibility of transforming Kuwait into a regional financial hub, which entails "relying on the expertise" of individuals who have found success in such endeavors.

The Cabinet on Monday reaffirmed commitment to "commendable" cooperation between the executive and legislative branches.

Deputy Premier and Minister of State for National Assembly Affairs Essa Al-Kanderi, underlined after the Cabinet meeting the government's keenness to sustain cooperation with parliament.

Meanwhile, the National Assembly on Tuesday elected by acclamation, MP Dr. Hamad Al-Mutar as head of parliament caucus and MP Dr. Mohammed Al-Mahaan as secretary and Hamad Al-Obaid as treasurer.

The voting came during the 1st annual meeting of the parliament caucus in the regular session of the 17th legislative term. The parliament also elected by acclamations MPs Dawood Marfie, Shuaib Shaaban and Fahd Bin Jamea as members of the caucus.

The Kuwaiti government's new work program for the 17th legislative term (2023-27) unequivocally bespeaks "Kuwait 2035 Vision," which is mainly designed to transform Kuwait into a regional and global financial and trade hub.

The Gulf country's primarily economic vision is also meant to, inter alia, create an attractive investment environment where the private sector leads the economy, to create competition, promote production efficiency, achieve human development and provide a congenial and updated legislative and business infrastructure.

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, introducing the program, said that the government had presented its work plan to the parliament in line with Article 98 of the constitution and the principle of constructive cooperation between both legislative and executive authorities.

Cooperation

He added that the plan is considered a document of cooperation between both legislative and executive authorities, and aims at putting national interest first, wiping out obstacles and addressing challenges.

He also regarded it as a document of partnership with the private sector and civil society organizations, which have a central role to play in achieving progress and development as part of the country's future economic development drive.

His Highness the Prime Minister cited the plan as including major economic and development projects aiming at ensuring economic diversification, improving development performance and addressing economic and financial challenges, as well as establishing an independent electoral commission.

The government's work program consists of five axes involving a set of programs that are divided into executive projects that reflect the government's 2023-27 orientations, and are based on the pillars of the development drive.

This program's priorities are centered on building a developed and sustainable economy, supporting human capital and improving quality of life, and enhancing government efficiency and boosting production.

Regarding the program's pillars, the list mainly embraces a fruitful partnership between the public and private sectors, prudence in public financial management, efficiency in resource management, a clear-cut government structure that enhances accountability and defines responsibilities, responsible and sustainable prosperity, an encouraging stimulus framework, unequivocal and implementable projects, accurate timetables, measurable outputs and effective management of government projects.

The government's work program has five axes, notably stability of public finance, economic agenda, job creation and capability-building, sustainable prosperity and solid human capital and productive government.

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Day by Day

THE parliamentary proposal to naturalize the children of Kuwaiti women married to non-Kuwaiti men, is not strange as this law is applicable in all countries of the world, where the child has the right to acquire the citizenship of his/her mother.

In this regard, we say: Do not talk about these children as if they were foreigners or born to non-Kuwaiti descendants. It is the right of the child to acquire the citizenship of either of his/her parents. We are all human beings - descendants of Adam and Eve. No one objected to this, or said that the origin of this lineage belonged to Saudi, American, Yemeni, or French ...

... Yet tomorrow is another day.

Zahed Matar



His Highness the Crown Prince receives national paralympic athletes.

Crown Prince Diwan photo

Crown Prince receives paralympic athletes

His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received Tuesday at Bayan Palace Honorary Chairperson of Kuwaiti Disabled Sports Club Sheikhha Sheikhha Abdullah Al-Khalifa Al-Sabah, chairman of Kuwaiti Tomooh Sports Club Jassem Mohammad Al-Nouri, and the club's founder and head of Kuwait National Special Olympics Rihab Buresli as well as its members.

His Highness the Crown Prince also welcomed female and male athletes who won a number of gold, silver and bronze medals at the Special Olympics World Games hosted by Germany.

In a speech during the reception, His Highness the Crown Prince expressed his pleasure to convey greetings and congratulations of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah to the attendees.

His Highness the Crown Prince congratulated the athletes who managed to bag a number of medals to their homeland during the games in Germany.

In addition, His Highness the Crown Prince thanked

all officials who took part in preparing the athletes to represent Kuwait in this international sports event and gain advanced positions.

His Highness the Crown Prince said "our sons and daughters are our real wealth and investing in them is our goal".

His Highness the Crown Prince directed all concerned bodies of the State to pay attention to the distinguished nationals mainly those special needs, wishing further success and progress to the dear homeland under the wide leadership of His Highness the Amir.

Meanwhile, Sheikhha Sheikhha said Kuwait has paid attention to human beings before caring for buildings and streets, referring to achievements made by the athletes over times for the country's interests.

For her part, Buresli said these accomplishments have been made amid tough conditions, calling for inserting this segment in the country's development plans and activities. (KUNA)

Opinion

Government statement of pipe dreams, difficult to implement

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

HAVE we entered the era of ruminating on slogans and the pointlessness of shedding light on problems that the country suffers from? Or is the reality that we live in different from that of the government whose program is devoid of any reference to a number of crises and the way to solve them?

From 1992 until today, with each one of them, we have read words that inspire hope, rendering one to almost say that this Council of Ministers relies on it to reform and get the country out of its crises. However, as soon as the ink of the government statement dries up and the National Assembly discusses it, it goes back to its usual state of bickering and quarreling with the parliamentarians.

Indeed, the current Cabinet suffered from two successive setbacks in less than two weeks and has become lame through successive resignations, which do not indicate the possibility of achieving what can be relied upon.

Citizens are fed up with the slogans coined by successive governments, because reality has always belied them.

While people are waiting for openness, the past governments permitted the heresy of negative phenomena, which was preceded by the ban on co-education in schools and universities, and the financial repercussions it left on the state.

When the country was closed as a result of shortsighted approaches in this regard, another heresy appeared - to ban pregnant women and those over 60 years of age from visiting the country.

Despite the successive governments wasting \$200 billion over a period of ten years, the infrastructure is still the worst, at least among the Gulf states and the countries that possess wealth such as Kuwait.

When voices called for awarding major tenders to world-renowned companies, which have implemented many major projects in various countries of the world, the governments instead clung to the local agent. The result was an increase in the costs of infrastructure projects, becoming much higher than that of similar projects executed in other Gulf countries, which eliminated the phenomenon of bribery and corruption through firm decisions and the abandonment of the local agent.

Also, those countries did not turn a blind eye to any of the corrupt, because their goal is the future, continuity, and the strength of the state, not the interests of individuals.

It is true that one of the parliamentary committees recommended the abolition of the local agent. Here we say it explicitly - This law will witness many obstacles and will not see the light, or at least there will be a great delay. This is because "companies and money sharks" will be waiting for it in fear of losing their ability to control projects, which are like a luxury cake that they monopolize.

With these facts, how can an economy be promoted through slogans? How can a country with all the capabilities, but lacks the right decision, use reasonable and scientific plans to manage the country if the executive officials do not have a clear vision?

In this regard, there are many questions that observers and citizens ask. For example, what is the wisdom behind closing the country?

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stc revenue KD 174.6 mn in first half '23

— Details Page 7 —

Fighters, 'Hudner' headed for Hormuz

WASHINGTON, July 18, (AP):

The U.S. is sending additional fighter jets and a warship to the Strait of Hormuz and Gulf of Oman to increase security in the wake of Iranian attempts to seize commercial ships there.

The Pentagon said Monday that the USS Thomas Hudner, a destroyer, and a number of F-35 fighter jets will be heading to the area. The Hudner had been in the Red Sea.

Defense officials last week announced the deployment of F-16s to the area over the past week-end, and there have been A-10 attack aircraft there for nearly two weeks in response to the Iranian activity.

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This still image taken from surveillance video from a U.S. Navy Boeing P-8 Poseidon shows three Iranian Revolutionary Guard fast-attack vessels near a commercial ship in the Strait of Hormuz, June 4, 2023. (AP)

'Interference'

Education Minister quits

KUWAIT CITY, July 18: Minister of Education, Dr. Hamad Al-Adwani, has submitted his resignation to the Council of Ministers for a number of reasons most notably his adherence to his powers and interference in the affairs of his specialties from outside the ministry, in addition to the parliamentary pressures he was subjected to recently, reports Al-Qabas daily.

The minister in his resignation letter claimed he was not given the opportunity to implement the reform plan that he set to advance education and address problems at the higher education and other education sectors, in addition to the government's failure to provide sufficient support in the face of these pressures and continuous interference in his work.

The sources indicated Al-Adwani also refused concessions and did not bow to pressure, indicating that the Council of Ministers is heading towards appointing the Minister of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy, Dr. Jassim Al-Ustad, as acting Minister of Education.

Al-Adwani's resignation from the government is the second within a week, after the resignation of Finance Minister Manaf Al-Hajri, which was accepted on July 12.

Another decree was issued appointing Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Oil, Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investment Saad Al-Barrak as acting Minister of Finance.



Al-Adwani

Newswatch

KUWAIT CITY: The Representative of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and his accompanying delegation will head to Saudi Arabia tomorrow Wednesday.

The Representative of His Highness the Amir will head the Kuwaiti delegation in the GCC 18th consultative meeting and the meeting between the GCC states and C5 Central Asian countries, held in Jeddah. (KUNA)

KUWAIT CITY: The Ministry of the Interior announced that personnel from General Administration of the Coast Guard, in cooperation with the Police Aviation Wing, dealt with a report that a sailor had been injured and one died when their fishing trawler was attacked and robbed by sea bandits, outside Kuwait's territorial waters, reports Al-Qabas daily.

The sources explained that the boat was intercepted at the border area, and the injured person was handed over to the emergency medical personnel, while the concerned authorities took all necessary measures to deal with the situation.

Inflation rate up 3.83 pct last June

KUWAIT CITY, July 18, (KUNA): The consumer prices on an annual basis grew by 3.83 percent last June, according to the Kuwait Central Statistical Bureau (KCSB).

In a statement to KUNA on Tuesday, the bureau said that the inflation rate in Kuwait rose 0.54 percent last June, on a monthly basis, due to the increase of prices of all main groups that influence the movement of key indices, particularly food, education and clothing.

Record number of the first group (food and beverages) last June went up by 6.25 percent, compared to the same month in 2022, while the price index of the second group (cigarettes and tobacco) slightly rose by 0.37 percent on an annual basis.

The consumer price index (CPI) for the clothing group rose 6.76 percent, and the (housing services) rose by 3.23 percent, while the inflation rate in furnishings increased by 2.36 percent.

Israelis 'recognizing' Moroccan sovereignty on Western Sahara

JERUSALEM, July 18, (AP): Israel announced it was recognizing Moroccan sovereignty over Western Sahara, joining the United States as the only countries to acknowledge the kingdom's annexation of the disputed north African territory.

The announcement came shortly after Morocco's Foreign Ministry issued a statement saying King Mohammed VI had received a letter from Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu recognizing Morocco's claim over the territory.

Netanyahu's office later confirmed the

announcement. Israeli Foreign Minister Eli Cohen said recognition of Western Sahara as Moroccan territory "will strengthen relations between the countries and the nations" and advance regional stability.

Israel and Morocco reestablished diplomatic relations as part of the "Abraham Accords" brokered by former President Donald Trump between Israel and Arab states. The two countries had low-level diplomatic ties in the 1990s that were disrupted by the Palestinian uprising that began in 2000.

Prayer Timings

Fajr 03:30 Asr 15:29
 Sunrise .. 05:02 Maghrib .. 18:47
 Zohr 11:54 Isha 20:17

Local

Expected weather for the next 24 hours:

By Day: Very hot and relatively humid over coastal areas with light variable wind to light to moderate southeasterly wind with speeds ranging from 06-28

km/h.

By Night: Hot to rather hot with light variable wind to light to moderate northwesterly wind with speeds of 06-26 km/h.

Station Max Exp Min Rec
 Kuwait City 48 36

Weather

Kuwait Airport	48	30
Abdaly	49	30
Jahra	50	34
Salmiyah	47	36
Ahmadi	45	37
Nuwaisib	49	31
Wafra	49	29

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

Kuwait FM's visit to Italy successful, fruitful: Ambassador Baldocchi

'All Kuwaiti, Gulf and Arab tourists are welcome and safe in France'

KUWAIT CITY, July 18: The French Ambassador to Kuwait Claire Le Flecher has reassured all Kuwaiti, Gulf and Arab tourists that the events and protests taking place in France have not affected, and will not affect, the demand for visa applications, reports Al-Qabas daily.

In an interview, she said her country will remain one of the most popular tourist destinations, and that Paris will do its best to ensure the safety of the tourists, as per what was affirmed by the French Minister of Economy, Finance, Industrial and Digital Sovereignty Bruno Le Maire in his interview with "The Telegraph" newspaper.

Ambassador Le Flecher stated that all foreign tourists, regardless of their nationalities, are welcome and safe in France.

She called for the need to ensure accuracy and avoid believing all the information circulating on the Internet, especially social media as it regularly publishes fake and unverified news and information.

Ambassador Le Flecher highlighted the high demand for visa applications, especially in the summer months, revealing that the embassy, since the beginning of the year, processed more than 23,000 visa applications, which is an increase of 18 percent compared to the same period last year.

She explained that the fees imposed by France on domestic workers accompanying Kuwaiti tourists (for sponsors and employers) as social insurance for them as they are employees in the private sector according to the French Labor Law, did not affect the desire of Kuwaitis to visit France. This is based on the number of visa applications, which is on the rise.

These fees are not collected by the embassy, but by a specific party in France, due to which the embassy is not sure about the amounts collected. These fees are included in the state budget, as is the case in many European countries, and they do not apply only to Kuwaitis, but include all nationalities.

Regarding the facilities provided by the embassy to avoid overcrowding in submitting applications, Ambassador Le Flecher said, "In addition to Kuwait's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, whom we thank, we communicated widely about the possibility of submitting applications for a period of up to six months before the trip."

She praised the role played by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and its cooperation with the embassies of European countries in its continuous communication, and the renewal of its claims and calls for those wishing to travel to France to submit their requests early, which contributed to organizing the work well, even if the delays remained high.

Ambassador Le Flecher said, "We continue to open new appointments regularly, and provide a VIP mobile service to collect requests for those wishing to travel to France from their homes or wherever they are in order to facilitate their comfort."

Regarding the measures taken against the violating offices, she said, "With the cooperation of our European colleagues, we asked the Kuwaiti authorities to regulate the work of travel agencies, especially the regulation of

the imposed prices."

Ambassador Le Flecher reiterated that the French Embassy works exclusively with the service provider in the "Cabago" office to collect visa applications, and there are no other offices accredited to issue visas.

Also, Ambassador Le Flecher praised the recent visit of Foreign Minister Sheikh Salem Al-Abdullah to Paris, describing it as an important and fruitful visit, as he chose France as the first country on his European tour.

She said, "The two countries signed a memorandum of understanding to continue the strategic dialogue between them to develop and strengthen bilateral relations. The strategic dialogue meeting, which Sheikh Salem Al-Abdullah will soon co-chair with his French counterpart Catherine Colonna includes sub-working committees on various topics such as education, security, trade and health."

It is worth highlighting that the two ministers, during the visit and their meeting, particularly emphasized their common vision regarding the stability of the region, especially within the framework of France's efforts to promote the expected "Baghdad Conference", which will be held in Iraq in October and in which Kuwait will participate at a high level, like it did in the previous two editions of the conference.

During the meeting with his counterpart, Sheikh Salem Al-Abdullah stressed the importance of extending the visa period granted to Kuwaitis, and Minister Colonna in turn expressed her interest in this issue.

Meanwhile, the Italian Ambassador to Kuwait Carlo Baldocchi described the recent visit of Kuwait's Foreign Minister Sheikh Salem Al-Abdullah to Italy as successful and fruitful by all standards, reports Al-Anba daily.

In an exclusive press interview, he explained that the visit laid down a road-map for the future of Kuwaiti-Italian relations towards more strategic cooperation and a qualitative shift in terms of strengthening ties and building bridges of communication and understanding between the two friendly countries. It resulted in the signing of three very important memorandums of understanding that will open new horizons for the benefit of the two friendly nations.

Ambassador Baldocchi revealed happy news for Kuwaitis regarding the Schengen exemption file, which will be announced in September in Brussels, indicating that it will not be the final stage, but it is an important step forward.

He said his country's foreign minister confirmed to Sheikh Salem Al-Abdullah that his country will make great efforts to facilitate the obtaining of long-term, multi-entry visas for Kuwaitis at the current stage.

Ambassador Baldocchi highlighted periodic consultations with the Kuwaiti side in the field of military cooperation as an essential pillar of the strategic dialogue between the two countries.

He stressed that the Eurofighter deal is proceeding according to agreed standards, affirming that Kuwait has received nine Eurofighter aircraft so far and will receive two or three more within a few weeks, while the rest of them will be delivered by the end of 2024.



Carlo Baldocchi



Claire Le Flecher

MEW bags KD132m dues so far

Top oil company arrears total KD225 million



Photo by Rizk Taufiq
 His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Sabah making a point in discussions with the Minister of Interior Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled during the Assembly session on Tuesday, July 18, 2023.



KUNA photo
 Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Ahmad Fahad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah meets with the Qatari Ambassador to Kuwait.



KUNA photo
 Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Ahmad Fahad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah meets with Yemen Ambassador Ali Mansour.

Deputy PM meets two envoys

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Ahmad Fahad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah underlined Monday the importance of cooperation and how strong relations between Kuwait and the State of Qatar.

A statement by the Ministry of Defense, said remarks by the minister came during a meeting with the Qatari Ambassador to Kuwait, Ali bin Abdullah.

The sides also discussed the recent developments and issues of common interests, including ways to strengthen

cooperation and work between the two countries.

Later, the Minister received Yemen Ambassador Ali Mansour.

The two sides delved into a number of issues, including a mechanism for enhancing forms of bilateral cooperation between the two countries.

Sheikh Ahmad praised the strong ties that binds the two countries, stressing on the keenness of both sides to strengthen and develop them.



Biometrics registration underway at one of the MoI offices.

Biometric system not canceled: MoI

The Ministry of Interior announced the continuation of the biometric system, refuting the reports circulating regarding its cancellation, reports Aljarida daily.

In this regard, sources affirmed that the ministry is pushing for the expansion of the campaign and is working on implementing this after the summer vacation.

They revealed that the ministry has actually launched biometric centers for citizens and residents in the designated centers, which the ministry had previously announced in all governorates.

The sources stressed that work is

underway to open new centers in some commercial complexes and the Ministries Complex in order to facilitate everyone.

They explained that the biometrics registration was carried out for those entering through the land border posts. Work was carried out partially at the airports during the summer period in order to avoid congestion that might result due to the large number of arrivals and departures.

The introduction of the biometric system will be applied effectively after the end of the summer vacation for all those leaving and arriving in the country.

KUWAIT CITY, July 18: During a tour of the customer service sector in the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy, it was discovered that an amount of KD 132 million was collected from the beginning of the current fiscal year until July 4, i.e. within 94 days. On the other hand, the collections during the last fiscal year amounted to KD 460 million, reports Al-Qabas daily.

The Assistant Undersecretary of the sector and Acting Director of Customer Service Department Eng. Falah Al-Mutairi explained that the total bill is currently estimated at approximately KD 800 million. The delay in adopting the budget during the past year led to the delay of some government agencies in paying at the time. The share of government agencies in the debt is currently estimated at KD 470 million, i.e. equivalent to 57 percent of the bill.

Topping the government agencies in terms of arrears is the Kuwait Oil Company (KOC). Its total bill is estimated at KD 225 million, which are accumulated bills since 2017. The arrear amounts vary from the rest of the government agencies.

Government agencies, from whom the total collections during the current fiscal year amounted to KD 73 million, are still paying. The ministry is working hard in carrying out the collection either from regular customers in various sectors or from government agencies.

Regarding ways to speed up collection, delayed government agencies are addressed and urged to pay. In the event of further delays, the matter is submitted to the Council of Ministers.

As for the rest of the sectors - private, investment, commercial, or industrial housing, they are notified via the Sahel app. After all the communication channels are used for sending reminders and warnings, water service is disconnected from private housing, and electricity is cut off from those who delay in paying in the rest of the sectors.

The customer service sector is currently working on configuring the smart meters, which were installed in the investment and commercial sectors in Hawally and Farwaniya governorates, to operate on a prepaid system. Part of those meters have been activated.

Eng. Al-Mutairi added that all smart meters installed in the two sectors are scheduled to become prepaid by the end of the first quarter of the year 2024.

Regarding cases of disconnection, the tour revealed that the total of those who were cut off from water and electricity during the last fiscal year amounted to about 200,000 utilities. It is known that, at the level of private housing, the law allows only water to be cut off, while electricity is cut off from those who are late in the investment and commercial sectors.

Meanwhile, Eng. Al-Mutairi stated that 90 percent of the sector's services can currently be used electronically without the need to visit the ministry, including entering readings, paying bills, connecting electricity, removing the meter, and other services, referring to Article 2 of Law No. 20/2016, which gives the right to obtain these services for someone who achieves rationalization in consumption of electricity in the private housing.

The private housing sector is on a rationalization incentive, and the number of participants in the program has reached more than 3,000 customers so far. The amounts due are placed in the accounts of the beneficiaries at the end of the year.

Furthermore, the collection manager in the sector Eng. Muhammad Al-Otaibi highlighted four sections in the monitoring collections, indicating that the ministry facilitates payment methods for customers by making payment available in the main building, and in external offices.

He stressed that the electronic payment system is available around the clock, adding that the completion of the transaction starting from entering the reading and issuing the invoice takes a few minutes.

Eng. Al-Otaibi said the focus is on collecting dues along with providing the customer with means of comfort for the completion of his transaction, adding that the collection control in the ministry building receives on a daily basis about 100 to 150 clients from private, investment or government housing and other sectors.

In addition, Head of the follow-up team for customer affairs offices Batel Al-Fadhli revealed that the sector currently has about 45 offices in various governorates.

He said the Sabah Al-Ahmad office was recently opened, and a customer service office is expected to open in West Abdullah Al-Mubarak shortly.

Al-Fadhli stressed that the process of following up the external offices is carried out on a daily basis by the team, which consists of six individuals who carry out daily rounds to a number of offices to monitor compliance with attendance and departure, facilitate procedures, as well as follow up and verify complaints received through social media.

Mol commences installing biometric devices in malls

KUWAIT CITY, July 18: The Ministry of Interior has taken the first step to install biometric fingerprint devices inside commercial malls, reports Al-Rai daily.

The Avenues Mall was the first of the five complexes to provide those wishing to take their fingerprints indicating that about 500 Kuwaitis have taken their biometric fingerprints over the past two days.

These devices will be placed also in the 360 and Al Kout malls from Monday. The complexes that have already been equipped with the system apart from the Avenues, 360 and Al Kout are the Al-Asima Mall and the Ministries Complex.

Those wishing to take the biometric fingerprint in these complexes do not need prior appointments, and can simply find the devices, take a token number, and do the fingerprint. The waiting period does not exceed five minutes.

The number of people who will take their fingerprints is expected to increase in the coming days, as more complexes announce the installation of these devices.

There are currently 10 fingerprinting devices in five major shopping malls, with two devices in each complex. The devices are also distributed in the governorates and at the land, air and sea outlets.

The General Department of Criminal Evidence is moving forward with the completion of this project, according to the plan in force to fingerprint all citizens, residents, and visitors.

Hunt for qualified professionals

MoH new exam for doctors' jobs

KUWAIT CITY, July 18: The Ministry of Health has approved the unified electronic test which is an additional test to tests already in place for applicants who wish to join the healthcare profession in Kuwait, reports Al-Qabas daily.

The Ministry stated that this step came within the framework of its keenness to achieve quality performance and said the test is an extension of the "efficiency assessment" test that is currently being conducted before hiring doctors and technicians.

It includes at the beginning of the application phase some specializations of the medical professions, and then includes the rest of the specializations gradually, adding that the test is done electronically, and it can be done from outside Kuwait through the relevant website, if the applicants are from abroad.

The ministry stated that the additional test comes within several criteria for acceptance and granting a license to practice the profession in Kuwait, including the standardized (electronic) theoretical test, in addition to the personal interview, and the practical professional test.

The Ministry added that this step is similar to many countries in the region, and is done within the framework of ensuring quality performance. This test is mandatory for applicants who wish to join the public and private health sectors, while continuing to develop it periodically, to include larger categories, in order to ensure the application of the best evaluation standards before granting a license to practice the medical profession.

The ministry indicated that it is possible for non-citizen health practitioners wishing to work in the government or pri-

Kuwaitis top list

9,000 seek KU joining

KUWAIT CITY, July 18: The Acting Director of Kuwait University Dr. Fayez Al-Dhufairi announced that the number of applications to join Kuwait University has reached approximately 9,000 within three days of launching registration, adding that most of the applications came from Kuwaiti students, reports Al-Qabas daily.

On the sidelines of his visit to the admission hall in Sabah Al-Salem University City on Monday, Al-Dhufairi said the Deanship of Admission and Registration received applicants on the third day of registration, and provided assistance and guidance in entering some data for those who were unable to enter it in the electronic system.

