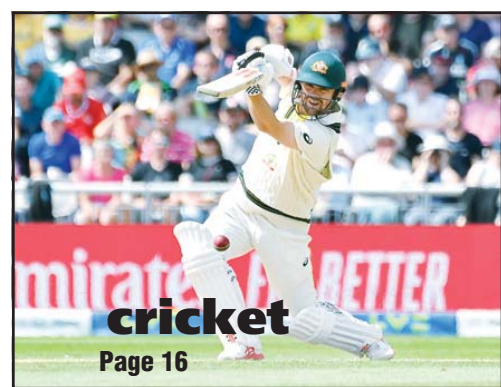




baseball Page 15



cricket Page 16

CBK SETS 46 TRANSACTIONS THAT NEED PRIOR APPROVAL Kuwait bans virtual currency payment



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 arrive in Saudi Arabia on Wednesday.

Amiri Diwan photo of the GCC consultative meeting is due to address mutual issues such as boosting inter-Gulf cooperation and integration in various spheres.

KUWAIT CITY, July 19: The supervisory authorities -- the Central Bank of Kuwait, the Capital Markets Authority, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, and the Insurance Regulatory Unit -- have issued circulars on supervision on the issue of virtual assets as a tool/means of payment or recognizing them as a decentralized currency in Kuwait, in addition to ab-

Circulars issued

News watch

TOKYO: Chinese President Xi Jinping said on Tuesday that his country will work with Algeria to carry forward the traditional friendship and push for greater development of China-Algeria comprehensive strategic partnership.

During his meeting with Algerian President Abdelmadjid Tebboune in Beijing, Xi also underscored the importance of the two sides supporting each other on issues of core interests, the ministry said in a statement. (KUNA)

THE HAGUE: Appeals judges at the International Criminal Court ruled Tuesday that an investigation into the Philippines' so-called "war on drugs" can resume, rejecting Manila's objections to the case going ahead at the global court.

The court's investigation was suspended in late 2021 after the Philippines said it was already probing the same allegations and argued that the ICC - a court of last resort - therefore didn't have jurisdiction.

The Philippines launched its appeal after judges in January agreed with the court's chief prosecutor, Karim Khan, that deferring the investigation to Manila was "not warranted."

staining from conducting transactions whereby virtual currency is used as a payment instrument/method within the scope of this prohibition, reports Al-Jarida daily.

The circulars, which were issued in accordance with the conclusions of the study prepared by the National Committee for Combating Money Laundering and Financing of Terrorism, regarding the required commitment in the field of implementing Recommendation No 15 of the international requirements issued by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), forbids dealing with these assets as a means of investment.

Refrain

The circulars say it is necessary to refrain from providing this type of services to any of the customers, or to issue or grant any natural or legal person inside Kuwait a license to provide virtual asset services as a business for his benefit, or on behalf of others, noting that no licenses have previously been issued in this regard.

Meanwhile, the informed sources told the daily that virtual assets are a form of currency trading, and it is a digital currency, as it is the closest analogy to the financial situation that exists in virtual assets.

The sources emphasized that customers are constantly aware of the risks that may result from dealing in virtual assets, which are carried out through transactions carried out outside the State of Kuwait by customers, especially encrypted currencies, because they do not have a legal status and are not issued or supported by any government.

It is not linked to any asset or issuer, and the prices of these assets are always driven by speculation that exposes them to a sharp decline.

Risky

The sources indicated that the local regulatory authorities have warned and carried out awareness campaigns to reduce the risks of dealing or investing in virtual assets or so-called virtual currencies, the most famous of which are "Bitcoin, Ethereum, Dogecoin and others" in light of the continued increase in calls to invest in and deal with these virtual assets which are highly risky and have various negative consequences for dealers, due to their nature and sharp fluctuation in their prices, in addition to not being subject to any supervisory or regulatory authority in the State of Kuwait.

Meanwhile, the Central Bank of Kuwait has specified 46 transactions and procedures related to companies, banks and entities subject to its supervision, whose transactions may not be completed at the Ministry of Commerce and Industry without referring to it and obtaining its approval prior to its execution, reports Al-Qabas daily.

Continued on Page 5

Opinion

Daylight erases night's sweet talk of Government Program

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

SOME historic books narrate that one of the Abbasid caliphs, who wanted to be entertained, requested a famous singer called Abu Ishaq Al-Mawsili to perform for him.