He said, "It is obvious from the number of applications for admission to the university that Kuwait University is the first to attract the desires and aspirations of the Kuwaiti society for their children to be members of this ancient institution."

Kuwait University, represented by the Deanship of Admission and Registration, announced the approved timeline for submission for the next academic year 2023/2024 during the period from July 15 to 26, 2023.

vate health sector to apply by visiting the website and filling out the job application form online, and then applying for the standardized electronic test.

diwaniya ديوانية

A DIGEST OF PUBLIC OPINION

'Need to strengthen Audit Bureau's role, transparency in enacting laws'

"I PRESENT to the Speaker of the National Assembly, Ahmed Al-Saadoun, with two appeals: the first with the aim of fortifying and developing the vital role played by the Audit Bureau, and the second with the aim of enhancing transparency and professionalism in the procedures for enacting laws in the National Assembly," **Dr. Abdul Latif bin Nakhi** wrote for **Al-Rai** daily.

"The objective of establishing the Audit Bureau is to achieve effective control over public funds. This goal cannot be achieved if the man in charge is involved in or influenced by political tensions.

"Evidence for this is numerous, including negative attitudes by deputies — who swore to defend the people's money — towards suspicions of encroachment by some of their peers on public money, and the suspicious roles played by deputies in investigation committees regarding suspicions of corruption in contracting companies owned by their comrades in political blocs.

"Therefore, despite the importance and necessity of the condition of high professionalism (specialization and experience) in selecting the head of the bureau, it is preceded by the condition of independence, especially when exposed to pressures of most severe forms and degrees.

"Accordingly, and in order to enhance the chances of selecting the most qualified person to head the Audit Bureau, and in line with the repeated demands of the representatives to ration the selection of leaders, I appeal to Speaker Ahmed Al-Saadoun to invite experts and experienced people to run for the position of president of the Audit Bureau through the portal of the General Secretariat of the National Assembly online.

"Then the comparison table to be published among the candidates — without mentioning their names — in accordance with the conditions and criteria for comparison that are determined and announced by the Council's office before the door for candidacy opens.

"This is in respect of the right of the people, "the source of the authorities," to be acquainted with the selection procedures.

"As for my second appeal, it is to expedite the availability of parliamentary committee reports on the Internet, through the "Parliamentary Information System" platform of the Secretariat of the National Assembly, especially reports on draft laws.

"This is because the observers have noticed a wide discrepancy in the time taken to provide the reports, extending the dates until the time of publication on the Internet.

"For example, during the third annulled council, it was noted that the report of the committee concerned with one of the draft laws — which has popular priority — was available on the Internet well before the date of its first deliberation, allowing those interested to evaluate it and submit their views and observations on it.

"However, the committee's report on the draft law itself was published weeks later than the original date for its second deliberation, a date that was repeatedly postponed due to the government abstaining from the sessions during that time.

"Therefore, specialists interested in the draft law wondered if the delay in publishing the report was deliberate in order to disrupt their natural role in approving the law.

"It is unacceptable today, after all these rapid advances in information and communication technologies, and after all these rhetoric about the partnership between the parliament and the people, for the parliament to deliberate on bills before the people are able to view the reports of the committees in this regard. Unfortunately, over the past few days, many of the parliament's committees have issued reports on bills.

"During this week, the Council began holding its regular and special sessions. In these sessions, the Council deliberated, and the Council will deliberate on a set of bills.

"However, last Wednesday, at the time of writing the article, the "Parliamentary Information System" platform was devoid of committee reports.

"In conclusion, I call on all reformists to support the previous two appeals, and all the positive initiatives that are put forward inside and outside the Council, by expressing objective views and initial observations regarding them, in order to develop them or adapt them.

"I warn them against the consequences of excessive support for those they consider to be reformists and show extremism in their hostility to those they consider corrupt, at the expense of reform itself, by questioning intentions — for example — with the aim of reducing responsibility for a person or a parliamentary or political bloc."

Also:

"In recent years our nation's councils have changed, deputies have changed, ministries have changed and ministers have changed, but the situation has remained as it is," columnist **Iqbal Al-Ahmad** wrote for **Al-Qabas** daily.

"Our problems are the same and their solutions are the same. The relationship between the executive and legislative branches is still hampered by many bumps.

"We assumed and believed that the change of some deputies and heads of councils, and the absence of some from the parliamentary scene, would solve the dilemma.

"We assumed and believed that the change of some ministers and the absence of some prime ministers would solve the dilemma, and open the way for development projects to flow and enjoy the long-awaited political stability.

"But it seems that this belief and this assumption has become today a fantasy, as the period of political stalemate has prolonged, which requires us to ask this question: What is the reason?"

"What MP **Muhalhel Al-Mudhaf** preferred, in last Wednesday's session, was a needle that pricked a wound whose inflammation increased, and increases day by day. It was not said by many 'silent' members and he was followed by a pause, when he indicated that Kuwait, since the promulgation of the constitution in 1962, has been experiencing successive crises, especially in recent periods, as any initiative for real and serious reform has been absent from the political scene with the agreement and understandings of all parties, in all sincerity, to make all the changes required by real reformers, and not by those who claim that.

"All of this requires today, after enough is enough, a bit of courage and audacity, without any hesitation to correct and amend what needs to be amended at all levels and directions.

"What MP **Al-Mudhaf** preferred was a bell that rang in the silence of the graves. But just as MP **Al-Fadel** criticized the government side, there is more than criticism and disappointment from the parliamentary side as well.

"At least the people did not choose the members of the executive authority. Many proposals presented in the National Assembly have nothing to do with the constitution, since they go beyond its provisions and texts, and occupy the country's authorities and waste their time.



Dr Bin Nakhi

"They are proposals far from the people and far from the reality, their rights and freedoms, and close to the destruction of the country and the loss of the people.

"This is all a reflection of an unhealthy political reality. A reality that suffers from a phobia that it cannot overcome and is unable to confront it and take the right decision regarding it.

"Is it destined for the Kuwaiti people to endure conflicts greater than them, and to live the repercussions of these conflicts on their reality and on all intentions of development and progress to catch up with countries that once looked at us with fear, not because of our military strength and authority, but because of our excellence in every field and aspect, rich human resources and the most harmonious between dreams and reality, which contributed to our renaissance before others, and imposed our reality that no one could deny at the time.

"One of the most difficult and most dangerous things for societies is preoccupying his authorities with concerns that turn into parliamentary proposals that are far from the citizen and his rights and from developing the state and illuminating its future.

"At the height of all these crises, a group of deputies proposes to naturalize 4,000 people every year, at a time when the Kuwaiti people are waiting for a solution to their housing, health, educational, and economic problems, and...and...and so on.

"Are these your priorities, our honorable deputies? Is this issue your concern in the midst of the pains that we suffer from in many fields?"

"Your Excellency MP **Muhalhel Al-Mudhaf**, what you said about the government side is also paralleled by many negatives on the parliamentary side, of which you and all the members of the current parliament, and before it and other parliaments also contributed to the frustration and pessimism we have reached.

"Unfortunately, those who suffer today and suffer from the fire of this absurdity and the preoccupation of decision-makers, authorities and responsibilities with matters far from the interest of the homeland and the requirements of the Kuwaiti people, present and future is the people and their homeland.

"One of the most difficult and cruel things is that people pay the price for something that is not in their hands and conflicts are greater than them.

"What MP **Muhalhel Al-Mudhaf** said, and what came in my comment on him, is said by everyone, the youth in their gatherings, the old men in their offices, and the women in their gatherings and events. Everyone expresses their dissatisfaction and complaining about this reality on a daily basis waiting for a solution.

"May God protect Kuwait and all those who love it and are faithful to it, and see nothing but its security and stability. Amen."

"Every year, parents encounter a problem at the beginning of the summer vacation, especially those who cannot travel due to their financial or social conditions and other reasons related to families, that is, how do children of different ages and orientations spend their free time," columnist **Mubarak Al-Harbi** wrote for **Al-Anba** daily.

"To ensure the children do not feel weary and bored, parents must search for everything that meet the aspirations of their children and help them find their passion by encouraging them to engage in hobbies, sports and other activities that suit their tendencies and desires.

"Perhaps, summer clubs are considered the best refuge if parents want their children to spend time in worthwhile activities. Children can join sports clubs where they can practice swimming, football and other types of sports, whether individual or group. Such activities will make children preoccupied on one hand, and develop their talents as well as physical and psychological abilities on the other hand. This is in addition to giving them the opportunity to meet new friends who share the same interests, thereby, creating an atmosphere of positive competition between them.

"There are cultural and social summer clubs where the children can develop their talents. We have governmental and private agencies that provide trainings on various fields of work for students during summer vacation.

"LOYAC is a model due to its distinguished training programs, which are carried out in cooperation with private institutions like banks, newspapers, companies and others that host students during summer, train them on the nature of work, and introduce them to the mechanism of production and achievement in a professional manner to make students more aware of their aspirations and future.

"Moreover, there are scouting activities and accompanying events, camps, trainings, educational, social and voluntary programs that develop the children's personality through constructive interaction and continuous development of skills and dealing with people who have different orientations and visions.

"Yes, travel is necessary for those who can and it has many benefits, but for those who cannot, they can consider summer an opportunity for acquiring knowledge. Clubs exist and constructive ideas are on the table. All we have to do is search and respond to the organizers of these activities in the interest of our sons and daughters. In this manner, children spend time on activities deemed beneficial to them, their families and their community."

"The Gulf march is being completed under the auspices of the sisterly Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to search for the best centers and prestigious economic sites in the Middle East and the whole world," columnist **Dr Essa Al-Omairi** wrote for **Al-Anba** daily.

"This auspicious Gulf economic march comes through the Gulf-Asian Summit scheduled for this month. It is a continuation of the prospects for correct economic action and the realization of the established vision, whose implementation intersects with the visions of countries in the Arab Gulf region, each according to the set implementation date, God willing.

"This type of summit is a basic and urgent need to achieve economic integration, in light of the economic developments that the world is witnessing today in more than one spot. It is based on the fact that the game in the world now is purely economic. If countries in any part of the world have no important foothold, they could face economic decline and delay.

"We have the right to commend the summit, as it gives the region smooth access to the global economy with steady footing and professionalism in order to face unimaginable or unexpected economic incidents. It establishes a real economic system.

"This summit is also a gathering of important partners in the Asian continent. These partners are active countries on the global economic level and have great influence. Such efforts are exerted by the sponsoring nation, which is the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. We hope for their sustainability and continuity, and for holding of more such summits, because of the general good for everyone, led by the Arab Gulf states."

— Compiled by **Mai Elsoukary**

Man, brother, wife & partner jailed for selling fake chalets

MoSA responds on SAB query over computers

KUWAIT CITY, July 18: The Ministry of Social Affairs responded to the observations made in the annual report issued by the State Audit Bureau, which included all the observations and shortcomings that marred the auditing and review of its work for the 2022/2023 fiscal year, regarding the failure to account for 50 computers belonging to the computer department in the ministry, reports Aljarida daily.

According to informed sources, the incident has been referred for investigations to take the necessary legal measures and hold the employees responsible for its occurrence accountable.

The bureau's report indicated that there was destruction and loss of documents related to the aforementioned department, and the failure to observe the professionalism required to restore backup copies of these documents.

They stressed the need for the ministry to take the necessary legal measures regarding the matter, to find out the reasons for the destruction and loss of documents, and to try to search for the backup copies.

The sources said the ministry assured the bureau of the referral of the incident to the investigations, which ended with the filing of report, due to the inability to fulfill the legal elements of the subject matter of the claim, the lack of legal capacity for the former officials of the administration because of the issuance of an administrative decision to accept their resignations.

They said, "Regarding the observations that marred the implementation of Contract No. 10- 2019/2020 concerning the supply, installation, operation, and maintenance of 170 computers at an amount of KD 41,000, the incident was referred to the committee formed by the minister of Social Affairs at the time to investigate the matter and take the necessary action regarding it."

The sources explained that the bureau demanded the ministry to provide it with the reasons for renewing licenses for security devices and protecting their networks, at a total cost of KD 149,000, despite the inclusion of another contract for the supply and maintenance of the integrated security system for the ministry's infrastructure, which cost KD 1.156 million and is considered a waste of public money and a violation of the rules for implementing the budget of government agencies for the 2022/2023 fiscal year. The ministry informed the bureau about referring the case for investigations to take the necessary action.

It was the Ministry of Social Affairs that initiated, under the leadership of the assistant undersecretary for Planning and Administrative Development Affairs, to inform the supervisory authorities in the country about the aforementioned facts, after reviewing and auditing the contracts concluded in this regard, to determine their importance and the goals to be achieved as a result of their conclusion, as well as to ensure that they match the size of its financial value compared to the services it provides. This was based on its keenness to implement the directives of the Council of Ministers aimed at rationalizing spending and stopping unjustified financial waste.

The ministry was able to reduce the estimated value of some mechanization projects, cancel others, and achieve financial savings for the state treasury by about KD 1.5 million in a way that does not affect all services provided to the beneficiary groups.

The team, which was formed to respond to all the observations and shortcomings included in the report of the State Audit Bureau and was headed by the ministry's undersecretary and with the assistant undersecretaries as members, will submit to the bureau at the end of this week the final report with the ministry's statements on these observations.

The sources indicated that the team will continue with its meetings, the last of which was held last week, with the bureau's representatives to refute the observations separately.

They affirmed the ministry's serious keenness to avoid all the observations of the oversight authorities in the country, led by the State Audit Bureau, the Civil Service Commission, the Financial Controllers and Employment Affairs.

Family of fraudsters: The Court of Appeal, headed by Counselor **Salah Al-Houti**, put behind bars for 10 years the director of an Iraqi company, his Kuwaiti wife for 5 years, the brother of the director for 5 years, and their Kuwaiti partner for 8 years, and fined them a total of 30 million dinars, for selling fake chalets in the Khairan area and money laundering, reports **Al-Rai** daily.

The court decided to protect the rights of those affected who bought chalets in the Khairan area during exhibitions organized by the company licensed by the Ministry of Commerce, but it was found that the company did not own the land, and that the buildings were built without permits, and the electric current was connected on the strength of forged licenses.

The daily added, more than one thousand Kuwaitis had bought chalets and shops for tens of millions of dinars.

Attorney **Ali Al-Attar** said, "The judiciary today, with this ruling, placed responsibility on the government and the National Assembly to implement judicial rulings and implement the law by tracking the money and returning it to its owners and compensating those affected by this process, as well as holding government officials accountable who failed in their role to monitor real estate exhibitions."

Al-Attar called on the office of **Mashari Al-Osaimi**, both the National Assembly and the government, to quickly address the effects of real estate fraud operations that took place through real estate exhibitions that were held under the umbrella of the Ministry of Commerce.

22 held in drugs: Officers from the Drug Control General Department in the Criminal Security Sector at the Ministry of Interior have arrested 22 individuals for involvement in drug cases, reports **Al-Qabas** daily.

5 women stuck in elevator 'rescued'

KUWAIT CITY, July 18: Monday evening firefighters rescued 5 women who were trapped in a mosque elevator in the Salmiya region, reports **Al-Rai** daily.

According to a report received by the Public Relations and Security Media Department of the Directorate-General of Fire Department the elevator stopped because of a malfunction and firemen rushed to the mosque and moved the women to safety.

No injuries were reported.

Barrak appointed: A decree has been issued accepting the resignation of Finance Minister **Manaf Al-Hajri**, and another to appoint Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Oil, Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investment **Dr. Saad Al-Barrak**, as Acting Minister of Finance, reports **Al-Jarida** daily.

Court Cases

Court sets 9/11 hearing in case of 'Luxury Cars'

KUWAIT CITY, July 18: The Criminal Court has decided to postpone the hearing of the so-called **Luxury Cars** Office case, in which 455 plaintiffs are citizens, to September 11, 2023, to review the documents and pay the civil lawsuit fees, reports **Al-Qabas** daily.

The court refused to release the owner of the office and one of his partners, and release 9 other employees. It also refused the request of the defense council to release the company's funds which the defense claimed will help their client to pay the defendants or reduce the number of claims.

The criminal court was packed to capacity and an unprecedented number of people crowded the courtroom expecting the court to issue a verdict. Two Kuwaitis, believed to be the main accused, were placed inside the cage in the courtroom, as dozens of citizens demanded KD 5,000 temporary compensation for each of them.

The office had allegedly fraudulently sold cars to the victims at a price lower than the agency, but failed to deliver the goods.

Egyptian jailed: The Criminal Court, headed by Judge **Nayef Al-Dahoum**, sentenced an Egyptian to seven years in prison followed by deportation for encouraging others to join the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIS) and be among its fighters through Telegram and video clips; in addition to taking advantage of an event in a mosque in Salmiya to promote ISIS, reports **Al-Qabas** daily.



Al-Dahoum

During investigations, the defendant affirmed his belief in the ideologies of ISIS; including the excommunication of anyone who violates its ideals even if they are Muslims.

Fake ID used: The Public Prosecution has clarified that Attorney General **Saad Al-Safran** has no personal account on any of the social networking platforms, reports **Al-Anba** daily.

The prosecution made the clarification after the spread of social media posts attributed to **Al-Safran**.

New cases registered: The semi-annual statistics issued by the Ministry of Justice for 2023 revealed about 424,000 new cases were registered at the Court of First Instance, reports **Al-Qabas** daily.

The copy of statistics obtained by daily indicates that the most prominent cases registered during the first half of this year were 1591 crimes, 16 state security cases, and 486 domestic violence cases.

The sources stated that the Court of First Instance registered 12 cases of "money laundering", 954 juvenile cases, 531 information technology cases, in addition to 46 complaints against lawyers.

It pointed out that 298 traffic violations, 2,196 environmental cases, 908 dud cheque cases, and 4,864 passport misdemeanor cases were recorded.

Those arrested included seven citizens, four Arabs, three Asians, six Bedouins and two other nationalities.

The officers also confiscated 16,500 kilograms of various narcotic substances; 2,400 psychotropic pills and an undisclosed amount of cash.

During investigation, those arrested admitted ownership of the confiscated items, indicating the drugs were for trading and personal consumption.

The ministry emphasized that security efforts are continuing to track down drug dealers and users.

Two drug addicts caught: The **Najdat Al-Ahmadi** patrols arrested two bedouin in front of the **Mahboulia** area in a state of abuse and for possessing narcotics and drug paraphernalia, reports **Al-Anba** daily.

The daily said both men have been referred to the General Administration for Drug Control.

The daily added, the police patrol suspected the men after seeing them drive slowly on a highway and when the man behind the wheel was asked to pull over for driving below the permissible speed limit, the officer discovered the man was under the influence of drugs.

Police records also showed the man was wanted by law in theft cases and the car he was driving was wanted by the judiciary. After the search of the vehicle police found narcotics, — pills, sachets of shabu, chemical and hashish — and the drug paraphernalia.



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Abdullah Al-Salem Suburb Center opens: Mol

ICU patients to be transferred from old to new Farwaniya Hospital

KUWAIT CITY, July 18: The Anesthesiology and Intensive Care Department at the Farwaniya Hospital is preparing to transfer patients from the old hospital intensive care to the new hospital, reports Al-Rai daily.

The daily has learned that the transfer strategy is based on placing internal medicine patients in the E4 intensive care unit, surgery

patients in the B4 intensive care unit, and chronic respiratory patients in the F4 intensive care unit.

Center opens: The Ministry of Interior has announced that Abdullah Al-Salem Suburb Center, which is affiliated to the Capital Gov-

ernorate Service Centers Department, opened on Tuesday after completion of maintenance works, reports Al-Rai daily.

The ministry also revealed that the Subhan Center, which is under Mubarak Al-Kabeer Governorate Service Center, was closed Tuesday for maintenance and repair works.

45 health care centers to operate during Hijri New Year holiday: min

'Business activity in Al-Qurain, Al-Ardiya must end by 1:00 am'

KUWAIT CITY, July 18: The Ministry of Health announced that there are 45 primary health care centers that will operate during the Hijri New Year holiday in various health zones, reports Al-Anba daily.

The West Hawally and Mahmoud Haji Haidar centers will operate from 7:00 am until midnight.

In Farwaniya Health Zone, South Firdous, West Farwaniya, Andalous, Rabya and Abdullah Al-Mubarak center will operate round the clock.

The centers that will operate from 7:00 am until midnight are M a n a h i Al-Osaimi in K h a i t a n, South Ardiya, North Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh and Sabah Al-Nasser centers.



Al-Abduljader

In a press statement issued on Saturday, the ministry explained that the health centers that will operate round the clock in the Capital Health Zone are Mohammed Thunayan Al-Ghanim in Sulaibikhat area, Mirza Hassan Al-Ahqaqi in Daiya area, Hamad Al-Saqer Specialist Center in Adailiya area, and Jaber Al-Ahmad 2 area. Munira Al-Ayyar Center in Kaifan area and Abdullah Youssef Al-Abdul-Hadi Center in Yarmouk area will operate from 7:00 am until midnight.

In Hawally Health Zone, Rumaithiya Specialist Center, South Sabah Al-Salem Center, West Salmiya Center and Salwa Health Center will operate round the clock.

In Ahmadi Health Zone, West Sabahiya, Sabah Al-Ahmad "A", Khairan, Khairan Residential, Wafra Residential, Wafra Agricultural, and Abdulaziz Al-Rashed centers in Bnaider, Ali Sabah Al-Salem, Raqqa, Jaber Al-Ali, Fahahel Specialist, Fintas Specialist, Sabah Al-Ahmad Marine City and Khairan Marine City centers will operate round the clock.

In Mubarak Al-Kabeer Health Zone, Adan Specialist and Al-Salam centers will operate round the clock.

Bayan and West Mubarak Al-Kabeer centers operate from 7:00 am until midnight.

In Jahra Health Zone, Jahra Health care, Saad Al-Abdullah Block 2, Qasr and Abdali centers will operate round the clock. The South Sulaibiya center will operate from 7:00 am until midnight, and Kabd health center will operate from 7:00 am until 9:00 pm.

Close

Meanwhile, the Director General of the Kuwait Municipality has issued an administrative decision to close restaurants and cafés inside the Al-Qurain Market, Al-Ardiya Industrial Area and the handicraft areas at one in the morning, reports Al-Qabas daily.

The decision stipulates all commercial shops in the designated areas must close by 1:00 am. The decision states that a new Article No. 2 bis shall be added to Administrative Resolution No. 3212/2022 GM regarding determining the working hours of shops located in private housing areas, which reads as follows.

"The working hours of shops located in these areas are determined until one in the morning maximum, direct sales are not allowed.

The decision calls on all concerned authorities and sectors to start implementing the decision 30 days after the date of its publication in the Official Gazette.

Bid to cancel decision: A member of the Municipal Council Fahad Al-Abduljader submitted recently a proposal to cancel the council's decision to allow comprehensive and specialized sports clubs, sports unions, and the Olympic Committee to invest spaces within their sites, reports Al-Jarida daily.

In the proposal submitted to the Chairperson of the Municipal Council Abdullah Al-Muhri, Al-Abduljader called for allocating alternative sites for clubs, federations and the Olympic Committee outside the private housing areas, stressing that they be invested in a way that generates financial returns for these entities and helps them advance the sports field.

In the proposal, he emphasized that clubs, federations and others covered by Municipal Council's resolution No. 24/24/2007 be given a period of two years from the date of issuance of this cancellation decision to arrange and reconcile the situation in accordance with the cancellation decision.



KUNA photo
HH the Prime Minister receives President of Asian Olympic Council Sheikh Talal.

PM receives newly-elected AOC chief

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received Tuesday the newly-elected President of the Asian Olympic Council

Sheikh Talal Fahad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. His Highness the Prime Minister wished Sheikh Talal all success in his new position. (KUNA)

MoE, MEW officials hold joint meet

Rationalization of power consumption in schools

KUWAIT CITY, July 18: The Assistant Undersecretary for Educational Facilities and Commissioning Planning, Eng. Mohammed Al-Khalidi during a joint coordination meeting recently with representatives from the Ministry of Electricity and Water, headed by the Assistant Undersecretary for Monitoring, Control and Oversight Centers, Chairperson of the Electricity and Water Rationalization Strategy Committee Eng. Fatima Hayat, in the presence of representatives of the educational districts and engineers from the Ministry of Electricity and Water, shed light on the campaign to rationalize power consumption, reports Al-Jarida daily.

40 yrs in service

Al-Shula retires 10 consultants

KUWAIT CITY, July 18: State Minister for Municipality Affairs Fahd Al-Shula has referred 10 consultants assigned in the Legal Department for retirement as they have been in service for 40 years, reports Al-Qabas daily quoting a reliable source.

The source revealed that Director of the department Rajaan Al-Gharib is among those covered in the decision.

The source explained that this step is aimed at pumping fresh blood into the department.

stitution which calls for subsequent approval of the job titles such as the head teacher, field study director, technical mentor, deputy director, school principal and senior technical mentor, reports Al-Rai daily.

The ministry spokesman, Ahmed Al-Wahida, said in a press statement that this measure comes to ensure the sustainability of work in schools without legal or technical deficiencies and to stop financial waste, saying the approval of this structure will fortify many decisions and work mechanisms, the most important of which is the mechanism for evaluating the efficiency of workers in the educational process and the application of the fingerprint system in schools, which the educational sector will face difficulty in applying them in the absence of an organizational structure and clear job description that define the individual tasks.

He pointed out that the ministry is awaiting coordination between the CSC and the Ministry of Education regarding the organizational structure of schools.

'Legal legislation needed'

Move to purchase energy from GIA

KUWAIT CITY, July 18: With a crucial meeting on the cards between the Ministry of Electricity and Water officials and the Fatwa and Legislation Department to discuss the latest developments in purchasing energy from the Gulf Interconnection Authority, informed MEW sources suggested that it would be necessary to enact legislation that would allow this step, since the purchase process here is considered with an institution external, even if Kuwait is a member of the same body, reports Al-Qabas daily.

The sources said that the ministry has been working for months to speed up the procedures for allowing it to purchase 600 megawatts from the authority, a step for which nearly 30 million dinars were allocated, but the Central Agency for Public Tenders had previously informed the ministry that it was not competent in this matter, because the discussions with the fatwa department were still ongoing.

The sources indicated that if it was decided to resort to enacting a law that allows the purchase of energy from the Gulf interconnection, similar to the amendment that took place regarding the decree establishing the ministry, which introduced amendments allowing it to purchase energy from others inside the country, then the purchase process will most likely take place from the authority after the end of the current peak season, which lasts until mid-August.

The sources pointed out that with the rise in temperatures during the coming days, and it is expected that the loads will increase significantly with them, rationalizing consumption becomes the best option, to ensure safe operation and stability in the electrical network.

She explained that controlling air-conditioning devices in homes, which consume about 70% of the electricity of private housing during the current period, and promoting the concept of energy efficiency at the level of all devices used would make a noticeable difference in consumption.

News in Brief

56K citations issued: The operations and traffic sector of the General Traffic Department from July 8 to July 14, issued more than 56,000 traffic violations and arrested 78 motorists for committing serious traffic offenses and juveniles for driving without license, 38 for possessing and abusing narcotics, and impounded about 150 vehicles and motorcycles for various reasons, reports Al-Anba daily.

The daily said all the impounded vehicles have been transferred to the Ministry of Interior reservation garage.

50 structures shut: Kuwait Firefighting Force (KFF) closed 50 structures in different governorates for violating the

safety and fire prevention regulations, reports Al-Jarida daily.

The Public Relations and Information Department in KFF revealed that the inspection teams from the Fire Prevention Sector uncovered violations in the above-mentioned structures. The department clarified that the closure decision was taken when the violators did not heed the warnings issued earlier.

Fire station opens: Head of the Kuwait Fire Force, Lieutenant General Khaled Al-Mekrad, inaugurated recently, the Tahrir Fire Station in Saad Al-Abdullah area, on behalf of the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior, Sheikh Talal Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

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Two sides discuss ways to enhance bilateral ties

Kuwait, Netherlands hold 7th round of bilateral political consultations

BRUSSELS, July 18, (KUNA): The seventh round of Kuwaiti-Dutch bilateral political consultations was held in The Hague, Netherlands, yesterday, said Kuwait Embassy in The Hague Tuesday.

According to a statement by the Embassy, Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs for European Affairs Sadeq Marafi met with Director-General for Political Affairs of Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands Marcel DeVink.

The two sides discussed bilateral ties and ways to enhance them, as well as the ongoing preparation for celebrating the 60 anniversary of establishing the diplomatic relations between the two countries next year, and the latest regional and international developments.

The meeting was also attended by Ali Ahmed Al-Dhafiri, Ambassador of the State of Kuwait to the Kingdom of the Netherlands, in addition to the Acting Director of the Middle East and North Africa Department at



KUNA photo Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs for European Affairs Ambassador Sadeq Marafi and Director-General for Political Affairs of Netherlands Foreign Ministry Marcel DeVink.

the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs and a number of officials from both sides.

KUNA Director General discusses media co-op with Bahraini envoy

KUWAIT CITY, July 18, (KUNA): Director General of Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) Dr. Fatima Al-Salem held talks on Tuesday with the Ambassador of the Kingdom of Bahrain to Kuwait, Salah Al-Maliki on boosting media cooperation between the two countries.

The discussions also touched on various common media files between KUNA and Bahrain's News Agency (BNA).

Dr. Al-Salem affirmed Kuwait's keenness on boosting media cooperation

with Bahrain especially between KUNA and BNA to benefit experiences from both sides.

For his part, the Bahraini ambassador praised the role of Kuwaiti media for cementing relations with friendly states, particularly with his country affirming the joint media vision between the two states.

He underlined KUNA's presentation of its media message with credibility and objectivity, also lauding its up-to-date news services.



KUNA photo Director General of Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) Dr. Fatima Al-Salem holds talks with Bahraini Ambassador Salah Al-Maliki.

Sheikh Abdullah Nouri Charity and UNHCR ink cooperation agreement

KUWAIT CITY, July 18, (KUNA): The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the Sheikh Abdullah Al-Nouri charity society inked Tuesday a cooperation deal on supporting Syrian Refugees in Lebanon.

The commissioner's acting representative in Kuwait, Maher Ishaqat, mentioned on sidelines of signing ceremony, that this the third agreement to be signed with Abdullah Al-Nouri society, adding that it is an extension of the strategic partnership between the two and an implementation of "warm winter" donations campaign.

This agreement, commented Ishaqat, aims to provide financial help to more than 2,200 Syrian fam-

ilies in Lebanese refugee camps, to better their living conditions, coping with high rent rates, loans and evacuation risks, as well as the harsh environmental conditions between June and December 2023.

Head of society's board of directors, Jamal Al-Nouri stated that the cooperation agreements over past two years aided more than 5,000 Syrian families seeking refuge.

Al-Nouri underlined the society's keenness on coordinating with the foreign ministry and ministry of social affairs for the necessary permits, and affirmed intent on furthering such strategic partnership with UNHCR for the benefit of humanitarian work and aiding refugees all over the globe.

Government

Continued from Page 1

Here we present an example from reality. One of the oil companies operating in the south of Iraq wanted to make an agreement with a hotel in Kuwait for some of its workers to stay because the distance from Kuwait to the site is less than the distance to the site from Baghdad and Basra.

When the concerned ministry was contacted in this regard, it refused to issue specific visit visas for these workers, except on the condition that they hold high degrees. It also refused to grant visas to representatives of major banks and companies because some of them are young women or do not have degrees.

With such a mentality, how can the economy of a country like Kuwait be managed, which is in need of every opportunity to revive it?

Isn't the economy the focal point, or is it not one of the priorities of the government, which does not know until today how to fill vacancies in institutions and ministries, due to which most of them are managed on acting capacities?

MPs give

Continued from Page 1

Each axis has certain programs, with the first targeting boosting and diversifying state revenues, curbing expenditures, upgrading state financial management and managing liquidity and financing.

The second axis is intended to develop and promote prioritized sectors and sustainable economic growth potential.

The projects of this axis chiefly target investment in local economy in order to overcome ongoing challenges,

achieve a productive and sustainable economy by spurring growth, and create added-value job opportunities.

To ensure effective allocation of state resources and notch up tangible outcomes, prioritized sectors are to be defined, with the private sector's significant contribution to economic goals and business environment development being taken into consideration.

Tourism and entertainment, transport and telecommunications and logistic services, housing and communications and technology, financial services, renewable energy, and oil and petrochemicals top the list of this axis' programs.

The third axis provides for qualifying citizens to work in the private sector and boosting state employees' productivity.

In relation to the fourth axis, its programs target ensuring responsible prosperity, strengthening social fabric, setting up sustainable cities and advanced infrastructure, a robust educational and research and development system, and knowledge-based society, investment in youth, sports and culture and developed health care.

The programs of the fifth axis are meant to promote governance, regulatory structure and capabilities and establish a digitally empowered government.

The main features of the government work plan consists of 15 projects aiming at improving quality of life and promoting human prosperity, 21 projects aiming at boosting the public sector's productivity, 13 projects purposed to upgrade Kuwait's education rating, 36 projects targeting the private sector's involvement and public subscription (over 10 projects of them are worth more than KD 100 million), nine projects designed to raise Kuwait's health rating and 39 capital projects.

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah said Tuesday the govern-

Kuwait up four notches in '23 Henley Passport Index

Major shake-up in world's passport power ranking

KUWAIT CITY, July 18, (Agencies): Kuwait ranked 55th with a visa-free score of 99 in the 2023 Henley Passport Index released Tuesday.

This means that Kuwaitis can travel to 99 destinations around the world without the need to obtain a visa. The country's ranking went up four notches compared with its rank in 2022 when it landed on the 59th spot with a visa-free score of 96.

According to Henley & Partners – the institution behind the index, "countries are ranked based on information obtained from the International Air Transport Authority (IATA). The index, which includes 199 passports and 227 travel destinations, is considered the standard reference tool for global citizens and sovereign states when assessing where a passport ranks on the global mobility spectrum."

Travel destinations

Japan has been knocked off the top spot on the Henley Passport Index for the first time in five years and bumped into 3rd place, according to the latest ranking, which is based on exclusive data from the International Air Transport Association (IATA). Singapore is now officially the most powerful passport in the world, with its citizens able to visit 192 travel destinations out of 227 around the world visa-free. Germany, Italy, and Spain all move up into 2nd place with visa-free access to 190 destinations, and Japanese passport holders join six other nations - Austria, Finland, France, Luxembourg, South Korea, and Sweden - in 3rd place with access to 189 destinations without a prior visa.

The UK appears to have finally turned the corner after a six-year decline, jumping up two places on the latest ranking to 4th place - a position it last held in 2017. The US, on the other hand, continues its now decade-long slide down the index, plummeting a further two places to 8th spot with access to just 184 destinations visa-free. Both the UK and the US jointly held 1st place on the index nearly 10 years ago in 2014 but have been on a downward trajectory ever since. Afghanistan remains entrenched at the bottom of the index, with a visa-free score of just 27.

Dr. Christian H. Kaelin, Chairman of Henley & Partners, says the general trend over the his-

ment's work program includes plans for added-value implementable projects with specific timetables.

Addressing a parliament session on the government's program, the prime minister said the plan is considered a document of cooperation between both legislative and executive authorities, and establishes joint constructive work rules based on putting the supreme national interest first, wiping out obstacles and addressing challenges.

It is also a document of partnership with the private sector and civil society organizations, which have a central role to play in achieving progress and development as part of Kuwait's future vision aiming at serving the interest of generations to come, he stressed.

He added that the government had presented its work plan in line with Article 98 of the constitution and the principle of constructive cooperation between both legislative and executive authorities, which is essential to serving public interest and carrying out the aspired achievements.

His Highness the Prime Minister cited the plan as including major economic and development projects aiming at ensuring economic diversification, improving development performance and addressing economic and financial challenges.

Improving living conditions and answering social needs for citizens, mainly housing, education, health and entertainment, have been taken into account in the government's work program, he pointed out.

The prime minister commended fruitful cooperation between the legislative and executive authorities in the enactment of a law that allows companies to establish new residential cities or areas, the amendment of the health insurance law to include more citizens.

Kuwait Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Oil, Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Acting Minister of Finance Dr. Saad Al-Barrak said that the government's work program for the 17th legislative term (2023-2027) is practical and based on a clear



Aerial shot of the ongoing construction of the new passenger terminal at Kuwait International Airport.

Terminal designed to be LEED Gold Certified

Government to complete new passenger terminal at Kuwait International Airport

KUWAIT CITY, July 18: As part of its work program, the government is completing the new passenger terminal at Kuwait International Airport, known as T2, reports Al-Rai daily.

The terminal is designed to be LEED Gold Certified, meaning it will be environmentally friendly and energy efficient. The roof will be equipped with photovoltaic panels to generate solar energy to operate the building.

The terminal will be able to accommodate 25 million passengers

annually and will include 51 boarding gates and aircraft parking lots.

It will also be able to accommodate and load 21 Airbus and A380 aircraft at the same time.

On the other hand, the government is also working to complete the development of Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port, which has a planned absorptive capacity of 1.8 million containers annually in the first stage, 2.7 million containers annually in the second phase, and 3.6 million containers annually in the third stage.

The following has been accom-

plished: design, implementation, and maintenance of roads, bridges, and soil reclamation; construction of port walls, anchorage for small boats, and burial works for four berths; and, construction and maintenance of a road linking the first phase with the current road on Bubiyan Island.

The following is still to be done – the construction of main buildings, roads, services, and container storage yard; and, manufacture, installation, and maintenance of handling equipment required for port operations.

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Fighters, 'Hudner'

Continued from Page 1

The latest deployments come after Iran tried to seize two oil tankers near the strait early this month, opening fire on one of them. The aircraft are intended to give air cover for the commercial ships moving through the waterway and increase the military's visibility in the area, as a deterrent to Iran.

The U.S. Navy said in both instances the Iranian naval vessels backed off when the USS McFaul, a guided-missile destroyer, arrived on the scene. The Navy said the McFaul remains in the Gulf region to continue protection of the shipping lanes.

Sabrina Singh, a Pentagon spokeswoman, said it is not clear how long the ship and the aircraft will remain in the region.

"In light of this continued threat and in coordination with our partners and allies, the department is increasing our presence and ability to monitor the strait and surrounding waters," Singh told Pentagon reporters during a briefing.

The U.S. Navy says Iran has seized at least five commercial vessels in the last two years and has harassed more than a dozen others. Many of the incidents have occurred in and around the Strait of Hormuz, the narrow mouth of the Arabian Gulf through which 20% of all crude oil passes.

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Revenues increased by 13.5%

stc rakes in revenues of KD174.6m for first six months of 2023 with KD16.1m net profit

KUWAIT CITY, July 18: Kuwait Telecommunications Company (stc), a world-class digital leader providing innovative services and platforms to customers and enabling the digital transformation in Kuwait, announced its financial results for the six months period ended 30 June 2023, highlighting the most significant achievements, financial and operational performance in addition to the social initiatives made by the company during the first six months of 2023.

Commenting on the announcements of these results, Dr. Mahmoud Ahmed Abdulrahman, stc's Chairman, stated: "stc achieved a notable financial and operational growth during the first six months of 2023 through its commitment to provide the most innovative, customer-centric and up-to-date solutions in addition to its relentless pursuit of excellence by providing a package of integrated offers and digital services to its individual and enterprise customers. Driven by the continuous demand for the digital and ICT services, stc has been keen to meet the needs of its customers by providing high quality advanced services and transformative technologies in light of the intense competition witnessed by the ICT sector in the State of Kuwait. With the support of its corporate strategy and its strategic expansion over the past years, stc has strengthened its position as a leading Telecom and ICT company through its technical and digital capabilities in addition to its human capital experience to keep pace with the rapid changes in the telecommunications sector, especially in the enterprise sector, as the company aims to sustain its market share by improving its services and enhancing the customer experience through relying on its solid infrastructure."

Commenting on stc's financial position as of June 30, 2023, Dr. Abdulrahman said: "stc's total assets reached KD 425.4 mn by the end of June 2023, while total shareholders' equity increased by 2.4% reaching KD 227.6 mn by the end of June 2023 compared to KD 222.3 mn during the same period in 2022. Whereby, stc has a strong solvency position amongst its peers in the Middle East.

Regarding stc's CSR framework, Dr. Mahmoud Abdulrahman indicated: "In Q2 2023, the Company has strengthened its presence within the local community through several campaigns and initiatives in collaboration with various charitable organizations, as well as institutions in the government and private sectors respectively.

stc's CSR program has focused in Q2 2023 on a series of community driven activities and youth initiatives under the "Weyak" umbrella - season 2 - that supports Kuwaiti SMEs and start-ups as well as other Kuwait-based innovative concepts, that reinforces our efforts to support the youth, entrepreneurs, and innovators to pursue their creative visions. In addition to "Weyak", stc has enabled its "upgrade" educational initiative, which serves as a platform dedicated to stc's contributions towards the education sector. This initiative aligns with the Company's efforts in highlighting

its continued commitment to supporting the education sector in Kuwait.

These initiatives align with the core values of our diversified CSR program, with a primary focus across our main pillars: education, health, sports, environment, entrepreneurship and youth empowerment. In line with the Company's integrated CSR program, stc will continue to activate sustainable development partnerships with the public and private sectors and strengthening the relationships with local communities in addition to increasing community awareness and promoting a culture of the concept of social responsibility."

Commenting on stc's major milestones during the first half of 2023, Eng. Maziad Alharbi, stc's CEO stated: "We are pleased to announce stc's results for the first half of 2023, which proves the Company's continues dedication in offering extraordinary services and driving the digital transformation process across the region. stc's strong results in both the individual and enterprise sector, which was attained through its ICT and business solutions specialized subsidiaries, contributed

in enhancing the Company's financial and operational performance. Therefore, stc was able to sustain its competitive position in the telecom and ICT sector in Kuwait. Driven by

its focus on innovation, network expansion, and delivering value added services to its customers, stc has ensured updating its future digital transformation strategy, in order to keep pace with the latest developments in the sector. This would aid the Company to deliver various high-quality services by seizing all the available opportunities that would support the main pillars of its corporate strategy which focuses on leading the ICT sector in Kuwait. Whereby, the Company's vision revolves around its growth trajectory by investing in emerging technologies focused on creating digital solutions including 5G services, IoT, Cloud services, and artificial intelligence. These investments will enable stc to expand its presence in both the individual and enterprise sectors, whilst building a solid customer base and increasing its market share."

Commenting on the announcement of company's financial results for the six months period ended June 30, 2023, Eng. Maziad Alharbi said: "stc managed to generate good financial results leveraging its internal capabilities to meet the anticipation of the Company's shareholders. Whereby, stc's total revenue reached KD 174.6 mn in the first six months of 2023 with growth rate of 13.5% compared to KD 153.8 mn during the same period in 2022. This increase is attributed to stc's services and smart packages designed to cater the demands of most segments of our individual customers. Not to mention stc's emphasis on the providing digital services to the enterprise segment and delivering integrated technical solutions to companies from all sectors in addition to driving its operations into new areas of sustainable growth through a series of innovative initiatives aimed at improving its operational ef-



CEO Eng. Maziad Alharbi



Dr Mahmoud Ahmed Abdulrahman, stc chairman

iciency, delivering the best services and products that meet its customer's needs, as well as supporting the company's advanced infrastructure with the best and widest 5G coverage".

Alharbi added: "These outcomes resulted in a growth of EBITDA by 4.7% to reach KD 42.1 million in the first half of 2023 compared to KD 40.2 million in the same period of 2022. As a result, the company's net profit during the six months period ended 30 June 2023 reached KD 16.1 million with a growth of 6.7% compared to KD 15.0 million during the same period in 2022. stc's customer base reached approx. 2.5 million customers at the end of June 2023".

Alharbi noted: "stc is committed to constantly update its financial and operational plans to improve the Company's capabilities and implement the most efficient cost optimization processes. Furthermore, by remaining abreast of the latest development in the telecommunications sector, stc is keen to offer a comprehensive range of services including voice and digital solutions as well as data services. This would empower stc to enhance profitability and achieving the desired financial and operational outcomes, crucial for maintaining a good cash flow position."

About stc
Kuwait Telecommunications Company (stc) is a Kuwaiti shareholding company incorporated pursuant to Amiri Decree No. 187 on 22 July, 2008, to operate and manage the third GSM mobile network in Kuwait as per Law No. 2 of 2007. Accordingly, stc launched its operations in December 2008 and was listed on Boursa Kuwait in December 2014. It is a world-class digital leader providing innovative services and platforms to

customers and enabling the digital transformation in Kuwait, and is a subsidiary of stc Group. stc has rapidly reached a leadership stance in the market through its customer and employee centric strategy.

stc offers an innovative range of world-class products, services and solutions with high quality, that cater to the customers' needs and demands, both for individuals and enterprises (solutions by stc). In 2019, stc acquired 100% of the share capital of the Internet Service Provider, Qualitynet General Trading and Contracting Company (solutions by stc) in Kuwait. Further enhancing its digital capabilities, in 2022 stc acquired the entire share capital of e-portal Holding Company and its subsidiaries, one of the most prominent ICT providers in Kuwait.

In 2021, stc obtained the approval from the Communication and Information Technology Regulatory Authority's (CITRA) to launch the first-of-its-kind mobile virtual network operator (MVNO) license to launch Virgin Mobile Kuwait in partnership with Virgin Mobile Middle East & Africa.

stc offers high internet speeds due to the implementation of the most advanced 5G network and deployment of the largest network nationwide. In 2021, stc was the first operator in Kuwait to launch the latest 5G Standalone technology dubbed 'FULL 5G' that brings the 5G experience to a new level with better speeds, lower latency, and improved coverage.

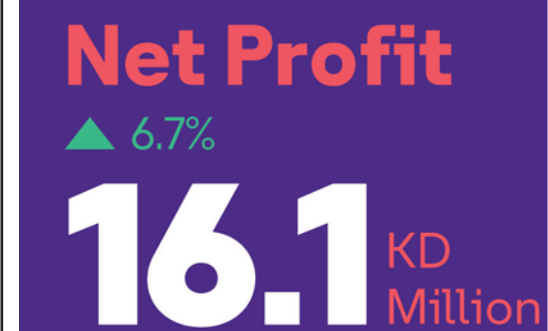
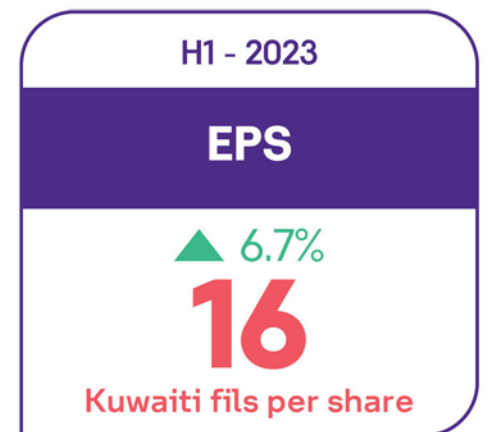
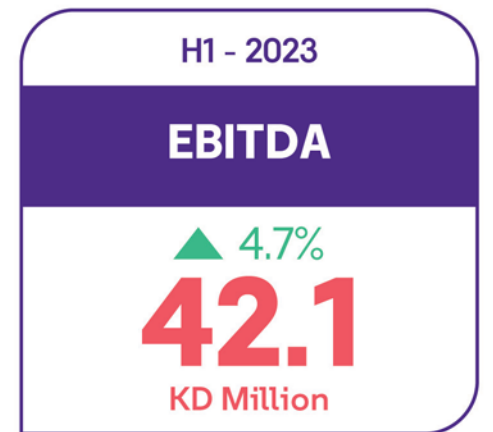
stc's CSR program focuses on outreaching to the local community with a primary focus on health, environment, entrepreneurship, sports, and education through contributing and supporting various community-driven initiatives.



The financial results for six months period ended 30 June 2023	
Revenues	KD 174.6 mn
EBITDA	KD 42.1 mn
Net Profit	KD 16.1 mn
Earnings per share	16 fils per share
Assets	KD 425.4 mn
Shareholders' equity	KD 227.6 mn
Book value per share	228 fils per share
Customer base	2.5 mn customers



stc Headquarters



The Board of Directors of **Kuwait Telecommunications Company (stc)** is pleased to announce to its shareholders that the company has achieved a net profit of KD 16.1 million (earnings per share 16 fils) for the six months period ended 30 June 2023.



BUSINESS



The Bank of America logo is seen on a branch office, Oct. 14, 2022, in Boston. Bank of America Earnings are reported on Tuesday. (AP)

Bank of America said its profits grew 19% in its most recent quarter, the latest of the big banks to see its bottom line boosted by higher interest rates. The nation's second-largest bank by assets posted a profit of \$7.4 billion in the three months ended June 30, up from \$6.2 billion in the same period a year earlier. On a per-share basis, BofA earned 88 cents, compared with 73 cents one year ago. Analysts were expecting profit of 84 cents per share, according to a poll by FactSet. Revenue of \$25.2 billion came in just ahead of target.

Like its major competitors, BofA has benefited from wealthy clients, businesses and other customers moving deposits to the bank in search of safety after this spring's bank failures. The nation's biggest banks are seen as having an implicit government backstop, due to their "too big to fail" status among the country's financial institutions. The Federal Reserve has raised its benchmark interest rate to a range of 5% to 5.25% from near zero starting in March 2022. Those higher interest rates have allowed banks to charge more for customers

to borrow. Bank of America's net interest income rose 14% to \$14.2 billion in the second quarter.

BofA set aside roughly \$602 million to cover potentially bad loans in the quarter. Many banks have been increasing their so-called loan loss reserves the last few quarters as customers start borrowing again after not doing so during the pandemic, and inflation starts stretching household budgets. Shares of Bank of America Corp. rose slightly before the opening bell Tuesday. (AP)

Bank of America net income jumps 19%

Privacy concerns in user advertising the issue

Meta faces \$100K daily fine from Norway regulator

NEW YORK, July 18, (AP) - Meta will face a hefty fine over advertising practices that violate user privacy, Norway's data protection authority said Monday, unless the Facebook and Instagram owner takes action to comply with the law.

Norwegian regulator Datatilsynet says that behavioral advertising - a common marketing model that profiles users by collection information like their physical locations, among other data - without consent is illegal. Because of this, Datatilsynet imposing a "temporary ban" of such practices on Facebook and Instagram.

During the ban, which starts August 4, Meta risks a fine of up to 1 million Norwegian kroner (nearly \$100,000) each day. The ban will "last for three months, or until Meta can show that it complies with the law," Datatilsynet said.

This decision "does not ban Facebook or Instagram in Norway," Tobias Judin, the Norwegian Data Protection Authority's international department head, stated in a release. "The purpose is rather to ensure that people

in Norway can use these services in a secure way and that their rights are safeguarded."

In a statement sent to The Associated Press on Monday, Meta said that the company will review Datatilsynet's decision - and added that there is "no immediate impact" to its services.

Debate

"The debate around legal bases has been ongoing for some time and businesses continue to face a lack of regulatory certainty in this area," Meta said. "We continue to constructively engage with the Irish (Data Protection Commission), our lead regulator in the EU, regarding our compliance with its decision."

Norway is not a member nation of the European Union, but is included in the European Economic Area (EEA).

In Monday's announcement, Datatilsynet pointed to a December decision from the Irish DPC, which ordered Meta to bring behavioral advertis-

ing in line with European law by April. The regulator also nodded a recent judgement from the EU's top court, which outlined how Meta's practices still didn't comply with the law.

"Nonetheless, Meta continues its practices," Judin told The AP over email. "Considering the recent legal developments and Meta's inaction, we consider it urgent to intervene. If not, we fear that Meta would continue delaying compliance."

A behavioral advertising ban beyond Norway is possible. Datatilsynet says it may take the matter to the European Data Protection Board, which could extend the three-month ban and led to wider implications across the continent.

Meta has been under fire over data privacy for some time. In May, for example, the EU slapped Meta with a record \$1.3 billion fine and ordered it to stop transferring users' personal information across the Atlantic by October. And the tech giant's new text-based app, Threads, has not rolled out in the EU due to privacy concerns.

Microsoft & British regulators win more time to resolve blocked deal

Judge approves joint request

LONDON, July 18, (AP) - Microsoft and British regulators won more time from a court Monday as the U.S. tech company uses a rare second chance to overcome opposition to its \$69 billion bid for video game maker Activision Blizzard.

Judge Marcus Smith conditionally approved a joint request from Microsoft and the Competition and Markets Authority to delay the appeal that the company set in motion after the CMA initially rejected the deal. The regulator later pushed back its final decision so it can consider Microsoft's argument that new developments mean its blockbuster purchase of the Call of Duty game maker should go through.

Also on Monday, a group of gamers who've described themselves as Activision fans made a last-ditch effort to stop the deal in the U.S., asking the Supreme Court for an emergency order that would block Microsoft from imminently closing the deal before its self-imposed Tuesday deadline.

The deal has already won approval in the European Union and a slew of countries but has faced opposition from antitrust regulators in Britain and the United States.

The U.K. blocked the deal on concerns that it would stifle competition in the small but fast-growing cloud gaming market. It also faced stiff resistance from rival Sony, which makes the PlayStation console that is a rival to Microsoft's Xbox game system.

But those positions appeared to be softening. Microsoft said Sunday it signed a 10-year agreement with Sony to keep the popular Call of Duty video game series on the PlayStation if the merger goes through.

Flashpoint

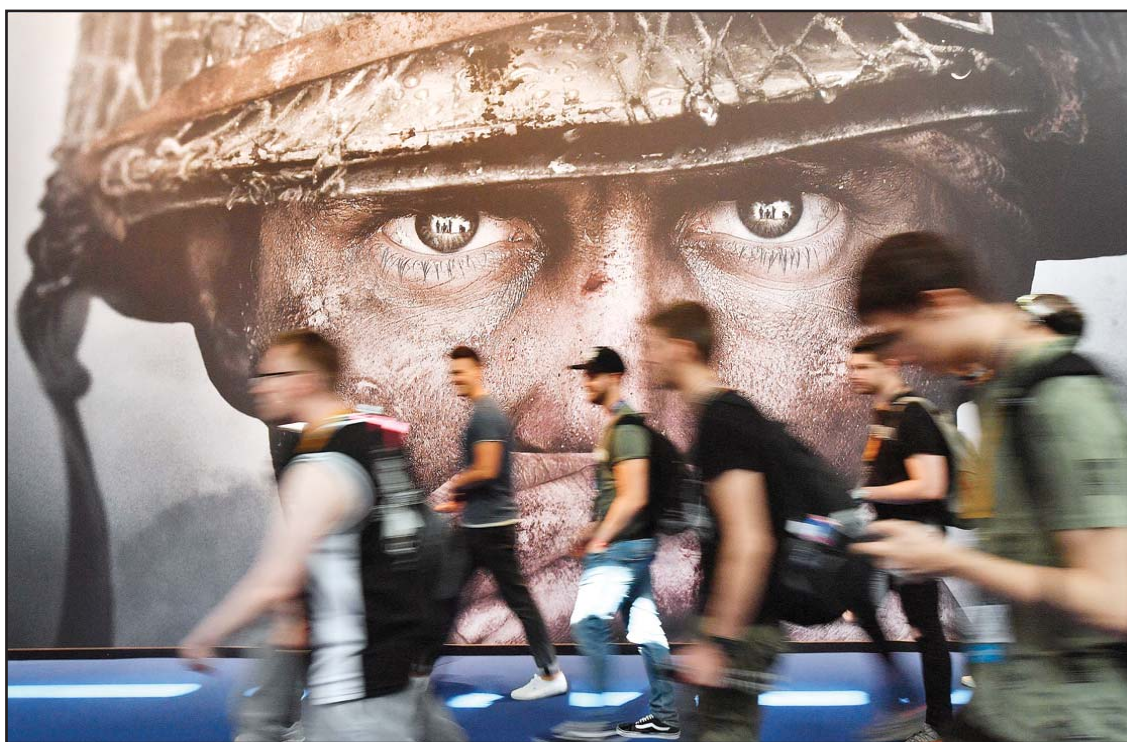
Activision's Call of Duty series of games has been a flashpoint in the merger battle fuelled by Sony's fears it would lose access to the title.

As it tried to win over regulators around the world, Microsoft has been signing provisional agreements to license Activision titles like Call of Duty to Nintendo and some cloud gaming providers. Sony had been holding out until now.

The British watchdog said last week that it's giving itself six extra weeks to consider Microsoft's submission outlining new developments and "special reasons" why the deal should be approved.

Smith said his ruling was conditional based on the CMA providing written explanations to address some points he raised. He said it would also help if Microsoft provided a statement "explaining the significance of the Sony transaction."

The judge acknowledged the need to come up with a speedy decision before Tuesday, which marks an important deadline for the deal. Both Microsoft and Activision had agreed that either party could walk away from the planned merger if it hasn't closed by then, triggering Microsoft to potentially



Visitors passing an advertisement for the video game 'Call of Duty' at the Gamescom fair for computer games in Cologne, Germany, Aug. 22, 2017. Microsoft has signed an agreement with Sony to keep the 'Call of Duty' video game series on PlayStation following the tech giant's acquisition of the video game maker Activision Blizzard. The announcement was made Sunday, July 16, 2023 in a Twitter post by Phil Spencer, who heads up Microsoft's Xbox. (AP)

Via website, mobile App, 'KFH Go' Branches, others

KFH continues to serve customers during holiday

KUWAIT CITY, July 18: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) continues to provide its banking services around the clock through a group of various technological and digital tools during the holiday.

Most of the banking services are available in several channels around the clock, whether through the bank's website, KFH.com, or via the KFHonline mobile application, or through the KFH Go electronic branches that are spread in many important locations, in addition to the KFH accounts on social media and many E-service channels and KFH branch at Kuwait international airport.

KFH Go branch is considered a new electronic channel that helps transfer normal customer transactions to an innovative automated branch, that provides capabilities that allow customers to benefit from highly efficient banking services. It includes more than 80% of the services and business provided by the branches in their traditional sense, which makes KFH Go branches the preferred choice to many segments of customers, especially the youth.

KFH Go branches include the XTM device that allows direct video call with service personnel, as well as automatic teller machines and cash deposit machines. The cash deposit machines receive 300 notes per transaction.

Moreover, Customers can perform a variety of interactive

have to pay a \$3 billion breakup fee unless both sides decided to renegotiate.

"It is obviously clear that this is an urgent matter which requires an urgent if conditional outcome," Smith said.

Both sides had asked the Competition Appeal Tribunal for the delay shortly after a court in the

banking services through KFH Go's 10 branches located in various places in Kuwait, including Kuwait International Airport, such as: establishing "Murabaha" financing transactions, requesting credit and prepaid cards, updating data and phone numbers, activating bank cards, opening deposits and accounts, instant cheque printing, receiving gold biscuits (10 grams), opening (gold, savings, Al-Rabeh, electron) accounts, online gold purchase and sell, cardless withdrawals using QR code through mobile, or by using Civil ID or phone number, in addition to many other financing and banking services conducted quickly, easily and safely.

The electronic banking services at KFH are also characterized by their high efficiency in addition to ease and safety. This was evident in the number of electronic banking operations that KFH customers carried out via KFHonline, on the website or through the mobile application.

The e-banking transactions includes: opening a bank account online for citizens and residents to join become a KFH customer without having to visit the branch, local and telex financial transfers, opening deposits, adding beneficiaries, balance inquiry, cheque book request, requesting financing, opening an account, requesting Al-Kheir Card, and checking the

U.S. thwarted the Federal Trade Commission's efforts to stop the acquisition.

Smith said he wanted to make sure that the FTC's failure to block the deal played no part in the CMA's reasoning for requesting a delay to give Microsoft another chance.

The CMA's attorney, David

PINs for credit and debit cards, activating new bank cards, reporting a lost credit/debit cards, checking the financing obligations and the number of installments, perusal of investment plans, receiving account balances and deposits summary, along with other wide range of digital services.

KFH has recently launched digital signature service in personal financing products through KFH mobile app or desktop from anywhere without having to visit the branch, instant card issuance within 3 minutes, Live FX Pricing, instant cross-border payments service at KFH-Turkey using Ripple's technology and digital Wallet service through smart mobiles and watches which provides advanced and smart digital payment methods according to highly developed security standards in cooperation with Samsung, Fitbit and Garmin.

Meanwhile, the call center continues to provide services around the clock to receive customer calls, listen to their enquiries and respond to them through a qualified and technically advanced staff. KFH provides the automated telephone service 1803333 that works with the same efficiency and speed, to respond to transfers between accounts, inquire about financial operations, pay bills, and recharge Mobile phone cards, along with other services.

Bailey, said it was a "coincidence in timing" at least "so far as the CMA is concerned" that the FTC lost its fight to block the deal in the U.S. He said the CMA was squarely focused on the public interest and there's a realistic chance that a restructured transaction could resolve its concerns.

Event slated for Sept 13-14

Shaping the Future: AM Conclave's mission to propel 3D printing in ME

ABU DHABI, United Arab Emirates, July 18, (Business Wire): AM Conclave Middle East will see manufacturing leaders from the region converge on 13-14 September 2023 at the Abu Dhabi National Exhibition Center (ADNEC) in Abu Dhabi, to learn, network, collaborate and discuss strategies to incorporate 3D Printing as a part of their business. This first of its kind event in the region will bring together industry professionals, policy makers, software providers, hardware manufacturers, material suppliers, research institutes, and standards bodies, fostering collaboration and advancing the adoption of additive manufacturing in the Middle East.

Additive Manufacturing is seeing fast growth in the Middle East supported by the conducive government policies to build local manufacturing supply chains and build diversified business models not dependent only on the energy industry.

Disruptive

Policy makers have identified that this disruptive technology has the potential to catalyse manufacturing across the region, including Oil and Gas, Defence, Aviation maritime, healthcare, energy, architecture and mobility, paving the way for enhanced efficiency, innovation, and sustainability.

"A common forum encompassing all the areas of Additive

Manufacturing for the Middle East is the need of the hour," says Aditya Chandavarkar, Co-Founder - AM Chronicle and AMTECH. "With our extensive experience at AM Chronicle and AMTECH in collaborating with industrial, government, and academic partners from various sectors, we are thrilled to announce the launch of the AM Conclave Middle East. Our aim is to initiate engaging conversations and establish a reputable platform that benefits the entire ecosystem."

The event will feature a comprehensive conference with a high-quality technical program, with an emphasis on application, business cases and technology. The conference will be complemented by a technology exhibition and networking zone, where industry stakeholders can find solutions, experience cutting-edge solutions and exchange ideas.

Don't miss this opportunity to be part of a transformative event that will shape the future of manufacturing in the Middle East. Join us at AM Conclave Middle East to unlock the potential of Additive Manufacturing in your industry.

For more information and to register, please visit www.amconclave.com. Follow us on LinkedIn and Instagram for the latest updates and use the official event hashtag #amconclave

For more details, contact: marketing@catnewtech.com or visit www.amconclave.com

Ford 'cuts' prices for F-150 Lightning electric vehicles

The sticker price on Ford's F-150 Lightning electric pickup is being lowered by thousands of dollars due to increased plant capacity, falling costs for battery raw materials and internal efforts to scale production by the Detroit automaker.

Ford Motor Co. said Monday that final upgrades at its Rouge Electric Vehicle Center in Michigan being completed now will lead to greater availability of a built-to-order truck as early as October at a manufacturer's suggested retail price closer to initial Lightning pricing.

The updated MSRP for the Pro model, it's lowest priced electric pickup, will be \$49,995, down from \$59,974. The Lariat 510A's MSRP will decline to \$69,995 from \$76,974.

"Shortly after launching the F-150 Lightning, rapidly rising material costs, supply constraints and other factors drove up the cost of the EV truck for Ford and our customers," said Marin Gajja, chief customer officer, Ford Model e. "We've continued to work in the background to improve accessibility and affordability to help to lower prices for our customers and shorten the wait times for

their new F-150 Lightning."

The price cuts arrive two days after Tesla said its first production Cybertruck electric pickup had rolled off the assembly line, nearly two years behind the original schedule.

The truck's 2019 unveiling veered off course when a window that was touted as unbreakable was spider-cracked when hit by a big metal ball, which prompted an expletive from Musk.

Tesla originally said it would make three versions of the truck, ranging from about \$40,000 to \$70,000. Later the company removed prices from the page where customers can decide whether to plunk down \$100 and place an order.

Ford CEO Jim Farley and Tesla CEO Elon Musk announced in March that all of Ford Motor Co.'s current and future electric vehicles will have access to about 12,000 Tesla Supercharger stations in the U.S. and Canada starting next spring. Commercial customers can also access Ford Pro Charging solutions to keep their F-150 Lightning powered up whether charging at home or onsite at work. (AP)

'Create a dream fund'

Netflix money shows provide info on how to 'save' money

By Channele Bessette
NerdWallet

In the past year, streaming service Netflix has released two financially focused offerings: the film "Get Smart With Money" and the series "How to Get Rich." Both feature powerhouse financial influencers who help people reevaluate their approaches to money to educate and empower them. Here are takeaways that you can apply to your own life, no matter your financial situation.

Get smart with money

The "Get Smart With Money" documentary features well-known financial writers, bloggers and podcasters who share their expertise on how to become better at managing money. Here are a couple of lessons they imparted.

Emotion management

In "Get Smart With Money," some of the featured participants were dealing with significant debt or with the challenges of living paycheck to paycheck. The stress, fear and frustration that come with money can significantly impact how you manage it.

Tiffany Aliche, a financial educator also known as The Budgetista, talks through this fear and encourages people to face their money head-on to see what they owe and where they need to save more. If you're afraid of your money, that's going to affect how you manage your money, she says in the film.

Money is a tool

Aliche tells one of the show participants to create a "dream fund," a special savings account for goals outside of regular bills and emergency fund budgeting. This takeaway is a great reminder that money is meant to be used for things that will make you happy in addition to paying for daily expenses.

How to get rich

Ramit Sethi, author of bestselling book "I Will Teach You to Be Rich," hosts this Netflix series and helps participants define their goals and make moves to achieve them. Here are some of the lessons and tips from the show.

What makes you happy

Investment scammers prey heavily on people feeling lonely

Be wary of anything that sounds too good to be true: Hartnett

NEW YORK, July 18, (AP): Scammers targeting investors are using fears of a recession and high inflation to put new wrappers on their ruses, but the underlying scams are still pretty much the same, says Andrew Hartnett. He is president of the North American Securities Administrators Association, a group devoted to protecting investors. He is also deputy commissioner in the Iowa Insurance Division.

Hartnett recently told The Associated Press that the key, as always, is to be wary of anything that sounds too good to be true. He also said scammers prey heavily on people feeling lonely, something that's becoming more common. The conversation has been edited for length and clarity.

Question: How much are investment scammers using high inflation and recession worries to their advantage?

Answer: We're definitely seeing that as part of the pitch or the way that the scammer creates fear in the person they're pitching.

One of the traditional scam types that we see is an investment that offers a guaranteed rate of return. Not just a guaranteed rate of return but an abnormally high rate of return, like 15%. So you can see how those two things

fit together really well. If somebody is feeling that eggs are too expensive, and somebody pitches them on a guaranteed rate of return of 12%, it's really easy for that to seem pretty appealing.

Q: Are there new types of scams? Or are these current worries just putting new wrappers on age-old scams?

A: Maybe there's something like a digital asset scam where because the blockchain is new, you can argue that is a new kind that we're seeing. But even there ... the traditional guaranteed rates of return, the creation of fear in someone with the news of the day and the creation of fear of missing out and pressure to act ... we find that just about all of our scams have those kinds of characteristics and that worries about inflation are really just a new wrapper.

Q: Your organization highlighted digital asset fraud as a top investor threat for this year, but has the comedown in crypto prices cooled that off?

A: Even as prices have come down for some of those crypto assets, the sense of something new and something that people don't understand has allowed those scams to continue in our experience.

In some ways, we see an increasing prevalence of using digital assets

as part of a fairly normal scam. What I mean by that is: Maybe the payment is made by a digital asset. Or, in terms of proving your amazing trading record, now sometimes we're seeing fake websites with digital asset trading returns that demonstrate unrealistic returns.

Q: Day trading has gotten more popular since the pandemic, and people are getting investing advice on social media. Are people savvy and less prone to fall for fraud than before?

A: The research suggests they think they know more than they do but are also really interested in being educated on it and learning more. That to me is the really hopeful part of this.

I can't say that I have seen any drop in our complaint activity or anything like that that would suggest everybody has sort of come into the market and understands it and we can all feel sanguine about that.

The other thing I would highlight is there's all sorts of misinformation out there. As a general rule, financial advisors have to be registered, and most products have to be registered. If we're leaving the scams out and dealing with the registered part of the market, there's a lot of information that can

be gotten that isn't on Reddit or Instagram.

Q: Are seniors still the biggest targets for scams? Are millennials getting more attention?

A: Generally speaking, we continue to see older investors as the number one demographic for our complaints.

There has been recent research that suggests that one of the things that makes one more susceptible to falling victim to one of these scams is loneliness. With the way society is changing after the pandemic and in light of technology, it's not just older investors feeling that loneliness. There's a susceptibility that goes across all those age groups.

Q: Any easy suggestions for investors to protect themselves?

A: If you have an account at a broker/dealer or an investment adviser, create a trusted contact. That's a great thing to do because it offers the finan-

cial professional an avenue if something seems awry. It doesn't give them the power to trade in your account, but it does give them someone else to talk to when they're concerned.

Sometimes that concern could be as little as "I can't reach this person," and the trusted contact can say that you're away on vacation.

Q: Anything else?

A: The worst scams that we see, almost universally, involve unregistered people. One of the best ways to protect yourself is to work with a registered financial professional. You can work with state securities regulators to verify registration status.

Q: How are scammers making first contact with victims? Cold calls? Internet?

A: Everywhere. We see it where people are playing Words with Friends online. Someone plays a couple of times, then it devolves into a little bit of a romance scam and then all of a sudden into a pitch about how you're getting all these great returns from a trader and get passed off to a WhatsApp number.

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'Updated to meet clients demand'

Warba Bank app features 'range' of digital services

KUWAIT CITY, July 18: Warba Bank announced the launch of updating the new Bank's application with its new and advanced design for smart phones, which is considered a new shift for applications in the banking sector, as this application contains many features and services that were made in response to requests and suggestions of Warba Bank clients. This update is part of upcoming updates so that the Bank completes the series of services that keep pace with the requirements and aspirations of clients in a more comprehensive, efficient and secure manner, as this application aims to give clients a distinctive and unique digital banking experience.

Mr. Mejren Hamad AlMejren, Director of Digital Department - Digital Group, said that this update comes within the plan set by the Bank to provide distinguished digital banking and social services and give a unique digital banking experience, that focuses on the client of Warba Bank by providing the best digital service.

AlMejren added that the Bank aims for this application to be a diversified banking application that serves the client in all respects and is compatible with the pace of daily life, its requirements and circumstances. AlMejren explained that Warba Bank is keen to continue developing its digital capabilities and keep abreast of the latest innovations and their rapid development.

The first of its kind
AlMejren stated that the new Warba Bank application includes a new service that is considered the first of its kind in the banking sector, which is the possibility of allocating and rearranging the main sections and express services in the application according to the client's preference. The customer can now choose the sections and services that he wants to show on the main page of the application and rearrange them as he deems appropriate for his daily needs, and the possibility of accessing all hidden sections through the "Summary View". AlMejren added that this service is considered one of the most important services that enable the client to enjoy a unique banking experience and gives him a lot of privacy to choose what's suitable, and this service will be synchronized and available for all devices used by the clients in the Warba Bank application.

It is worth noting that by using

modern technology, the application has become faster because the sections are displayed according to the client's movement within the application. When the client moves the page, the service details are called up and displayed automatically and smoothly without the customer noticing that.

The shop
AlMejren highlighted that the application offers a new page, "The Store", which contains all the services and offers that interest the client in one place. It provides him with the latest gift cards for various stores in the Gulf countries and Jordan, which the client can buy and gift to his beloved ones by sharing them through WhatsApp or e-mail.

In addition, it contains promotional codes, which give the client special discounts at a number of stores, and this service is provided free of charge to clients, and the page also contains the purchasing coupons available to clients.

Pay bills
Mr. Mejren AlMejren confirmed that the bill payment service has been built in a new way, which gives the client an exceptional experience when using this service, as this service includes all telecommunication companies, and the clients can choose one of these companies for quick payment, recharge or save the number in the case of recurring payment.

The client can also schedule payments automatically for all the numbers saved in the application, and what distinguishes this service is that the client can view all the scheduled numbers quickly and notice any defect in any payment process, in addition to that the client can follow the history of previous payments for all numbers and operations.

More development and innovation

Mr. Mejren AlMejren stated that Warba Bank will continue to develop its digital services continuously in order to keep pace with the rapid developments in the banking sector and in response to the requests and suggestions of its clients on an ongoing basis. The Bank is also keen to ensure that the application uses the latest technology, implements the highest levels of security, and provides the latest and best services that meet the aspirations of clients.

AlMejren said that this comes within the framework of the updates that the Bank is constantly and continuously conducting in order to provide more convenience and ease for clients in order to comply with the pace of daily life, its requirements, and circumstances, and it is a result of the Bank's continuous listening to the needs and suggestions of its clients.



H.E. United States Chargé d'Affaires in Kuwait James Holtsnider (fourth from right) with Zain officials at the NUKS USA Orientation Session 2023.

Event welcomes 700 students on scholarships plan

Zain sponsors annual NUKS USA orientation session held at JACC

KUWAIT CITY, July 18: As part of its extended strategic partnership with the National Union of Kuwaiti Students in the United States of America (NUKS USA), Zain recently sponsored the union's annual orientation session at Jaber Al Ahmad Cultural Center (JACC). The session welcomed high school graduates and came under the patronage of H.E. the Minister of Education.

The session was attended by the representative of the event's patron, the Acting Assistant Undersecretary of Scholarships and Equivalency Affairs at the Ministry of Higher Education, Wafaa Alsarraf; H.E. United States Chargé d'Affaires in Kuwait James Holtsnider; and Zain Kuwait Corporate Relations Department Manager Hamad Al Musaibeeh. The event welcomed over 700 students accepted in this year's scholarships plan, along with students who are NUKS USA members.

Zain's support to this annual session comes under the umbrella of its broader strategic partnership with NUKS USA for over 20 years. Through this cooperation, the company continues to support



Zain Kuwait Corporate Relations Manager Hamad Al Musaibeeh speaks during the NUKS USA Orientation Session 2023.

the union's long list of programs and social activities in both Kuwait and the US, reinforcing Zain's position as the top supporter of the biggest gathering of Kuwaiti students abroad.

This year's annual orientation session featured many programs that served the needs of new students who were recently accepted in the Ministry of Higher Education's scholarships program. NUKS USA mem-

bers from across US states who are studying various majors were present to interact with the new students and answer their inquiries. The event also featured a special panel discussion; My Experience in the US, about the unique experience of going to college in the United States.

Discuss

Zain recently welcomed NUKS USA officials at the company's headquarters in Shuwaikh during an official visit to discuss future collaboration opportunities and preparations for the new academic year. The union's team outlined their upcoming plan for special programs and activities to be held in and outside of Kuwait to serve new and current students, including the annual orientation session.

For over 20 years, Zain continued to be the top supporter of NUKS USA by participating in a plethora of community programs, including the annual conference in the US, the annual orientation session in Kuwait, the local NUKS USA office to guide new students, academic sessions, cultural seminars, sports competi-

tions, entertainment programs, workshops, and others. These programs and more witness wide positive reaction and participation from students every year.

Zain's support to NUKS USA comes in line with its pledge as a leading national company to provide bright and enthusiastic young Kuwaitis with a great social experience, as well as listen to their ideas and experiences while they pursue their education abroad.

NUKS USA serves thousands of Kuwaiti students studying in the United States every year. The union aims, through its events and programs, to connect Kuwaiti students with each other on one level, and with their nation and the local community on another.

The union was publicized in the US and was granted the recognition of the United States government. The achievement is considered a proud milestone for Kuwait's youth and is a direct result of the great relations between the State of Kuwait and United States. Such a recognition is a clear reflection of the strategic relations between the two nations.

Services through digital platforms

KIB to be closed during Islamic New Year holiday

KUWAIT CITY, July 18: Kuwait International Bank (KIB) announced that it will continue to provide its online banking services around the clock during the Islamic New Year (1445 AH) holiday. The bank aims to meet the needs of its customers, whether inside Kuwait or abroad, during the break.

The bank will be closed for business during the official holiday on Wednesday, 19 July, 2023, and the

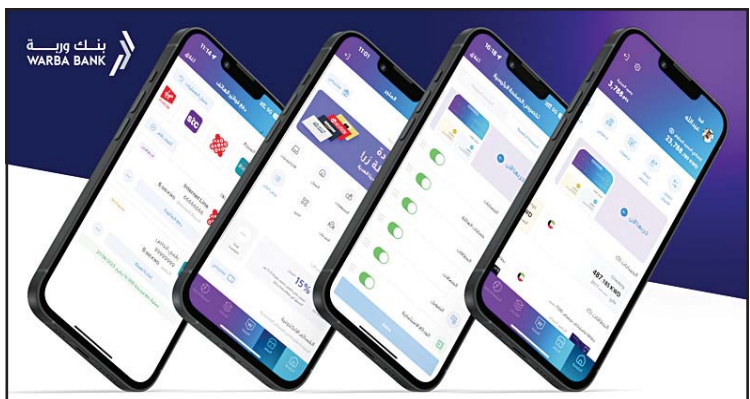
official rest day on Thursday, 20 July, 2023. Normal working hours will resume on Sunday, 23 July, 2023.

KIB highlighted its commitment to serving its customers and enabling them to follow up on their financial affairs and complete their banking transactions with efficiency and without disruption. The bank indicated that it will continue to provide its banking services

through all its digital platforms 24/7 during the holiday, including the KIB Mobile smartphone application that allows customers to perform most basic banking operations, in addition to the Live Chat and KIB Online services on the bank's website www.KIB.com.kw. Customers can also reach KIB via its Call Center, at 1866866 for local calls and at +965 22957300 for international calls, or through its

WhatsApp account registered with the local bank number 1866866 for general inquiries about products and services.

KIB also emphasized the readiness of the bank's ATMs to accommodate the expected increased demand for cash withdrawals during the holiday, both in terms of providing sufficient liquidity and the number of machines available in different areas in Kuwait.



Warba Bank updated application with new and advanced design for smart phones.

IGC presents 6 posters on positive impact of dementia drug at AAIC

IGC-AD1 effective in suppressing key hallmarks of Alz's

POTOMAC, Md., July 18: IGC Pharma, Inc. (NYSE American: IGC) ("IGC" or the "Company"), a clinical-stage pharmaceutical company, has announced that it is presenting 6 in-person posters highlighting data from its Phase 1 clinical trials investigating the Company's lead therapeutic candidate, IGC-AD1, at the Alzheimer's Association International Conference ("AAIC") being held July 16-20, 2023, in Amsterdam, Netherlands.

IGC-AD1 is the only natural low-doses THC-based investigational drug undergoing FDA trials. The therapy relies on low doses of THC and another compound as active agents for the treatment of neuropsychiatric symptoms associated with Alzheimer's disease. It has also shown in pre-clinical trials the potential to be effective in ameliorating Aβ plaque, a key hallmark of Alzheimer's. IGC-AD1 is currently in Phase 2 of clinical trials as a potential treatment for agitation in dementia due to Alzheimer's. According to Alzheimer's Disease International, the number of people living with Alzheimer's and other dementias is projected to nearly triple by 2050, with approximately 76% experiencing neuropsychiatric symptoms like agitation. IGC expects that 13-15 trial sites can process between 15 to 20 patients per month and is targeting completion of its Phase-2 trial in the first quarter of calendar year 2024.

Ram Mukunda, CEO of IGC stated, "We are honored to have six posters accepted for presentation at AAIC 2023, a prestigious meeting of leading Alzheimer's disease experts and pharmaceutical innovators. The data being presented at AAIC from our Phase 1 clinical trial of IGC-AD1 demonstrates the positive impact of our patented cannabinoid formulation on neuropsychiatric symptoms such as agitation, apathy, and the associated caregiver distress, without causing suicidal ideation or increasing blood pressure variability. Additionally, we are pleased to announce the presentation of our genotyping study analyzing the pharmacokinetics of THC metabolization in diverse patient groups. IGC is committed to increasing diversity in clinical trials and subsequently developing effective treatments for all who are impacted by Alzheimer's disease. We are encouraged by the results of IGC-AD1 so far and we continue to drive progress in our Phase 2 trial."

Poster Number: P2-694
Poster Title: Effect of the Combination of Tetrahydrocannabinol and Melatonin (IGC-AD1) on Blood Pressure Variability in Patients with Mild to Moderate Alzheimer's Disease

Presenting Author: Maria Paula Naranjo, David Silva-García, Evelyn Gutiérrez, Laura Tatiana Sánchez, Maria Juanita Arbelaez, Maria Alejandra Tangarife, Laura Delgado-Murillo, Diego Rodriguez-Soacha, Saadia Shah Nawaz, Varduhi Ghazaryan, Maria Paula Naranjo, Margarita Venegas, Karen Y. Pujals, William Julio, Claudia Grimaldi, Krista Lancôt, L. Elliot Hong, and Ram Mukunda

Session Title & Date: P2-01 Drug Development: Human Monday July 17, 2023: 8:45 AM - 4:15 PM
Poster Highlights: Preliminary data from the Phase I multiple ascending dose study suggests that investigational drug IGC-AD1 does not have a significant impact on BP or BPV in AD patients with controlled and uncontrolled BP. Regression analysis indicates that multiple ascending doses between cohorts may have lowered average BP during the trial.

Poster Number: P3-648
Poster Title: Cytochrome P450 2C9 Polymorphism in Puerto Rican Alzheimer's Disease Patients and its Role in the Pharmacokinetics of IGC-AD1, an Investigational Drug

Presenting Author: Jagadeesh S Rao, Evelyn Gutierrez, Claudia Grimaldi, William Julio, Saadia S Shah Nawaz, and Ram Mukunda

Session Title & Date: P3-01 Drug Development: Human Tuesday, July 18, 2023: 8:45 AM - 4:15 PM

Poster Highlights: Puerto Rican AD patients had 62% CYP2C9 polymorphism; 54% were intermediate metabolizers and 38% were normal metabolizers. Intermediate metabolizers had altered THC metabolism leading to longer THC half-lives compared with normal metabolizers. Polymorphisms in CYP2C9 can lead to accumulation of THC and its active metabolite as well as prolonging its elimination.

Poster Number: P3-663
Poster Title: Reduction of Neuropsychiatric Symptoms and Associated Caregiver Distress Using a Combination of Tetrahydrocannabinol and Melatonin in Dementia due to Alzheimer's Disease

Presenting Author: Alejandra Tangarife, Evelyn Gutiérrez, Laura Tatiana Sanchez, Maria Juanita Arbelaez, Laura Delgado-Murillo, Diego Rodriguez-Soacha, Saadia Shah Nawaz, Varduhi Ghazaryan, Maria Paula Naranjo, Margarita Venegas, David Silva-García, Karen Y. Pujals, William Julio, Claudia Grimaldi, Krista Lancôt, L. Elliot Hong, Ram Mukunda

Session Title & Date: P3-01 Drug Development: Human Tuesday, July 18, 2023: 8:45 AM - 4:15 PM

Poster Highlights: At all three dosages, IGC-AD1 led to a clinically and statistically significant reduction in NPS and caregiver distress as measured by the NPI-12. The active and placebo score comparison in this study suggests that IGC-AD1 may be efficacious at reducing NPS in AD patients.

Poster Number: P3-657
Poster Title: Effect of Tetrahydrocannabinol and Melatonin Combination on Suicide Ideation and Behavior in Dementia due to Alzheimer's Disease

Presenting Author: Laura Delgado-Murillo, Evelyn Gutiérrez, Laura Tatiana Sanchez, Maria Juanita Arbelaez, Maria Alejandra Tangarife, Diego Rodriguez-Soacha, Saadia Shah Nawaz, Varduhi Ghazaryan, Maria Paula Naranjo, Margarita Venegas, David Silva-García, Karen Y. Pujals, William Julio, Claudia Grimaldi, Krista Lancôt, L. Elliot Hong, and Ram Mukunda

Session Title & Date: P3-01 Drug Development: Human Tuesday, July 18, 2023: 8:45 AM - 4:15 PM

Poster Highlights: Clinically significant decreases in NPI-12 (depression domain) were observed in all three study cohorts. IGC-AD1 did not create a risk of developing suicidal ideation or behavior as assessed by the C-SSRS in the mild to moderate AD population during the 6-week Phase I trial. IGC-AD1 appears to be a promising pharmaceutical option for the treatment of depression.

Poster Number: P3-660
Poster Title: Reduction of Agitation and Caregiver Distress Using a Combination of Tetrahydrocannabinol and Melatonin in Dementia due to Alzheimer's Disease

Presenting Author: Maria Juanita Arbelaez, Evelyn Gutiérrez, Laura Tatiana Sanchez, Maria Alejandra Tangarife, Laura Delgado-Murillo, Diego Rodriguez-Soacha, Saadia Shah Nawaz, Varduhi Ghazaryan, Maria Paula Naranjo, Margarita Venegas, David Silva-García, Karen Y. Pujals, William Julio, Claudia Grimaldi, Krista Lancôt, L. Elliot Hong, and Ram Mukunda

Session Title & Date: P3-01 Drug Development: Human Tuesday, July 18, 2023: 8:45 AM - 4:15 PM

Poster Highlights: In the Phase I trial IGC-AD1 was found to be safe, well-tolerated, and caused no serious Adverse Events. In the Active Group, the mean NPI Agitation and NPI-D scores decreased by 36% and 55%, respectively. These NPI Agitation and NPI-D scores indicate that IGC-AD1 may be efficacious at reducing agitation due to AD and associated caregiver distress.

'Bridging gap between AI research and real-world clinical impact'

'MedPerf' can evaluate AI models on diverse real-world medical data

SAN FRANCISCO, July 18: Medical Artificial Intelligence (AI) has tremendous potential to advance healthcare and improve the lives of everyone across the world, but successful clinical translation requires evaluating the performance of AI models on large and diverse real-world datasets. MLCommons®, an open global engineering consortium dedicated to making machine learning better for everyone, has announced a major milestone towards addressing this challenge with the publication of Federated Benchmarking of Medical Artificial Intelligence with MedPerf in the Nature Machine Intelligence journal.

MedPerf is an open benchmarking platform that efficiently evaluates AI models on diverse real world medical data and delivers clinical efficacy while prioritizing patient privacy and mitigating legal and regulatory risks. The Nature Machine Intelligence publication is the result of a two year global collaboration spearheaded by the MLCommons Medical Working Group with participation of experts from 20+ companies, 20+ academic institutions, and nine hospitals across 13 countries.

Medical AI models are usually trained with data from limited and specific clinical settings, which may lead to unintended bias with respect to specific patient populations. This lack of generalizability can reduce the real-world impact of medical AI. However, getting access to train models on larger diverse datasets is difficult because data owners are constrained by privacy, legal, and regulatory risks. MedPerf improves medical AI by making data across the world easily and safely accessible to AI researchers, which reduces bias and improves generalizability and clinical impact. "Our goal is to use benchmarking as a tool to enhance medical AI," said Dr. Alex Karargyris, MLCommons Medical co-chair. "Neutral and scientific testing of models on large and diverse datasets can improve effectiveness, reduce bias, build public trust, and support regulatory compliance."

Assess

Critically, MedPerf enables healthcare organizations to assess and validate AI models in an efficient and human-supervised process without accessing patient data. The platform's design relies on federated evaluation in which medical AI models are remotely deployed and evaluated within the premises of data providers. This approach alleviates data privacy concerns and builds trust among healthcare stakeholders, leading to more effective collaboration.

Intel Labs' Research Scientist and MedPerf technical project lead Micah Sheller said, "Transparency lies at the core of the MedPerf security and privacy design. Information security officers must know about every bit of information they are being asked to share and with whom it will be shared. This requirement makes an open-source, non-profit consortium like MLCommons the right place to build MedPerf."

MedPerf's orchestration and workflow automation capabilities can significantly accelerate federated learning studies. "With MedPerf's orchestration capabilities we can evaluate multiple AI models through the same collaborators in hours instead of months," explains Dr. Spyridon Bakas, Assistant

ReproSeq PGT-A Kit prevents sample mix-ups

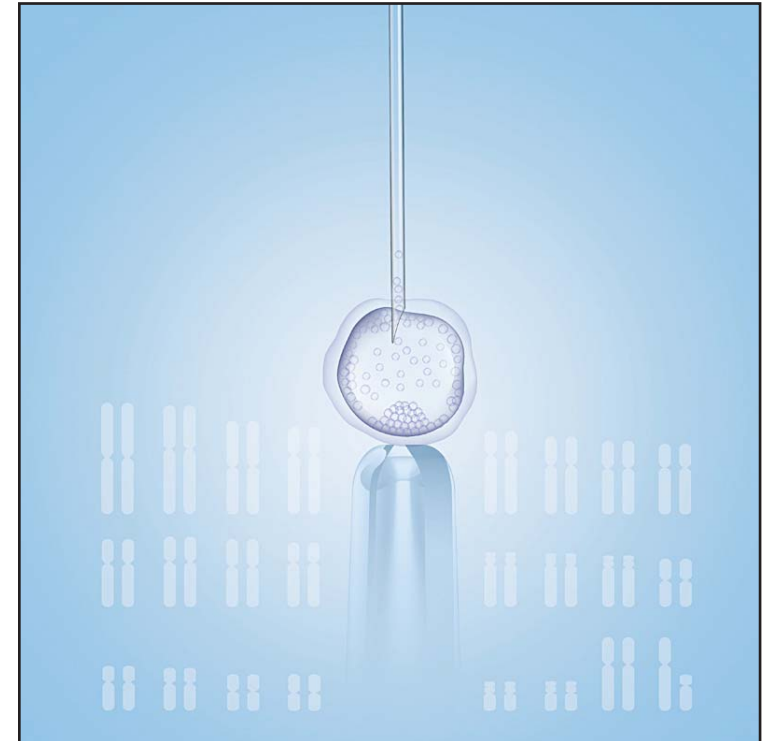
Thermo introduces reproductive health assays to 'accelerate' fertility research

CARLSBAD, Calif., July 18: To extend the benefits of genomic testing research for reproductive health labs, Thermo Fisher Scientific has launched two new next-generation sequencing-based options to support preimplantation genetic testing-aneuploidy (PGT-A) used commonly to inform in vitro fertilization (IVF) and intracytoplasmic sperm injection (ICSI) research. The Ion ReproSeq PGT-A Kit* and the Ion AmpliSeq Polyplody Kit* mark the first research use reproductive health assays available on the Ion Torrent Genexus Integrated Sequencer*, delivering complete workflows from sample to result for aneuploidy analysis.

Across all regions of the world, approximately 17.5% of the adult population experiences infertility. Subsequently, the use of assisted reproductive technology (ART), such as IVF procedures, is growing and has more than doubled over the past decade. PGT-A testing identifies chromosomal abnormalities in embryo samples and has become commonplace in IVF and ICSI research to advance future options for fertility care.

With the ReproSeq PGT-A Kit now available on the Genexus Integrated Sequencer, more labs will have the ability to explore comprehensive PGT-A analysis. Using the ReproSeq PGT-A Kit, researchers can study vital scientific and genetic insights that may increase the probability of success for future pregnancies and improve the health of future generations.

"Building on Thermo Fisher's existing reproductive health offerings, the launch brings the benefits of next-generation sequencing to more research labs with the potential of rapid, in-house testing and analysis," said Garret Hampton, president, clinical next-generation sequencing and oncology at Thermo Fisher Scientific. "Considering the far-reaching implications for those struggling with infertility, researchers must have reliable and accurate testing available to advance the fertility field and ultimately improve reproductive health for all. We're com-



Using the ReproSeq PGT-A Kit, researchers can study vital scientific and genetic insights that may increase the probability of success for future pregnancies and improve the health of future generations.

mitted to delivering comprehensive, complete solutions that can make this type of exploration a reality."

Simplifies

Delivering an end-to-end solution, the Genexus Integrated Sequencer simplifies the reproductive health research process with templating, sequencing and analysis available on one platform. When combined with the optional Ion AmpliSeq Polyplody Panel kit, researchers working with the ReproSeq PGT-A Kit have access to additional quality control features that detect contamination, prevent sample mix-ups and can identify triploidy in embryos.

Thermo Fisher Scientific Inc is the world leader in serving science, with

annual revenue of approximately \$40 billion. Our Mission is to enable our customers to make the world healthier, cleaner and safer. Whether our customers are accelerating life sciences research, solving complex analytical challenges, increasing productivity in their laboratories, improving patient health through diagnostics or the development and manufacture of life-changing therapies, we are here to support them. Our global team delivers an unrivaled combination of innovative technologies, purchasing convenience and pharmaceutical services through our industry-leading brands, including Thermo Scientific, Applied Biosystems, Invitrogen, Fisher Scientific, Unity Lab Services, Patheon and PPD.

Professor at the University of Pennsylvania's Perelman School of Medicine and the vice chair for benchmarking & clinical translation for the MLCommons Medical working group.

This efficiency was demonstrated in the Federated Tumor Segmentation (FeTS) Challenge, the largest federated experiment on Glioblastoma. The FeTS Challenge spans 32 sites across 6 continents and successfully employed MedPerf to benchmark 41 different models. Thanks to active involvement by Dana-Farber, IHU Strasbourg, Intel, Nutanix, and University of Pennsylvania teams, MedPerf was also validated through a series of pilot studies representative of academic medical research. These studies involved pub-

lic and private data across on-prem and cloud technology including brain tumor segmentation, pancreas segmentation, and surgical workflow phase recognition.

"It's exciting to see the results of MedPerf's medical AI pilot studies, where all the models ran on hospital's systems, leveraging pre-agreed data standards, without sharing any data," said Dr. Renato Umeton, Director of AI Operations and Data Science Services in the Informatics & Analytics department of Dana-Farber Cancer Institute and Co-Chair of the MLCommons Medical Working Group. "The results reinforce that benchmarks through federated evaluation are a step in the right direction toward more in-

clusive AI-enabled medicine."

MedPerf partnered with Sage Bio-networks to build ad-hoc components required for the FeTS 2022 and the BraTS 2023 challenges atop the Synapse platform serving 30+ hospitals around the world, as well as with Hugging Face to leverage its Hub platform and demonstrate how new benchmarks can utilize the HF infrastructure. To enable wider adoption, MedPerf supports popular ML libraries that offer ease of use, flexibility, and performance - e.g., fast.ai. It also supports private AI models or AI models available only through API, such as Microsoft Azure OpenAI Services, Epic Cognitive Computing, and HF inference points.

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Actors, writers on strike united in the face of long standoff

LOS ANGELES, July 18, (AP): Solidarity and stamina were picket-line themes Monday as striking screenwriters and actors in New York and Los Angeles braced for a long, hot summer standoff with studios.

Picketers emphasized unity between writers, who have been on the lines for more than two months, and performers, who are only on Day 2 of striking - as well as camaraderie between highly paid actors and those with spare screen credits who struggle to scrape by.

Kevin Bacon, who was among the famous faces picketing among unknowns outside Viacom headquarters in New York, said his presence was about "seeing people out here and being aware that not all actors are super high paid actors, that they are working class people who are trying to make a living."

One such working actor, Whitney Morgan Cox, who has appeared on the CBS series "Criminal Minds," said it was "powerful" to see writers and actors come together who don't often work simultaneously in production.

"I don't think people necessarily realize the energy that writers and actors have," Cox said outside Walt Disney Studios in Burbank, California, "and the stamina, and our ability to commit, that's all our entire job is about is just committing to something and follow-

ing through. So it's been a really beautiful sense of community."

Leaders of the Screen Actors Guild-American Federation of Television and Radio Artists (SAG-AFTRA) voted unanimously on Thursday that when their contract expired they would start striking the following day, joining the Writers Guild of America, who walked out on May 2.

"It's been amazing to be out here now that we have the second wind of SAG members coming," said Paul Scheer, who was already striking as a writer, and is now doing the same as an actor, outside Netflix headquarters in Hollywood. "I'm on strike two times, which means I have to walk double the steps, which is hard, but I'm willing to do it."

Support

On Monday temperatures were in the high 80s in New York, and well above 90 degrees F (32 C) in parts of Los Angeles, where some afternoon pickets were called off because of the extreme heat.

A union rally was planned for later in the day in Atlanta, where many productions have moved in recent years because of tax breaks and other lower costs.

The issue also came up in Washington, when White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre responded to a question during Mon-

day's briefing about whether the Biden administration supports the aims of striking entertainment workers.

"The president believes all workers, including the writers, including the actors, they deserve fair pay. And they deserve fair benefits," Jean-Pierre said. "We sincerely hope that both actors and writers strikes get resolved, and that the parties come together and have a mutually beneficial agreement as soon as possible."

While actors and writers also emphasized the need to reach a deal, few believed any such agreement would be coming soon, given the vast distance between the unions and the Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers - which represents studios, streamers and production companies in negotiations that are currently neither happening nor planned.

Key issues for both unions include residual payments, which have been nearly wiped out by the switch to the streaming system, and the unpaid use of their work and likeness by artificial intelligence avatars.

The AMPTP said it has offered fair terms on those and other issues.

"These things are things that I personally can negotiate for," Bacon said. "But I'm here for the working class, middle class part of our union who needs these basic provisions in the basic contract."

Film

Variety



This image released by Paramount Pictures shows Hayley Atwell, (left), and Tom Cruise in a scene from 'Mission: Impossible - Dead Reckoning, Part One.' One of the first major film productions shut down by the pandemic - 'Mission: Impossible - Dead Reckoning Part One' - only just reached theaters. (AP)

Film

'Everyone lost in the so-called streaming wars'

Hollywood plunges into all-out war

NEW YORK, July 18, (AP): To get a sense of just how much animosity is flying around Hollywood these days, watch how Ron Perlman responded to a report that the studios aimed to prolong a strike long enough for writers to lose their homes.

Perlman, the hulking, gravel-voiced actor of "Hellboy," leaned into the camera in a since-deleted Instagram live video to vent his anger. "Listen to me, mother-(expletive)," Perlman said. "There's a lot of ways to lose your house."

Three years after the pandemic brought Hollywood to a standstill, the film and TV industry has again ground to a halt. This time, though, the industry is engaged in a bitter battle over how streaming - after advancing rapidly during the pandemic - has upended the economics of entertainment.

Having weathered plague, Hollywood is now fully at war in its own "Apocalypse Now" double feature. When tens of thousands Screen Actors Guild-American Federation of Television and Radio Artists hit the picket lines last week, joining 11,000 Writers Guild of America screenwriters who have been on strike since May, a smaller clash went nuclear just in time for the release of "Oppenheimer." As striking actors and writers mobilized to mob studio lots and streamer headquarters, Puck's Matthew Belloni wrote, "The town is burning to the ground."

"You cannot change the business model as much as it has changed and not expect the contract to change, too," said Fran Drescher, SAG-AFTRA president, in a fiery press conference announcing the strike. "We're not going to keep doing incremental changes on a contract that no longer honors what is happening right now with this business model that was foisted upon us."

"What are we doing?" she added. "Moving around furniture on the Titanic?"

Disaster also loomed in Hollywood when COVID-19 in March 2020 shuttered movie theaters, emptied TV studios and shut down all production. The recovery is still ongoing. Over the weekend, one of the first major film productions shut down by the pandemic - "Mission: Impossible - Dead Reckoning Part One" - only just reached theaters. And as its big-but-not-blockbust-

er opening showed, some of pre-pandemic Hollywood still just hasn't returned. Box office remains about 20-25% off the pre-pandemic pace.

"We've talked about disruptive forces on this business and all the challenges we're facing, the recovery from COVID which is ongoing. It's not completely back," Disney CEO Bob Iger said Thursday. "This is the worst time in the world to add to that disruption."

Though many of the demands of SAG-AFTRA and the WGA are longstanding, much of the current dispute gathered force in the helter-skelter days of the pandemic. A digital land rush to streaming ensued, as studios, in many cases, hurried to craft their Netflix competitors. Subscriber growth became the top priority.

Rahul Telang, a Carnegie Mellon University professor and co-author of the book "Streaming, Sharing, Stealing: Big Data and the Future of Entertainment," says an entire era of change was condensed into two years.

"What is happening right now was bound to happen. With streaming, the whole business got disrupted," says Telang. "So naturally, they're complaining, 'We need our fair share.' But how do you decide what's a fair share? There has to be a transparency about where the money is coming from and where it's going. Until this gets resolved, this issue will keep coming up."

Protections

The last time screen actors and writers struck simultaneously, in 1960, the guilds established royalty (later residual) payments for replays of films and TV episodes, among other landmark protections. If that strike reckoned with the dawn of television, this one does much the same for the streaming era.

But streaming, especially when companies carefully guard audience numbers, offers no easy metric like box office or TV ratings to establish residuals - long a foundational part of how writers and actors make a living. SAG-AFTRA is seeking a small percentage of subscriber revenue, with data measured by a third party, Parrot Analytics.

The Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers, which negotiates on behalf of the studios, hasn't agreed to that but says the studios have offered actors

"historic pay and residual increases," along with pension contributions and other protections.

Meanwhile, actors are sharing images of their paltry residual payments for streaming hits. Kimiko Glenn of Netflix's "Orange Is the New Black" posted a clip of residual payments totaling \$27.30.

"You used to be able to work on a broadcast show, one show and you're good for the year because of the residuals," said actor Nachayka Vanterpool on the picket lines. "And then you have streaming coming along and you got 20 cent residual checks. That impacts you."

Increasingly, it's looking like everyone lost in the so-called streaming wars that went into hyperdrive under COVID-19. Since Wall Street last year began souring on subscription numbers being the be-all-end-all, most media companies have suffered stock declines. Wall Street's message turned to: Show us the profits.

At the same time, the drive to streaming has accelerated the demise of traditional television and its ad-based revenue. That's led analysts like Michael Nathanson of MoffettNathanson to survey a fragmented entertainment business and forecast a "scary" second half of the year for media companies.

With traditional TV increasingly eroded by streaming, many studios have been cutting costs. Disney, Warner Bros. Discovery and Netflix all slashed jobs over the past year and a half. Streaming profitability has remained elusive. The Walt Disney Co. says Disney+ will get there in fall 2024. WarnerBros. Discovery, which has taken the extreme step of cannibalizing finished productions to reshape its streaming strategy, says Max will start making money this year.

Many are now girding for a prolonged stoppage that, if carried into September, would greatly impact the fall TV schedule and the film festivals (Venice, Telluride, Toronto) that launch awards season contenders. Drescher said she "couldn't believe" how far apart her union and AMPTP are.

Ronny Regev, who penned the book "Working in Hollywood: How the Studio System Turned Creativity into Labor," thinks this strike could play out similarly to the 1960 stoppage, when actors struck for about a month but the writers strike dragged on.

Features

ARABIC TIMES

WEDNESDAY, JULY 19, 2023

LONDON: A red sweater adorned with a flock of sheep worn by the young Princess Diana is expected to sell for more than \$50,000 at auction.

The playfully patterned wool jumper featuring a single black sheep amid a pattern of white ones headlines Sotheby's online Fashion Icons sale in September.

The 19-year-old **Lady Diana Spencer** was photographed in the garment at a polo match in June 1981, soon after her engagement to **Prince Charles**, who was then heir to the British throne.

Diana was already becoming a style icon -- and one of the world's most photographed women -- and the moment gave a big boost to designers **Sally Muir** and **Joanna Osborne**, who made the sweater for their small knitwear label Warm & Wonderful.

A few weeks later, Muir and Osborne received an official letter from Buckingham Palace explaining that Diana had damaged the sweater and asking whether it could be repaired or replaced. The original was returned, showing damage to a sleeve the designers thought might have been caused by snagging on Diana's diamond and sapphire engagement ring.

A new sweater was knitted and dispatched, and Diana was photographed wearing it with white jeans and a black ribbon tie at an event in 1983.

Some have speculated Diana liked the "black sheep" pattern because she felt like an outsider in the royal family. **Emma Corrin** sported a replica as the young Diana in season four of "The Crown."

Warm & Wonderful still makes a cotton version of the design, which sells for 190 pounds (\$250). Osborne discovered the original lying forgotten in a box in an attic earlier this year.

Cynthia Houlton, Sotheby's global head of fashion and accessories, said "this exceptional garment, meticulously preserved, carries the whispers of Princess Diana's grace, charm, and her keen eye for fashion."

The sweater, which has an estimated price of \$50,000 to \$80,000, will be on display at Sotheby's New York showroom from Sept 7-13. Online bidding opens Aug 31 and runs to Sept 14. The record for a piece of

Diana memorabilia is \$604,800 for a **Victor Edelstein**-designed ballgown sold by Sotheby's in January. (AP)

HARRISBURG, Pa: Pennsylvania may soon be changing its tune.

A proposal to establish a new state song got a positive vote recent-



Diana



Ciresi

ly in the House of Representatives, although there was some discord.

The resolution to establish an independent commission to review the history, solicit suggestions from the public and make recommendations passed the House of Representatives by a 138-64 vote. It was sent to the Senate for concurrence.

The current state song was adopted in 1990 by a similar committee tasked with the same job. The song "Pennsylvania" by **Eddie Khoury** and **Ronnie Bonner** was selected.

But the bill's sponsor, Rep **Joe Ciresi**, a Democrat from Montgomery County, contends that these days no one really knows the

song and he's arguing it's overdue for an update. (If you need a refresher, it starts aptly: "Pennsylvania, Pennsylvania, mighty is your name.")

"This is something we should take pride in," he said. "This is something every member of this chamber should be able to sing, even if you don't sing well." (AP)

People & Places

People

Final witness

John lends celebrity 'support' to Spacey

LONDON, July 18, (AP) — **Kevin Spacey's** lawyers enlisted the help of an A-list star Monday in his sexual assault trial, calling on Elton John and his husband to cast doubt on one of the Oscar winner's accusers at the end of the defense case.

John appeared briefly in the London court by video link from Monaco after his husband, David Furnish, testified that Spacey did not attend an annual gala ball at their Windsor home at the time that the accuser said he was attacked in a car.

John was the final witness for the defense and was followed by character testimonials from colleagues, friends and family that had Spacey in tears in the dock when they were read aloud by his lawyer in Southwark Crown Court.



Spacey

Spacey, 63, has pleaded not guilty to a dozen charges that include sexual and indecent assault counts and one count of causing a person to engage in penetrative sexual activity without consent.

One of the alleged victims said he was driving Spacey to the White Tie & Tiara Ball in 2004 or 2005 when the actor grabbed his crotch so forcefully that he almost ran off the road.

Furnish supported Spacey's own testimony that the only year he had attended the event was 2001. Furnish said he had reviewed photographs taken at the party from 2001 to 2005 and Spacey only appeared in images that one year. He said all guests were photographed each year.

John, who was wearing yellow tinted glasses, a dark jacket and light blue open-collar shirt, said the actor attended the party once in the early 2000s and arrived after flying to England on a private jet.

Spacey's appearance was a surprise and memorable because it was a big deal, said Furnish, a filmmaker and John's manager, who also appeared from Monaco.

"He was an Oscar-winning actor and there was a lot of buzz and excitement that he was at the ball," said Furnish.

Auction

John said the actor spent the night at their house after the event. He also confirmed that Spacey bought a Mini Cooper at the auction held that night for the Elton John AIDS Foundation.

Spacey said he spent the most money "ever" on that model of car and he kept it in John's garage until he could pick it up later.

The alleged victim said he may have gotten the year wrong, but that he would not have forgotten the incident because it took his breath away and he was driving and almost crashed the car.

The timeline, however, is important because the man testified that Spacey had fondled him over several years beginning in the early 2000s. The incident was the final occasion, he said. He threatened to hit the actor and after that avoided him.

Spacey said the two were friends and they engaged in some romantic contact but the man was straight, so the actor respected his wishes not to go further. He said he was crushed when he learned the man had complained to police about him and said the man had "reimagined" what had been consensual touching.

Furnish said he was familiar with the accuser and described him as "charming," the same term Spacey used.

Over two days of testimony last week, the two-time Academy Award winner insisted that he never sexually assaulted three of the four accusers who described disturbing encounters between 2001 and 2013. The acts allegedly escalated from unwanted touching to aggressive fondling to one instance of performing oral sex act on an unconscious man.

Spacey dismissed one man's fondling claims as "pure fantasy" and said he shared consensual encounters with two others who later regretted it. He accepted the claims of a fourth man, saying he had made a "clumsy pass" during a night of heavy drinking, but he took exception to the "crotch-grabbing" characterization.

Defense lawyer Patrick Gibbs rested his case after reading statements from 10 character witnesses who praised the actor's work and compassion toward others.

Spacey dabbed at his eyes with a tissue as Gibbs read the words of actor Robert Sean Leonard, known for his role on the TV show "House" and the movie "Dead Poets Society." Leonard said Spacey was "positive, supportive and respectful" and someone he admired greatly.

"He's more than a successful actor, he's a movie star, but unlike every other movie star I've worked with, he doesn't know it," Leonard said. "Stardom was never his goal. He loves and respects the work, and he loves and respects the people he works with."

Closing arguments are expected later in the week. Spacey is free on bail.

John's testimony came just over a week after he wrapped up his 50-year touring career with a show in Stockholm.

It's the second time the "Rocket Man" star and Furnish have made appearances in a London courtroom this year. The two also showed for hearings in March at the High Court in their phone hacking lawsuit with Prince Harry against the publisher of the Daily Mail newspaper.

Also:

NEW YORK: Child star and activist **Mia Armstrong** has a picture book coming out next year about her experiences with Down syndrome, what her publisher calls "all the joys and challenges."

Random House Children's Books announced Monday that Armstrong's "I Am a Masterpiece!" will be released next January. Illustrated by **Alexandra Thompson** and co-written by Armstrong and author **Marissa Moss**, the book is Armstrong's way of helping kids see the world as she sees it.

Armstrong has spoken often about Down syndrome, and has called it her "superpower."

"I wrote this story because I want to inspire other people to love their own stories and be proud of who they are," the 12-year-old Armstrong said in a statement. "Down syndrome does not define me and is just one small part of who I am. I'm also an actress, a model, a voiceover artist, a rock climber, a thrill seeker, a daughter, a sister, and a friend. My dream is for 'I Am a Masterpiece!' to help kids everywhere recognize that people with Down syndrome are capable, strong and unique and that all people deserve to be accepted and loved."



This image released by Warner Bros. Pictures shows Ryan Gosling, (left), and Margot Robbie in a scene from 'Barbie.' (Warner Bros. Pictures via AP)



Actor Hilary Duff carries a sign on a picket line outside Paramount studios in Los Angeles on Monday, July 17. The actors strike comes more than two months after screenwriters began striking in their bid to get better pay and working conditions and have clear guidelines around the use of AI in film and television productions. (AP) — **Details Page 11**

Variety

NASHVILLE, Tenn.: Nashville music executive **Jerry Bradley**, who signed **Alabama** and **Ronnie Milsap** and helped brand the outlaws style of country music during a 40-year career, died Monday. He was 83.

Bradley died peacefully in Mt. Juliet, Tennessee, according to an obituary released by his family.

Bradley began his career in the 1960s, working in his family's music publishing business alongside his famous producer father, **Owen Bradley**. As an engineer, his clients included **Loretta Lynn**, **Dinah Shore**, **Gordon Lightfoot** and **The Who**, according to the obituary.

Bradley struck out on his own in 1970, joining RCA Records under **Chet Atkins** before taking over as head of the label's Nashville branch from 1973-1983. That is where he signed Alabama and Milsap. He helped market the outlaws of country music in a platinum-selling album called "Wanted: The Outlaws." Under his leadership, the careers of **Dolly Parton** and **Charley Pride** flourished.

After leaving RCA, Bradley ran the Opryland Music Group, whose song catalogs included the classics of **Hank Williams**, **Roy Orbison** and the Everly Brothers. But Bradley wanted more and acquired new staff, song pluggers, and songwriters, including **Kenny Chesney**, according to the obituary. Bradley retired in 2003 after the company was acquired by Sony/ATV Music.

Chesney said in a statement that Bradley "had a profound and unmeasurable impact on my life. But not just in my life. ... He helped change the lives of so many people that had a song in their heart. Jerry's impact on our creative community will be felt for years."

Bradley was inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame in 2019. (AP)

RIO DE JANEIRO: Brazilian composer and pianist **João Donato**, who helped lay the groundwork for bossa nova but throughout his career defied confinement to any single genre, died Monday. He was 88.

His death was announced on his verified Instagram account. Local media reported that he had been hospitalized and intubated with pneumonia.

Donato was prolific and inventive, collaborating with top artists at home and abroad, including **Chet Baker**, **João Gilberto**, **Sergio Mendes**, **Tito Puente**, **Gilberto Gil**, **Gal Costa** and countless others.

"Today we lost one of our greatest and most creative composers," Brazilian President **Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva** wrote on Twitter. "João Donato saw music in everything. He innovated, he passed through samba, bossa nova, jazz, forró and in the mixture of rhythm built something unique. He kept creating and innovating until the end."

Donato was born in the Amazonian state of Acre on Brazil's western border, far from the cultural hubs of **Rio de Janeiro** and **Sao Paulo**. He showed prodigious musical ability as a boy upon

Music

Ronson details how film's score came together

'Barbie' soundtrack is rich, diverse

LOS ANGELES, July 18, (AP) — **Mark Ronson** is showing off his Barbies.

Scattered throughout his studio, the executive producer of the "Barbie" soundtrack - and a musical polymath known for his work with artists like Amy Winehouse and Lady Gaga - has a few "leftovers" scattered across the room. One doll is placed in a permanent split, stretched across a Moog synthesizer. Another is styled to look like primatologist **Jane Goodall**.

"I went to Toys R Us and I couldn't find a single Ken," he laughs. Fittingly, "that's the theme of the movie." Mattel HQ did end up sending over a few; the Ken that remains in Ronson's studio is, appropriately, shirtless.

Finding the sound of "Barbie," poised to become one of 2023's biggest blockbusters, required careful consideration and research for a film with such a rich visual palette. In the end, he produced a stacked soundtrack that included **Lizzo**, **Billie Eilish**, **Dua Lipa** (who also acts in the movie) and more.

But it started with a simple text message.

The music supervisor on the project, **George Drakoulias**, shot Ronson a quick, "Barbie?" Ronson read the script and was in. He also scored "Barbie" with collaborator **Andrew Wyatt**. Ronson is no stranger to working on music for film, but executive producing a soundtrack album and scoring an entire movie, let alone a movie of this size, was new territory. "It was a lot of learning on the job," he says.

Assignment

The soundtrack assignment began with two tracks: a pop song for a big dance number and an '80s power ballad for Ken (name a genre with more "self-aware, bombastic silliness," as Ronson calls it).

The former came first. Ronson came up with a chorus and beat - a detour from his first, far too obvious plan on writing "80s, sugar-y pop," and instead landing on a "groovy, melodic thing ... with some toughness," perfect for **Dua Lipa**. It became "Dance the Night," the Lipa track featured in the film's main trailer.

The Ken song came about differently. For the most part, Ronson works on instrumentals: When he wrote "Shallow" with **Lady Gaga** and **Bradley Cooper** for "A Star Is Born," for example, he only contributed lyrics to fill in gaps - the "surface, don't hurt us," line, as he recalls. But for the song that would become **Ryan Gosling's** "I'm Just Ken," Ronson couldn't shake the lyric: "I'm just Ken, anywhere else I'd be a 10."

So he sent director **Greta Gerwig** a demo with a few lines - including a deliciously mouthy lyric about "blonde fragility." She sent it to **Gosling**, who plays Ken in the film, and knew immediately he needed to sing it. What could have soundtracked any scene in the film became

receiving an accordion as a Christmas gift and soon after his family moved to Rio began playing professionally.

He floated between two rival jazz fan clubs, playing at both, making contacts and leaving an impression. He began recording with ensembles and his own compositions.

Among his best-known songs were "A ra" (The Frog), "Bananeira" (Banana Tree) and "Minha Saudade" (My Longing).

Swift has more No. 1 albums than any 'woman in history'

LOS ANGELES, July 18, (AP) — Congratulations are in order for **Taylor Swift** and her loyal fans, known as Swifties. The pop star officially has more No. 1 albums than any woman in history.

"Speak Now (Taylor's Version)," released earlier this month, is the third in her endeavor to re-record her first six albums, instigated by music manager **Scooter Braun's** sale of her early catalog. It has officially debuted at No. 1 on the **Billboard 200**, becoming her 12th album to reach the top spot.

Previously, **Barbra Streisand** held the record, with 11 No. 1 albums.

its own musical moment.

Early on, **Gerwig** used the **Bee Gees** and '70s discos as a reference point for Ronson.

"You know the Chicago (Disco Demolition) thing, where everyone burned their disco records, "Saturday Night Fever" had reached its apex and the poor **Bee Gees** were like, "All we wanted to do was make people dance! What did we do wrong?" says Ronson. "That's 'Barbie.'"

If anything, that idea is more of a thematic one than a sonic guideline. The mood board was vast, and also included "Dolly Parton, **Olivia Newton John**, "Nine to Five," Ronson explains.

It speaks to why the "Barbie" soundtrack spans pop genres, including a reggaeton track courtesy **Karol G**, "Wataiti," bubblegum K-pop from girl group **Fifty Fifty** featuring **Kali Uchis** in "Barbie Dreams," and the falsetto piano ballad "What Was I Made For?" by **Billie Eilish**.

Collaboration

For **Atlantic Records**, who released the soundtrack, collaboration and diversity was key.

"All of these artists were brought in early on to do screenings with **Mark**, **Greta**, and the filmmakers. They would see scenes they were going to write their music to," says **Brandon Davis**, executive vice president and co-head of pop A&R at the label. "Each of these artists wrote lyrics about the specific ways Barbie was important to them."

Ronson echoes the sentiment. "Karol G was like, 'I'm here because I love Barbie. I wasn't expecting this incredible film. This is awesome,'" he says. "And **HAIM** had this encyclopedic knowledge. The only VHS they were allowed in the '90s, when they were kids, was this one Barbie thing. They knew every song."

Others were tasked with a prompt: **Lizzo's** "Pink," which ends with a voiceover from **Helen Mirren**, was inspired by the lead Barbie, played by **Margot Robbie**, living through her perfect day. And because the

Swift ties **Drake's** record of 12 No. 1 records, but sits just behind **Jay-Z**, who has 14 No. 1 albums to his name, and the **Beatles**, who have 19.

In addition to hitting this incredible milestone, Swift has 2023's biggest album release to date, with 716,000 equivalent album units, according to **Luminato**. An impressive 506,600 are in traditional album sales (a combination of 410,000 physical and 96,600 digital sales.)

With those figures, Swift has dethroned country singer **Morgan Wallen**, whose album "One Thing at a Time" sold 501,000 units in its first week.

film is a comedy with real-world complications, humor informed a lot of the songwriting: It's in **Dominic Fike's** "Hey Blondie" as well as the many samples of **Charli XCX's** "Speed Drive."

Acquisition (cross head) (Soundtracks) are an area where we cracked the code and figured out how to make it work in a way where we support our partners creatively," says **Kevin Weaver**, president of **Atlantic Records West Coast**, citing **Atlantic's** work on other major soundtracks like from the "Fast & Furious" franchise, "The Fault in Our Stars," and "The Greatest Showman," which produced massive hits like **Wiz Khalifa** and **Charlie Puth's** "See You Again," **Charli XCX's** "Boom Clap," and "This Is Me," respectively.

But unlike those films, part of the acquisition process for "Barbie" required a trip to the doll factory, where **Atlantic executives** got to witness the doll-making process from inception to completion. (Davis and Weaver are both producers on the soundtrack.)

When working with legendary intellectual property, a soundtrack comes with some risks. Do you bring back **Aqua's** 1997 hit "Barbie Girl," or do you reimagine it? Surely **Nicki Minaj** must be featured - her fans are called **Barbz**.

"I remember - no offense - that I had a song on the "Ghostbusters" remake and I think six of the 12 songs were reinterpretations of **Ray Parker Jr.'s** ("Ghostbusters" theme)," says Ronson. "It all dovetailed into the single we have with **Nicki Minaj** and **Ice Spice**," he continued, referencing the reworking of "Barbie Girl."

"I've never really executive produced something before," Ronson says. "I love this film. We had an amazing partner in **Atlantic Records**."

"And then doing the score, but it was a lot of learning on the job. It was still a job that I've never really done before. ... It's fun to show people different scenes and getting them to dream big."

At times he showed reluctance to put lyrics to his music. Several weeks ago on his Instagram account, he recalled telling **Gilberto Gil** that a melody of his could have no lyrics. "And you, generously and kindly, said, 'It does, it does, it does/everything does/it always does ...'"

On Monday, **Gil** recorded a video of himself with a guitar, sharing another instance of **Donato** coming to him with a catchy melody that he had created, but in need of lyrics. (AP)



Bradley



Donato

Climate

To be more common

Deadly flooding hit 'several countries'

NEW YORK, July 18, (AP): Extreme rainfall accompanied by deadly flooding hit the United States and several other countries over the weekend and last week.

There were several dozen fatalities in central and southern regions of South Korea, including the Chongju region where an underpass flooded and drowned motorists who became trapped in their submerged vehicles.

In the US, flooding claimed five lives in Upper Makefield Township, Pennsylvania, where a search is ongoing for two missing children. Flooding also struck parts of New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Connecticut, New York and New Jersey this past weekend. A state of emergency was declared in New Jersey by Gov. Phil Murphy following significant damage from flooding and landslides.



Murphy

This follows last week's relentless flooding in India, Japan, China, Turkey and the US.

Although the destructive floods are occurring in different parts of the world, atmospheric scientists say they have this in common: With climate change, storms are forming in a warmer atmosphere, making extreme rainfall a more frequent reality now. The additional warming that scientists predict is coming will only make it worse.

That's because a warmer atmosphere holds more moisture, which results in storms dumping more precipitation that can have deadly outcomes. Pollutants, especially carbon dioxide and methane, are heating up the atmosphere. Instead of allowing heat to radiate away from Earth into space, they hold onto it.

While climate change is not the cause of storms unleashing the rainfall, these storms are forming in an atmosphere that is becoming warmer and wetter.

"Sixty-eight degrees Fahrenheit can hold twice as much water as 50 degrees Fahrenheit," said Rodney Wynn, a meteorologist at the National Weather Service in Tampa Bay. "Warm air expands and cool air contracts. You can think of it as a balloon - when it's heated the volume is going to get larger, so therefore it can hold more moisture."

For every 1 degree Celsius (1.8 degrees Fahrenheit) that the atmosphere warms, it holds approximately 7% more moisture. According to NASA, the average global temperature has increased by at least 1.1 degrees Celsius (1.9 degrees Fahrenheit) since 1880.

Storms

"When a thunderstorm develops, water vapor gets condensed into rain droplets and falls back down to the surface. So as these storms form in warmer environments that have more moisture in them, the rainfall increases," explained Brian Soden, professor of atmospheric sciences at the University of Miami.

Along Turkey's mountainous and scenic Black Sea coast, heavy rains swelled rivers and damaged cities with flooding and landslides.

At least 15 people were killed by flooding in another mountainous region, in southwestern China.

"As the climate gets warmer we expect intense rain events to become more common, it's a very robust prediction of climate models," Soden added. "It's not surprising to see these events happening, it's what models have been predicting ever since day one."

Gavin Schmidt, climatologist and director of the NASA Goddard Institute for Space Studies, said the regions being hit hardest by climate change are not the ones that emit the largest amount of planet-warming pollutants.

"The bulk of the emissions have come from the industrial Western nations and the bulk of the impacts are happening in places that don't have good infrastructure, that are less prepared for weather extremes and have no real ways to manage this," said Schmidt.

In last week's flooding, schools in New Delhi were forced to close on July 10 after heavy monsoon rains battered the Indian capital, with landslides and flash floods killing at least 15 people. Farther north, the overflowing Beas River swept vehicles downstream as it flooded neighborhoods.

In Japan, torrential rain pounded the southwest, causing floods and mudslides that left two people dead and at least six others missing. Local TV showed damaged houses in Fukuoka prefecture and muddy water from the swollen Yamakuni River appearing to threaten a bridge in the town of Yabakei.

In Ulster County, in New York's Hudson Valley and in Vermont, some said the flooding is the worst they've seen since Hurricane Irene's devastation in 2011.

Meanwhile, heavy downpours lashed South Korea for a ninth day on Monday as rescue workers struggled to search for survivors in landslides, buckled homes and swamped vehicles in the most destructive storm to hit the country this year.

At least 40 people have died, 34 others are injured and more than 10,000 people have had to evacuate from their homes since July 9, when heavy rain started pounding the country. The severest damage has been concentrated in South Korea's central and southern regions.

In the central city of Cheongju, hundreds of rescue workers, including divers, searched for survivors in a muddy tunnel where about 15 vehicles, including a bus, were trapped in a flash flood that may have filled up the passageway within minutes Saturday evening.

The government has deployed nearly 900 rescue workers to the tunnel who have so far pulled up 13 bodies and rescued nine people who were treated for injuries. It wasn't immediately clear how many people were in the submerged cars.

Emergency

As of Monday afternoon, rescuers had pumped out most of the water from the tunnel and were searching the site on foot, a day after they used rubber boats to move and transport bodies on stretchers.

Hundreds of emergency workers, soldiers and police were also looking for any survivors in the southeastern town of Yecheon, where at least nine people were dead and eight others listed as missing after landslides destroyed homes and buckled roads, the county office said.

Photos from the scene showed fire and police officers using search dogs while wading through knee-high mud and debris from destroyed homes.

Nearly 200 homes and around 150 roads were damaged or destroyed across the country, while 28,607 people were without electricity over the past several days, the Ministry of the Interior and Safety said in a report.

Severe weather was also affecting many other places around the world. In the United States, an already saturated Northeast began drying out Monday after a second round of heavy rain in a week, including a flash flood in Pennsylvania that claimed at least five lives over the weekend.

Schools and the stock market were closed in Hong Kong on Monday as Typhoon Talim sideswiped the city and headed toward the Chinese mainland and the island province of Hainan.

This year has seen record-breaking stretches of high heat across large parts of China, South Korea and Japan. China's National Meteorological Administration reported that temperatures in the oasis city of Turpan in the northwestern Xinjiang region hit a record 52.2 Celsius (125.9 Fahrenheit) on Sunday.

Italian health officials intensified heat warnings as southern Europe began a brutally hot week on Monday with temperatures expected to top 40 C - or 104 F - on a continent already overburdened by tourists. The third heatwave in a month was expected to affect much of the Mediterranean and last until Wednesday.



People are transferred by boat as a residential area is flooded due to heavy rain in Akita, northern Japan, July 15. Scientists say increasingly frequent and intense storms could unleash more rainfall in the future as the atmosphere warms and holds more moisture. (AP)

Health

Both Alzheimer's drugs come with safety risk

New drug slows Alz's by 4-7 months

WASHINGTON, July 18, (AP): Another experimental Alzheimer's drug can modestly slow patients' inevitable worsening - by about four to seven months, researchers reported Monday.

Eli Lilly and Co. is seeking Food and Drug Administration approval of donanemab. If cleared, it would be only the second Alzheimer's treatment convincingly shown to delay the mind-robbing disease - after the recently approved Leqembi from Japanese drug-maker Eisai.

"Finally there's some hope, right, that we can talk about," Lilly's Dr. John Sims told reporters Monday at the Alzheimer's Association International Conference in Amsterdam.

"We don't cure the disease," he said. "Diabetes doesn't have a cure either - it doesn't mean you can't have very meaningful treatments for patients."

Lilly announced in May that donanemab appeared to work, but on Monday the full results of a study of 1,700 patients was published by the Journal of the American Medical Association and presented at the Alzheimer's conference.

Infusions

Both donanemab and Leqembi are lab-made antibodies, administered by IV, that target one Alzheimer's culprit, sticky amyloid buildup in the brain. And both drugs come with a serious safety concern - brain swelling or bleeding that in the Lilly study was linked to three deaths.

Scientists say while these drugs may mark a new era in Alzheimer's therapy, huge questions remain about which patients should try them and how much benefit they'll really notice.

"The modest benefits would likely not be questioned by patients, clinicians or payers if amyloid antibodies were low risk, inexpensive and simple to administer. However, they are none of these," Dr. Eric Widera of the University of California, San Francisco, wrote in a JAMA editorial accompanying Lilly's new data.

Lilly's study enrolled people ages 60 to 85 who were in early stages of Alzheimer's. Half received once-a-month infusions of donanemab and half dummy infusions for 18 months.

The study had a few twists. Patients were switched to dummy infusions if

New drug to protect babies and toddlers from RSV gets FDA nod

WASHINGTON, July 18, (AP): US officials on Monday approved the first long-acting drug to protect babies and toddlers against a respiratory virus that sends tens of thousands of American children to the hospital each year.

RSV is a cold-like nuisance for most healthy people, but it can be life-threatening in the very young and the elderly.

The Food and Drug Administration approved the injection for infants and children up to 2 years old who face increased risk of severe RSV.

"Today's approval addresses the great need for products to help reduce the impact of RSV disease on children, families and the health care system" said FDA's Dr. John Farley in a statement.

Last year, a surge in RSV cases flooded US hospitals with wheezing children. There are no vaccines for babies yet, though Pfizer and other companies are working on them.

AstraZeneca's drug, to be sold

under the brand name Beyfortus, is a laboratory-made version of an antibody that helps the immune system fight off RSV. Under the FDA approval, babies - including preterm infants - can receive a single injection to protect against their first season of RSV, which typically lasts about five months. Children up to age 2 can receive another dose to protect them during their second season facing the virus.

Beyfortus, which will be marketed in the US by Sanofi, is already approved in Canada, Europe and the UK. Sanofi did not immediately announce the US price of the treatment.

FDA officials approved the drug based on three studies showing Beyfortus reduced the risk of RSV infection between 70% and 75% among infants and children 2 and younger.

Advisors to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention will meet early next month to recommend exactly who should get the drug.

enough amyloid cleared out - something that happened to about half within a year. And because amyloid alone doesn't cause Alzheimer's, researchers also tracked levels of another culprit in the brain - abnormal tau. More tau signals more advanced disease.

The results: Both groups declined during the 18-month study but overall those given donanemab worsened about 22% more slowly. Some patients fared better - those with low to medium tau levels saw a 35% slower decline, reflecting that the drug appears to work better in earlier stages of the disease.

How much difference does that make? It means donanemab slowed patients' worsening by about four to seven months, the JAMA report concluded.

Another way of measuring: Among the donanemab recipients with lower tau levels, 47% were considered stable a year into the study compared with

29% of those who got the dummy version.

The main safety concern is brain swelling or bleeding, which often causes no symptoms but sometimes can be serious, even fatal. About a quarter of donanemab recipients showed evidence of that swelling, and about 20% had microbleeds.

Scientists already know that patients getting any amyloid-targeted therapy need repeat brain scans to check for those side effects - a costly and time-consuming hurdle.

Widera noted that the possibility of stopping donanemab treatment at least temporarily in people who respond well would help limit some of those challenges. For comparison, Leqembi is given by IV every two weeks and researchers didn't test a similar stoppage.

It's too soon to know if some patients might need to resume donanemab, said Lilly's Dr. Mark Mintun.



This illustration provided by AstraZeneca depicts packaging for their medication Beyfortus. US officials have approved a new long-acting drug to protect babies and toddlers against a respiratory virus that causes thousands of hospitalizations each year. The Food and Drug Administration on Monday, July 17, approved the injection for infants and children up to 2 years old. (AP)



Brownlow



Nagel

Discovery

Pod of 55 pilot whales die: A pod of 55 pilot whales have died after they were found washed ashore on a beach in Scotland in the worst mass whale stranding in the area, marine experts said Monday.

Marine rescuers, the coast guard and police were called to Traigh Mhor beach on the Isle of Lewis in northwest Scotland after receiving reports that dozens of the mammals were in difficulty there early Sunday.

The British Divers Marine Life Rescue found that only 15 of the whales - a mixture of adults and calves - were still alive, and attempted to refloat two of the more active animals that were low down in the water.

But by Sunday afternoon rescue teams decided that the remaining whales should be euthanized on welfare grounds, after considering the shallow beach, rough wave conditions and how long the whales had been out of the water.

The charity said the whole pod may have followed a female whale onto the beach when she had problems giving birth.

"Pilot whales are notorious for their strong social bonds, so often when one whale gets into difficulty and strands, the rest follow," it said in a statement. "A sad outcome for this pod and obviously not the outcome we were all hoping for."

Andrew Brownlow, from the Scottish Marine Animal Stranding Scheme, said that would be a "monumental task." (AP)

Oregon's Cannon Beach reopens: A cougar that climbed onto a towering rock off the coast of northwest Oregon over the weekend - probably in search of feathered prey - has abandoned the craggy formation, allowing for the popular Cannon Beach to reopen to visitors Monday.

Multiple agencies and organizations, from local and state police to the state Department of Fish and Wildlife and the Parks and Recreation Department, responded to Sunday morning's sighting of the big cat on the iconic Haystack Rock. The beach was closed to protect people and let it return to its usual habitat.

The US Fish and Wildlife Service said officials later confirmed that the animal had moved on. A game camera captured an image of it leaving the rock Sunday night, and tracks were also found heading away, federal officials said.

State biologists believe the cougar ventured to Haystack Rock at low tide Saturday night to hunt birds, a behavior they have not previously witnessed at that site.

"While the forested areas along the coast are prime habitat for cougars, it is unusual that a cougar made its way on to Haystack Rock," Paul Atwood, a biologist with the Oregon Department of Fish

and Wildlife, said in a statement. "Their primary food source is deer, but they will also consume elk, other mammals and birds."

However, cougars have been docu-



This handout photo issued by British Divers Marine Life Rescue (BDMLR) shows pilot whales in North Tolsta, on the Isle of Lewis, Scotland, Sunday, July 16. A pod of 55 pilot whales have died after they were found washed ashore on a beach in Scotland in the worst mass whale stranding in the area, marine experts said Monday. (AP)

mented traveling to other similar small offshore islands in Washington state's Olympic Peninsula, US Fish and Wildlife Service spokesperson Megan Nagel said via email. (AP)

Dingos attack woman: A pack of dingoes drove a woman who was jogging into the surf and attacked her in the latest clash between native dogs and humans on a popular Australian island, sparking new warnings Tuesday to visitors venturing out.

The 24-year-old woman was attacked by three or four dingoes on Monday while she was jogging on a beach at Queensland state's K'gari, the world's largest sand island formerly known as Fraser Island, officials said.

The World Heritage-listed national park is home to some of Australia's purest dingoes, which are also known by their Indigenous name wongari, because domestic dogs have long been banned. Tourists returned to the island after pandemic restrictions were lifted, and have found the dingoes have become less wary of humans. That's raised the danger to both species, wildlife ranger Linda Behrendorff said.

Two passersby rescued the woman from the dingoes after they chased her into the surf, using the same hunting technique they use for larger prey such as wallabies, Behrendorff said. (AP)

'We feel like underdogs and we embrace it'

Ireland preparing for difficult debut in opener vs Australia

BRISBANE, Australia, July 18, (AP): Overwhelming demand for tickets meant co-host Australia's opening match at the Women's World Cup had to be shifted to the tournament's biggest stadium, where it's set to be played in front of an expected record crowd of 82,500.

Stepping into that cauldron to face the Matildas on Thursday is Ireland, on debut at the World Cup and playing in its first major global tournament.

"We feel like underdogs and we embrace it," Ireland forward Marissa Sheva said. "I think it gives us a little bit of energy and we know the pressure is not on us, it's on them for this game."

The match was initially scheduled for a smaller downtown stadium but had to be switched to Stadium Australia, at Sydney Olympic Park, which is also the venue for the Aug. 20 final.

"Ever since they moved stadiums we knew that it was going to be a massive crowd," Sheva said. "Having the opening game of the tournament against the hosts is an incredible opportunity."

The hype around Sam Kerr and the Matildas has been growing Down Under as the countdown to the tournament

Australia is co-hosting with New Zealand gets closer to kick off.

The Matildas beat France 1-0 in a friendly played in front of a record 50,629 fans in Melbourne last week.

The previous record crowd for a Matildas match in Australia was 36,109, set in November 2021 in a loss to the United States at Stadium Australia.

Ireland manager Vera Pauw recognizes the challenge for her squad, but she is emphasizing the importance of her team

SOCCER

sticking to its game plan.

"Of course it's not an ordinary game, but we have to bring it back to the tasks of the game," Pauw said. "At the end of the day, it's the same pitch dimensions as we have back home."

Pauw's squad upset Australia 3-2 in a friendly in Dublin in 2021 in the only previous meeting between the teams at the senior level. Louise Quinn, a starting defender on Ireland's

World Cup roster, scored the winning goal on a second-half header.

"I think we've shown that we are capable of competing with the top teams in the world, so this should be no exception," Sheva said.

In April, Ireland played two friendlies against the U.S. team, losing 2-0 in Austin, Texas, and 1-0 in St. Louis, Missouri, to the back-to-back defending Women's World Cup champions. The U.S. enters this World Cup as the top-ranked team and the tournament favorite.

The Irish hosted fifth-ranked France in a friendly earlier this month, keeping the game scoreless for nearly a half before losing 3-0.

"We prepared by playing the best, so we're ready to do that here," Sheva said. "We know that Australia is world-class so we're going to get their best game."

Australia is 10th in FIFA's rankings, and fans in the host country are confident the Matildas will advance to the knockout stages.

"We're ready and confident to give them a game," Sheva said. "They're in good form, but so are we."



Australia's Sam Kerr (right) gets the ball past France's Selma Bacha during their friendly soccer match in Melbourne ahead of the Women's World Cup. (AP)

Mobley voted game MVP

Cavaliers win Summer League title

LAS VEGAS, July 18, (AP): Isaiah Mobley had 28 points and 11 rebounds, and the Cleveland Cavaliers captured the NBA Summer League championship with a 99-78 victory Monday over the Houston Rockets.

This was the Cavaliers' first title since the Summer League went to a tournament format in 2013. Mobley was voted game MVP.

Sam Merrill scored 27 points, making 6 of 12 3-pointers, and Emoni Bates added 19 points for the Cavaliers (6-0).

Nate Hinton led Houston (5-1) with 18 points and 10 rebounds. Three other Rockets also scored in double figures: Cam Whitmore (14), Trevor Hudgins (13) and Fletcher Magee (10).

Mobley, a second-round pick in

BASKETBALL

2022, finished strong in Summer League. He put the Cavaliers in the title game by scoring 23 points and making the winning shot in overtime to beat the Brooklyn Nets 102-99 on Sunday.



Houston Rockets' Fletcher Magee attempts a shot against Cleveland Cavaliers' Pete Nance (48) during the first half of a NBA summer league championship basketball game in Las Vegas. (AP)

Merrill has a history of playing well at the Thomas & Mack Center. His 3-pointer with 2.5 seconds left gave Utah State the 2020 Mountain West tournament championship, one of the last shots in college basketball before the COVID-19 shutdown.

On Monday, the Cavaliers asserted control early by running out to a 17-4 lead. Houston went on a 19-4 run to cut the margin to 41-38 late in the first half.

But then Cleveland scored the first 11 points of the second half to take a 62-44 lead, and the outcome was never seriously in doubt after that.

□ □ □

The Phoenix Suns have traded guard Cameron Payne to the San Antonio Spurs and signed big man Bol Bol to a one-year contract, a person familiar with the moves told The Associated Press.

The Suns also acquired three second-round draft picks from the Orlando Magic for a swap of first-round picks in the 2026 NBA draft, the person said Sunday on condition of anonymity because the deals have not been officially announced.

Phoenix was expected to have a quiet offseason after trading for Bradley Beal, but has been active while trying to build a roster around him, Devin Booker and Kevin Durant.

The Suns traded Payne with a second-round pick and cash to the Spurs for a future protected second-round pick in a deal that will clear salary cap space.

That cleared the way for Phoenix to sign Bol, who was released by Orlando earlier this month. The 7-foot-2 son of former NBA player Manute Bol averaged 9.1 points and 5.8 points last season after three years in Denver.

Payne played a key reserve role on a Suns team that went to the 2021 NBA Finals. The 6-1 guard averaged 10.8 points and 4.5 assists last season, his fourth in Phoenix. The Suns were busy at the opening of free agency late last month, agreeing to terms with sharpshooter Yuta Watanabe, big men Chimezie Metu and Drew Eubanks, and wing Keita Bates-Diop.

Parity, 'bigger' field mean there could be surprises at World Cup



In this file photo, United States' Alex Morgan (right), and Ireland's Ruesha Littlejohn battle for the ball during the first half of an international friendly soccer match in St. Louis. (AP)

US still considered dominant

WELLINGTON, New Zealand, July 18, (AP): There could be some surprises at the Women's World Cup.

Sure, the U.S. is still considered dominant, and those elite European teams have developed even more with the rise of competitive clubs. Then there's Brazil, which always seems on the verge of a breakout.

But an expanded field of 32 teams at the tournament starting Thursday in Australia and New Zealand means more players will see the international spotlight - and they no doubt want to prove they belong.

Consider Japan. Back in 2011, Japan wasn't expected to make the semifinals, let alone the championship match. But the Japanese, reeling from the earthquake and tsunami that devastated their country earlier that year, rallied and beat the Americans on penalties after a 2-2 draw, and in the process became the first Asian team to win soccer's top prize.

That was the last Women's World Cup that wasn't won by the United States. The No. 1-ranked Americans aim to make it three in a row.

SOCCER

U.S. coach Vlatko Andonovski is well aware that other countries are catching up. He pointed to Zambia's exhibition victory over Germany in the run-up to the tournament.

"The top 10 have always been there. The world that is catching up is Wales, is Vietnam, is Zambia, Portugal. These are these are the countries that are catching up. The 7-0, 8-0 games are gone. And we can see that Germany plays against Zambia, loses 3-2. Those games are going to happen," Andonovski said. "And that's what we are preparing ourselves for, so we don't run into into a game like that with the mentality that it's gonna be easy. No game is gonna be easy. It doesn't matter who's in front of us."

Canada is considered among those top teams, particularly after winning the Olympic gold medal at Tokyo. But coach Bev Priestman suggested that growing parity means there are no givens.

"It could really throw up some surprises just on tournament football, you can lose group-stage games and then go on to win the thing. So yeah, it's tighter than it's ever been," Priestman said.

There are eight teams debuting at the tournament, including Ireland, Vietnam, Zambia, Haiti, Morocco, Panama, Portugal and Philippines. While most stand little chance

Bayern replace Salihamidžić with Freund

MUNICH, July 18, (AP): Bayern Munich is hiring Salzburg sporting director Christoph Freund to take over from the fired Hasan Salihamidžić.

The Bavarian powerhouse said on Tuesday the 46-year-old Freund, who has been involved in a management role at Salzburg since 2006, will start as Bayern sporting director on Sept. 1.

"We are convinced that he is the right person to strengthen the team in the future, together with Thomas Tuchel's coaching team and technical director Marco Neppi," Bayern CEO Jan-Christian Dreesen said. Salihamidžić was fired after Bayern clinched an 11th consecutive Bundesliga title on the final day of the season. Bayern was second going into the final round, where it pipped Borussia Dortmund to the title thanks to a late goal from Jamal Musiala coupled with Dortmund's draw with Mainz.

Salihamidžić was Bayern's sporting director since 2017. The club also fired former goalkeeper Oliver Kahn as CEO. Kahn was replaced by Dreesen.

□ □ □

The owners of the NFL's San Francisco 49ers have assumed control of the English soccer club Leeds United.

Leeds United announced Monday that the English Football League had approved the sale of the club to 49ers Enterprises, allowing for "an immediate transition of ownership." Leeds was relegated from the Premier League to the second-tier Championship for next season. "This is an important moment for Leeds United

and we are already hard at work," said Paraag Marathe, who will take over as chairman of the club. "This transition is a necessary reset to chart a new course for the Club."

Marathe succeeds Andrea Radrizzani as Leeds' majority owner. Leeds CEO Angus Kinnear will remain in that role.

Marathe and 49ers CEO Jed York lead 49ers Enterprises. The ownership group first invested in Leeds in 2018 and increased its share to 44% in late 2021, then reached an agreement last month to take over Leeds with NBA player Larry Nance Jr. and T.J. McConnell joining as minority partners.

□ □ □

Former Liverpool midfielder Naby Keita will miss the start of the season for Werder Bremen after being injured while preparing for a friendly.

The 28-year-old Keita suffered a groin problem before Sunday's game against VfB Oldenburg, forcing him to miss the match.

Bremen coach Ole Werner said at the time it was a precautionary measure, but on Monday it became apparent that the injury was more serious as the club announced he will miss "several weeks."

"We have to assume that Naby won't be available for us for the first games of the season," Werner said.

Guinea international Keita joined Bremen on a free transfer from Liverpool in June. He only managed 13 games for the English Premier League club last season, in part because of injuries.

against the likes of France or Sweden, there's always that hope.

And there's hope that the international stage will help push federations to invest in more for the teams that don't traditionally have support.

"A lot of federations are slowly getting into the trend of being better," South Africa forward Thembi Kgatana said. "A lot of those girls in those countries have been professional athletes, so they have an idea of what it means to be a professional. And when they go back to the respective national teams, they are able to also help and say, 'Hey, we need this, we need that.' It kind of forces the national

teams to also adapt into the trends of changing and becoming better."

Players are well aware that the World Cup gives them the platform to speak about inequity, human rights and a whole host of social issues.

At the World Cup final four years ago in France, fans chanted "Equal Pay!" in support of the Americans' fight for equitable compensation to their male national team counterparts. The players struck a contract that equalized pay last year.

Now other teams are joining the call for better pay and conditions. A group of international players,

backed by the global players association FIFPRO, called on FIFA to increase prize money and make sure that each player at the tournament gets a share of those funds.

As a result, all 736 players participating at this World Cup will each get at least \$30,000, an amount that increases the further teams advances in the tournament. FIFPRO has vowed to make the money gets to the players.

The overall fund for this World Cup is \$152 million, covering prize money, team preparation and payments to players' clubs. That's a 300% increase over the funds for the 24-team edition in 2019, and 10 times what it was in 2015.

It's hard to say who has had more of an impact on women's soccer in their home countries: Canada's Christine Sinclair or Brazil's Marta. Both players will be making their sixth appearance at the World Cup.



Sinclair, 40, holds the international scoring record, among both men and women, with 190 career goals. She's played in 323 games for Canada.

Marta, 37, a six-time FIFA World Player of the Year, has scored 115 goals for Brazil in 174 appearances. Marta is the tournament's all-time leading scorer with 17 goals and will vie to be the first player to score in six World Cups.

They are not the only players to make a sixth World Cup roster: Nigeria's Onome Ebi, 40, is about a month older than Sinclair and is the oldest in the tournament.



Nigeria women's national team head coach Randy Waldrum, (second right), stands with his players and staff for a prayer ahead of a practice session in Brisbane, Australia. Nigeria will play Canada in their opening Women's World Cup game in Melbourne on July 21. (AP)

RECALL VEHICLES

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'AU\$6-AU\$7 billion for a 12-day sporting event does not represent value for money'

Victoria state withdraws as host of the 2026 Commonwealth Games

MELBOURNE, Australia, July 18, (AP): Australia's Victoria state has withdrawn as host of the 2026 Commonwealth Games because of a blowout in projected costs. Victoria Premier Daniel Andrews on Tuesday said his government last year agreed to host the next edition of the multi-sports event, "but not at any cost." He said his government initially budgeted 2.6 billion Australian dollars (\$1.8 billion) to stage the Games in five regional cities but recent estimates put the potential cost as high as 7 billion Australian dollars (\$4.8 billion). Andrews told a news conference he'd notified Commonwealth Games organizers of his government's decision to pull out of the hosting contract. "Today is not about finding fault with those cost estimates," he said, declining to outline the reasons for the cost

blowouts. "Frankly, AU\$6-AU\$7 billion for a 12-day sporting event, we are not doing that - that does not represent value for money, that is all costs and no benefit." The Commonwealth Games Federation issued a statement saying it was taking advice on its options.

COMMONWEALTH GAMES

The CGF said the estimated cost escalation was mainly due to the regional, multi-city host model and the Victoria government's decision to change plans for venues and include more sports. "We are disappointed that we were only given eight hours' notice and that no consideration was given to dis-

cussing the situation to jointly find solutions prior to this decision being reached by the government," the CGF statement said. The 2026 Games had been scheduled for March 17-29 in the regional centers of Geelong, Bendigo, Ballarat, Gippsland and Shepparton. The state government had promoted the multi-city model as a game changer, with the five regional centers hosting 20 sports and nine fully-integrated Para sports. The government's website had promoted Victoria 2026 as a showcase of "what makes the people of our state tick: our unity, our diversity, our sense of community, our welcoming attitude and our love of sport." Commonwealth Games Australia chief executive Craig Phillips said the government's decision was a

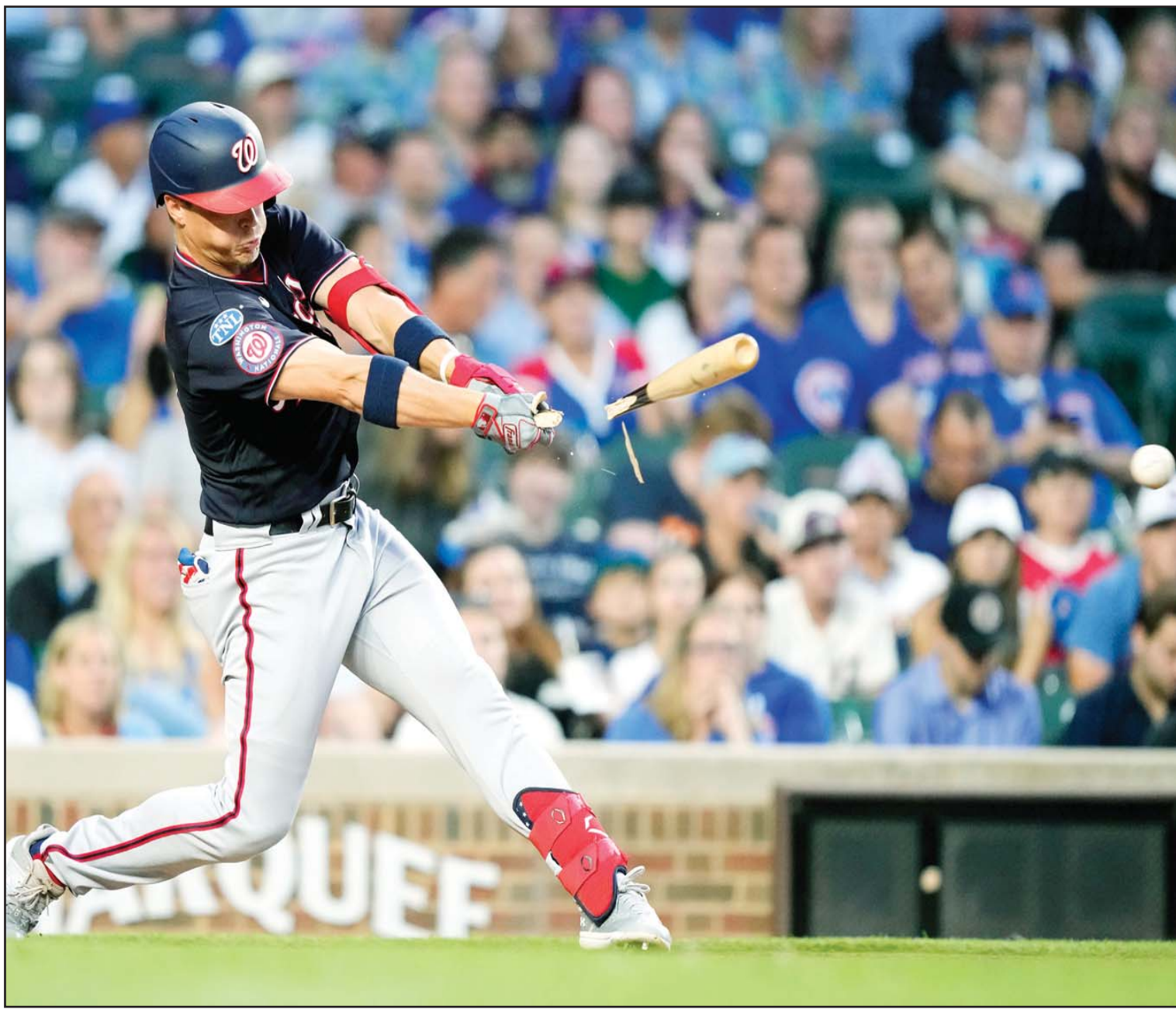
"comprehensive let down" on a concept it had pitched to organizers. "The stated costs overrun, in our opinion, are a gross exaggeration and not reflective of the operational costs presented to the Victoria 2026 organising committee board as recently as June," Phillips said in a statement. "Beyond this, the Victorian Government willfully ignored recommendations to move events to purpose-built (venues) in Melbourne and in fact remained wedded to proceeding with expensive temporary venues in regional Victoria." It's the second time in as many editions there's been issues with hosting the Commonwealth Games. Birmingham stepped in late to host the 2022 Games in England to replace Durban, South Africa.

Taylor hits grand slam as LA Dodgers edge Orioles

Guardians shut out Pirates to halt skid

BALTIMORE, July 18, (AP): Chris Taylor fouled off four straight pitches. Then Bryan Baker threw him one fastball too many.

Taylor hit a grand slam on an 0-2 pitch in the sixth inning, and the Los Angeles Dodgers rallied to beat Baltimore 6-4, snapping the Orioles' eight-game winning streak Monday night. Baltimore remained a game behind Tampa Bay atop the AL East. Los Angeles trailed 4-1 entering the sixth before Will Smith's RBI single. Baltimore starter Grayson Rodriguez left with men on first and second and nobody out, and for a moment it looked like Baker (3-3) might escape the jam when he induced two straight flyouts. But after getting ahead 0-2 on Jason Heyward, Baker issued a walk to load the bases. After two foul balls made the count 0-2 on Taylor, the right-hander threw three fastballs around the plate. Following a couple more fouls, the Los Angeles shortstop hit a drive to center field for his 12th homer of the year.



Washington Nationals' Alex Call breaks his bat on a pitch from Chicago Cubs' starter Drew Smyly during the fourth inning of a baseball game in Chicago. (AP)

BASEBALL

Emmet Sheehan (3-0) allowed four runs in five innings, but the Orioles did not come all that close to scoring on the Los Angeles bullpen. Ryan Brasier worked a hitless ninth for his first save since joining the Dodgers last month. He did allow a walk to Colton Cowser leading off the inning when he was called for a pitch timer violation with the count full. Freddie Freeman finished a homer shy of the cycle for the NL West-leading Dodgers, and his triple to center - which Aaron Hicks couldn't quite hold onto at the wall - started the big sixth inning. Adley Rutschman homered for the Orioles. Ryan Mountcastle opened the scoring for Baltimore with an RBI double in the first. Adam Frazier hit a run-scoring grounder in the second, and Gunnar Henderson followed with an RBI triple to make it 3-0.

Rangers 3, Rays 2
In Arlington, Aroldis Chapman got his first win since being traded to Texas when pinch-runner Josh Smith scored on a wild pitch in the ninth inning by Tampa Bay's Pete Fairbanks.

Chapman (5-2), acquired from Kansas City last month, twice threw the fastest pitch for the Rangers in the Statcast era (since 2015) with 102.8 mph sinkers while striking out the side in the ninth.

All-Star rookie Josh Jung led off the bottom half with a double and was replaced by Smith, who went to third with two outs on Nathaniel Lowe's groundout. A 1-1 fastball from Fairbanks (0-3) to Mitch Garver went past catcher Christian Bethancourt, and Smith scored easily.

Angels 4, Yankees 3, 10 Innings
In Anaheim, Shohei Ohtani tied the score in the seventh inning with his major league-leading 35th home run and pinch-hitter Michael Stefaniak delivered a game-ending

single in the 10th to lift Los Angeles over New York.

The Angels trailed 3-1 when Ohtani hit a two-run drive off Michael King, then made a demonstrative flip of his bat. Ohtani has homered in three straight games for the third time and surpassed his home run total last year.

Ohtani had three hits and increased his batting average to .306. He struck out in the ninth against Nick Ramirez (0-2), winced and grabbed at his back.

The Yankees have lost seven of nine and dropped into sole possession of last place in the AL East. New York (50-45) is 15-20 since Aaron Judge got hurt on June 3.

Guardians 11, Pirates 0
In Pittsburgh, Josh Naylor homered, doubled and drove in three runs, and Cleveland routed Pittsburgh to end a four-game skid.

Naylor's sixth-inning RBI double extended his hitting streak to eight games. He drove a sinker from Yoohan Ramirez over the left-field wall in the seventh, the last of the Guardians' trio of two-run homers.

Mariners 7, Twins 6
In Seattle, Jarrod Kelenic's two-run single capped Seattle's big fifth inning against Minnesota All-Star Sonny Gray, and Eugenio Suárez added a two-run homer in the seventh.

MLB Results/Standings

WASHINGTON, July 18, (AP): Results and standings from the MLB games on Monday.

Cleveland	11	Pittsburgh	0
LA Dodgers	6	Baltimore	4
Texas	3	Tampa Bay	2
Detroit	3	Kansas City	2
Boston	7	Oakland	0
Seattle	7	Minnesota	6
LA Angels	4	NY Yankees	10 inn 3
LA Dodgers	6	Baltimore	4
St. Louis	6	Miami	4
Washington	7	Chicago Cubs	5

American League				
East Division				
W	L	Pct	GB	
Tampa Bay	60	37	.619	-
Baltimore	57	36	.613	1
Toronto	53	41	.564	5-1/2
Boston	51	44	.537	8
New York	50	45	.526	9
Central Division				
W	L	Pct	GB	
Minnesota	48	47	.505	-
Cleveland	46	48	.489	1-1/2
Detroit	42	51	.452	5
Chicago	40	55	.421	8
Kansas City	27	68	.284	21
West Division				
W	L	Pct	GB	
Texas	56	39	.589	-
Houston	52	42	.553	3-1/2
Seattle	47	46	.505	8
Los Angeles	47	48	.495	9
Oakland	25	71	.260	31-1/2

National League				
East Division				
W	L	Pct	GB	
Atlanta	61	31	.663	-
Miami	53	43	.552	10
Philadelphia	51	42	.548	10-1/2
New York	43	50	.462	18-1/2
Washington	38	56	.404	24
Central Division				
W	L	Pct	GB	
Milwaukee	52	42	.553	-
Cincinnati	50	44	.532	2
Chicago	43	50	.462	8-1/2
Pittsburgh	41	53	.436	11
St. Louis	41	53	.436	11
West Division				
W	L	Pct	GB	
Los Angeles	54	39	.581	-
San Francisco	52	41	.559	2
Arizona	52	42	.553	2-1/2
San Diego	44	50	.468	10-1/2
Colorado	36	58	.383	18-1/2



Los Angeles Dodgers' Will Smith (16) reacts after fouling a ball off his body during the fourth inning of a baseball game against the Baltimore Orioles in Baltimore as Orioles' catcher Adley Rutschman looks on. (AP)

The Mariners overcame a shaky first few innings on the mound from Logan Gilbert (8-5) to hand Gray his second straight loss and snap the Twins' three-game win streak coming out of the All-Star break.

Red Sox 7, Athletics 0
In Oakland, Connor Wong hit a two-run double and singled in a run for a career-high three RBIs and Boston beat Oakland for its eighth

win in nine games.

Nick Pivetta (6-5) matched his career high with 13 strikeouts over six innings of one-hit relief after replacing lefty opener Brennan Bernardino, who worked two innings. It was Pivetta's ninth career double-digit strike-out game and first of 2023.

Cardinals 6, Marlins 4
In St. Louis, Nolan Arenado drove in four runs, Miles Mikolas threw six solid innings on two days' rest, and St. Louis extended Miami's skid to four games.

Mikolas (6-5) gave up three runs on seven hits in six innings. He threw three perfect innings Friday night against Washington in a game that was halted by rain.

Pinch-hitter Nolan Gorman doubled with two outs in the sixth against reliever Dylan Floro (3-5). Dylan Carlson broke a 3-3 tie with an RBI single, and Arenado followed with a two-run double.

Nationals 7, Cubs 5
In Chicago, Keibert Ruiz went 3 for 3 with a two-run homer and a double as Washington beat Chicago. Jeimer Candelario also launched a two-run drive in his return to the Nationals' lineup.

Ian Happ and Patrick Wisdom each had a two-run homer for the Cubs, who have lost three of four.

MacKenzie Gore (5-7) allowed five runs in 6 1/3 innings to win for only the second time since April. Kyle Finnegan got four outs for his 12th save and first since May 27.

Tigers 3, Royals 2
In Kansas City, Matt Vierling capped a three-run eighth inning with a two-run double, and Detroit sent Kansas City to its ninth loss in 11 games.

Taylor Clarke (1-4) gave up Akil Baddoo's leadoff double, hit Riley Greene with a pitch with two outs and walked Spencer Torkelson.

José Cuas relieved and walked Kerry Carpenter on four pitches, forcing in a run and ending Detroit's 20-inning scoreless streak. Vierling sliced a sinker to the opposite field in right.

Brendan White (2-2) got the win in relief. Alex Lange struck out two in a perfect ninth for his 15th save in 18 chances.

Barkley not happy being tagged
Jacobs and Raiders fail to reach long-term deal

HENDERSON, Nev., July 18, (AP): Josh Jacobs of the Las Vegas Raiders, who led the NFL in rushing last season, failed to reach an agreement on a long-term extension by Monday's deadline, according to two people with knowledge of the situation. Both people spoke to the AP on con-

dition of anonymity. One person was not authorized to speak publicly on the matter and the other because of its sensitivity. The failure of the two sides to reach a deal could prompt Jacob to sit out training camp and perhaps even this season. Jacobs doesn't have anything

to lose financially by missing camp, but he would be forfeiting paychecks by not playing games.

The Raiders placed the franchise tag on Jacobs on March 6, which means he would play on a \$10.1 million deal this season if he returns to the team. The veterans report July 25, and training camp opens the following day.

Jacobs has been clear about his position all along, even saying at one point he would be a "hero turned villain" if forced to play under the tag.



Jacobs

FOOTBALL

He is the latest example of the changing climate for running backs, who have gone from a prominent position of being able to help lead teams to Super Bowl to an expendable spot where workhorse backs are less valued.

Saquon Barkley and the New York Giants failed to reach an agreement on a long-term contract extension by Monday's deadline for franchised players, leaving the star running back with the option of playing for the tag-mandated \$10.1 million salary or maybe taking the season off.

The Giants gave the franchise tag to the 26-year-old Barkley in March, giving the two sides four months to reach an agreement on a new deal by the July 17 deadline at 4 p.m. Talks went down to the wire and an agreement was not reached.

Barkley was not happy being tagged, especially after running for a career-best 1,312 yards and 10 touchdowns and sharing the team lead with 57 receptions last season in what was his second Pro Bowl season.

It was a big reason why New York reached the playoffs for the first time since 2016.

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Spain team poses with their gold medals after winning the team technical final of artistic swimming at the World Swimming Championships in Fukuoka, Japan. (AP)

Sports

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Vingegaard closes in on Tour de France victory

Defending champ extends lead

COMBLOUX, France, July 18, (AP): Defending champion Jonas Vingegaard may have time-trialed his way to a second straight Tour de France victory.

A sensational time trial from Vingegaard on Tuesday saw the overall leader extend his advantage over two-time winner Tadej Pogacar to nearly two minutes with just five stages remaining - including Sunday's largely ceremonial, final procession to Paris.

Vingegaard, who rides for the Jumbo-Visma team, started the day only 10 seconds ahead of Pogacar after little could separate the duo in a fascinating duel over the last two weeks.

However, when it came down to a direct head-to-head battle, Vingegaard was in a class of his own.

The Danish cyclist finished the 22.4-kilometer (14-mile) hilly route from Passy to Combloux 1 minute, 38 seconds ahead of Pogacar. Wout van Aert was third at the end of the 16th stage, 2:51 behind Vingegaard.

The 26-year-old Vingegaard now leads Pogacar by 1:48 overall and it will take something equally sensational from the Slovenian cyclist to wrest the yellow jersey from his rival. Adam Yates moved into third

overall, almost nine minutes behind Vingegaard.

Riders face a mammoth mountain stage, the hardest of the race, on Wednesday. The last of four climbs of the 17th stage is a 28.4-kilometer (17.6-mile) slog up Col de la Loze, before sweeping downhill to the Courchevel ski station which hosts World Cup slalom races.

Tuesday's time trial had been seen as a potential tiebreaker but few could have imagined such a large gap.

Pogacar himself put in an impressive performance and flew through the first time check 26 seconds up

CYCLING

on the rest of the field. However, Vingegaard - who had rolled down the ramp last - was 16 seconds faster than Pogacar at that point, after just 7.1 kilometers, and had extended that to 30 seconds after 12 kilometers of racing.

Pogacar opted to change from his time-trial bike to a lightweight road bike at the foot of the second-category climb, with 5.3 kilometers remaining, and that helped him on the ascent. But he was unable to match an extraordinary ride from Vingegaard, who could almost see his rival on the approach to the finish line, such was his time gain.



Stage winner and overall leader Denmark's Jonas Vingegaard rides towards the finish line of the sixteenth stage of the Tour de France cycling race, an individual time trial over 22.5 kilometers (14 miles) with start in Passy and finish in Combloux, France. (AP)

Sri Lanka 14 for no loss on day three

Shakeel double hundred has Pakistan in command

GALLE, Sri Lanka, July 18, (AP): Saud Shakeel became the first Pakistan batter to make a double hundred in Sri Lanka as the visitors took control of the first test after making 461 on Tuesday.

Behind by 149 runs on the first innings, Sri Lanka reduced that to 135 when it was 14 for no loss by stumps on day three.

Shakeel was stranded on 208 not out, his second century in two tests, when Pakistan was all out after tea.

In six tests since his debut in December, he has scored a double hundred, a hundred and five half-centuries. He has a Bradmanesque average of 98.5.

CRICKET

Shakeel was the mainstay of Pakistan's innings by stitching valuable partnerships with the lower middle order and the tail after the top order collapsed.

At 101-5, a first-innings lead was the last thing on Pakistan's mind, but Shakeel added 177 runs with Agha Salman to rescue his side. The partnership was a record for Pakistan for the sixth wicket against Sri Lanka, improving on the 173-run stand between Sarfaraz Ahmed and Asad Shafiq in Dubai in 2017.

"When I went in to bat, I wanted to attack," Shakeel said. "If I had tried to be defensive we would have got bowled out for 150. That's the reason I attacked and was able to take the game deep."

"We have been working to play this kind of attacking cricket back in the camp at home. The coaching staff backed me. Pretty pleased with the effort."

With an unorthodox batting technique, Shakeel used his feet expertly to the spinners, punishing the loose balls

Australia recall Hazlewood, retain for 4th Ashes Test

MANCHESTER, England, July 18, (AP): Australia fast bowler Josh Hazlewood will return to try and help them secure the Ashes series against England at Old Trafford this week with a match to spare.

Captain Pat Cummins also said on Tuesday the top five batters will remain but they were considering not playing rookie spinner Todd Murphy.

That could mean a recall of first-choice allrounder Cameron Green, who was fit after missing the third test at Headingley with a hamstring issue.

Mitch Marsh filled in for Green and hit a brilliant century to pose a selection headache for the selectors.

Australia will confirm its side at the toss on Wednesday. Even after losing at Headingley by three wickets, Australia still leads the series 2-1.

Scott Boland will make way for Hazlewood after taking no wickets in Leeds. Boland has only two wickets in the series from the opening win at Edgbaston.

Hazlewood has eight wickets after also playing in the second win at Lord's. But he was rested from Headingley to manage his workload.

Retaining the top five means David Warner will continue opening. Warner is averaging 23.5 in six innings but has contributed to opening stands of 61, 73 and 63 with Usman Khawaja.

"(Warner) has been going really well," Cummins said. "I thought at Lord's, he was really impressive. Last

week, like many of us, he probably didn't contribute as much as he would have liked with the bat.

"He's been out there over the last couple of days putting in a lot of work, but I think this tour he has shown a lot of good signs and hasn't quite kicked on to make that big score. Some of those innings he's played under really tough circumstances has made it easy for (Steve) Smith to come in and score runs, or the like."

Australia has not gone into a test without a frontline slow bowler since January 2012 but with Nathan Lyon injured and Murphy considered more dispensable, it was considering a significant change to the balance of the side. Playing Green and Marsh will shore up the batting but diminish their options in the field. An all-seam attack will have to be complemented by Travis Head's spin.

Murphy bowled only 9.3 overs for one wicket at Headingley.

"It's all really conditions based," Cummins said. "I would have loved to bowl him a bit more but there wasn't a heap of overs in the game, the ball seemed to swing and seam a little bit, so that's certainly something to weigh up this week."

It rained in Manchester most of Tuesday and was to clear early Wednesday. But rain was forecast to return on Saturday.

and forcing the Sri Lankans to spread the field during his stand with Salman.

Ramesh Mendis made the breakthrough in the rain-affected morning session when he had Salman stumped for 83.

Batting with the tail, Shakeel changed gears, quite content to farm the strike from the tail and the tactic worked.

After lunch, Shakeel extended the seventh-wicket stand with Noman Ali to 52 runs. He added a match defining 94 runs with Naseem Shah for the ninth wicket. Naseem's contribution

was just six runs.

"When we were eight wickets down and Naseem Shah joined me, he said that there's a chance for me to go for the double hundred," Shakeel said. "Lot of credit for him for backing me and not letting me panic."

Sri Lanka was sloppy in the field as Shakeel was dropped twice, on 93 by Nishan Madushka at leg gully and on 139 by Angelo Mathews at deep mid-wicket.

The left-handed batsman reached his double hundred cutting Dhanan-

jaya de Silva behind square, bisecting the fielders for four.

When last man Abrar Ahmed was dismissed for 10 with the total on 461, Shakeel was unbeaten after a marathon innings lasting for 506 minutes, in which he faced 361 balls and hit 19 boundaries.

Only two overseas players - West Indies' Chris Gayle (333) and England's Joe Root (228) - have higher innings in Galle than Shakeel.

Mendis finished with a five-wicket haul, his fifth in 13 tests, while Prabath Jayasuriya claimed three wickets. Overall, the Sri Lanka bowlers struggled against the clever batsmanship of Shakeel.

Sri Lanka's openers faced 3.4 overs without trouble before bad light forced an early end to play. But they have a huge ask at their hands on day four.

"It's an important day in the test match," Sri Lanka coach Chris Silverwood said. "We have to come out and put our best foot forward."

Logano finishes second

Truex wins at New Hampshire track for first time in 30 races

LOUDON, N.H., July 18, (AP): Martin Truex Jr. had just chewed up the competition to win at the same New Hampshire track where his dad won a regional stock car series race in 1994 when he clutched a 22-pound live lobster given to the winner and chomped on a claw. Joey Logano finished second. Kyle Larson, Kevin Harvick and Brad Keselowski rounded out the top five.

Maybe Truex can save the feast for a meal on the saltwater fishing boat the veteran driver says he's buying this week. Truex had long wanted one - when he didn't tag along as a kid with his mom and little brother to the race-track, he worked on his dad's clamming boat - but the pull of another day at the race shop or the commitments of long NASCAR weekends always made him put it off.

Not now.

Sounds perfect for retirement. Truex has few boxes left to check in

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his career. The latest came in yet another masterful Monday matinee when he won at New Hampshire Motor Speedway for the first time in 30 career Cup tries. The win did more than earn him a big meal - it triggered melancholy memories from his childhood at the same track where he watched his dad share space with some of racing's greats.

New Hampshire was where Truex saw Dale Earnhardt tinker with his carburetor under the hood of his car. It's where Truex got his first taste of the sights, smells and sounds of a NASCAR garage.

It's where a few hours after the 43-year-old Truex led 254 laps in the No. 19 Toyota and won his third Cup race of the season, he pondered just how much longer he wanted to continue his NASCAR career.

Team owner Joe Gibbs wondered why Truex would give it up.

Time is ticking on a decision. Truex announced last June that he would return for 2023 and he hasn't made up his mind yet on 2024. Gibbs needs



Martin Truex Jr., celebrates his win in the Crayon 301 NASCAR Cup Series auto race at New Hampshire Motor Speedway, in Loudon, N.H. (AP)

an answer. So do the sponsors and all other interested parties affected by Truex's decision.

Truex, the 2017 NASCAR Cup Series champion, said he was close to choosing. He is still driving at an elite level and has stamped himself again a serious contender for the Cup championship. But the choice is much more complicated for Truex than making it about simply wins and losses.

Truex led with 15 laps left when JGR teammate Christopher Bell, last year's New Hampshire winner, smacked the wall to bring out the eighth caution.

It really didn't matter for Truex. He pulled away off the restart with nine laps left and could taste victory - and soon enough, the lobster that traditionally goes to the winner.

There was no such tasty prize in 1994 when the elder Truex won at New Hampshire. The Truex family went to the track so often that younger brother - and fellow driver Ryan Truex - tweeted a family photo of the kid brothers and mom in the grandstands.

About as soon as Truex could race at New Hampshire, he won. Truex had just turned 20 when he won a regional stock car series race at the track. Pretty cool. Even better? His father finished fifth in the same race.

'Budget 'under control' a year ahead of 2024 Games'

PARIS, July 18, (AP): The operating budget for the Paris Olympics is "under control," the president of the organizing committee said Tuesday.

With one year to go before the opening ceremony, organizing com-

OLYMPICS

mittee president Tony Estanguet said partnership deals are on track, with 22 new sponsors joining since the start of the year.

"Just recently, we passed the 1 billion euro (\$1.1 billion) mark in secured revenue from our partners,"

Estanguet said. "This is unprecedented. It's obviously the first time that a sporting event in France has raised so much money from companies and partnerships."

Estanguet said the money in investment does not include "a new premium partner with whom we're in talks."

Paris organizers are still negotiating a partnership contract for the 2024 Games with luxury group LVMH.

The organizing committee, known as COJO, has an operating budget of about 4.4 billion euros (\$4.5 billion). Estanguet insisted that 96% of

the budget is funded by the private sector, including the IOC, partner companies, as well as the ticketing office and licensing. He added that organizers aim to secure 92% of the budget by the end of the year.

"We continue with enthusiasm and serenity in a bid to achieve this goal," Estanguet said, adding that ticket sales have also been successful, with 6.8 million tickets already sold.

The overall budget for the Paris Olympics, including the cost of building and renovating venues, is about 8 billion euros (\$8.2 billion).



Pakistan's Saud Shakeel plays a shot as Sri Lankan wicketkeeper Sadeera Samarawickrama watches during the third day of the first cricket Test match between Sri Lanka and Pakistan in Galle, Sri Lanka. (AP)