Al-Mawsili accepted the request but in return, he asked for a house. The caliph said, "We gave you two houses". He then asked for a farm, and the caliph said, "You have two farms". After that Al-Mawsili performed, not forgetting that the last thing he asked for was some of the slave girls. The Caliph responded to his request.

The next morning, Al-Mawsili went to the palace in order to pick what the caliph granted him. He said, "Oh caliph, I am here to collect what we had agreed on last night."

The caliph replied, "Yesterday, your singing entertained us, and we reciprocated by giving you good words. In short, we made you happy as you made us happy, and we told you what makes you happy. However, the night's sweet talk has been erased by the daylight". After that, Al-Mawsili left the palace empty-handed.

Unfortunately, this story applies to the Government Program that was discussed by the National Assembly this week, as if it contained many promises and beautiful projects on paper, which needs years to be implemented. That is if it does not face obstacles as usual due to the deceptive relationship between the two authorities, and the confrontation, which began before the announcement of the program, with the resignation of two ministers, and the announcement of some parliamentarians to ask questions that indicate an expected debate between them and the Council of Ministers.

Those who followed Monday's session realized the extent of the current Council of Ministers' inability to implement that program. This is due to several reasons, the most important of which is its loss of the ability to secure financial liquidity for these projects, as well as its lack of clear plans.

As we said yesterday, it could also be nothing but a new formulation of slogans put forth by other governments, and they went without achieving the bare minimum of it, because they collided with the National Assembly and the parliamentarians who are not comforted by the singing of the ministers.

From 1992 until today, the government's programs have not differed from one another, except in changing the formula, or cutting paragraphs from previous programs and pasting them in the statement submitted to the National Assembly.

As for the practice, it is the same. However, day after day it becomes worse, because the method has not changed. The people have become convinced about the popular proverb "a snowball's chance in Hell" because they have lived for 20 years on unfulfilled promises.

We will not repeat the state of poor infrastructure, or restrict joy, as if Kuwait is a dungeon containing many prohibitions that push people to migrate abroad on special occasions and holidays.

A testimony to that is what His Highness the Prime Minister said about the program, and that the government took into account "ways to improve the standard of living and meet social needs, foremost of which is building the Kuwaiti citizen, as it is the focus of the government's work program, through housing, educational, health, entertainment and other issues that fulfill the aspirations of the loyal Kuwaiti people, and enhance their survival and improve their quality of life."

This was what was said in the programs of all previous governments for the last 30 years, but nothing has been achieved from it. Therefore, the people indeed heard the entertaining government's words, but all that is like a snowball's chance in Hell.

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Agency raises alarm

Aid cut in funding crunch

BEIRUT, July 19, (AP) - The United Nations food agency said Tuesday it will reduce monthly cash aid for 120,000 Syrian refugees living in two camps in Jordan because of what it described as an "unprecedented funding crisis."

Jordan is a country of 11 million people and hosts some 1.3 million refugees from Syria. Most of them live in towns and cities across the kingdom, while several tens of thousands have settled in two camps - Zaatari and Azraq. Starting in August, the monthly cash allowance for camp residents will be reduced from \$32 to \$21, the World Food Program said.

Jordanian officials have warned that the kingdom cannot fill the gap left by international donors.

The announcement by the World Food Program comes after the agency said last week it would gradually cut off 50,000 refugees in Jordan from its assistance altogether. The program had initially covered 465,000 refugees.

U.N. agencies and international humanitarian organizations for years have struggled to reach budgetary requirements for their assistance in Syria and for Syrian refugees in neighboring countries due to donor fatigue, the economic impact of the coronavirus pandemic and Ukraine's war with Russia.

Though Syrian President Bashar Assad's government was able to reclaim large swaths of territory with the help of allies Russia and Iran, the crisis in the war-torn country remains in a stalemate.

"As funding dries up, our hands are tied," said Alberto Correia Mendes, the WFP representative for Jordan.

The agency said that even with the current cuts, it still faces a funding shortfall of some \$41 million and may have to impose additional

measures. Funding cuts have also impacted millions of Syrian refugees in Lebanon and Turkey, where anti-refugee rhetoric and calls for mass deportations have surged in light of economic and political turmoil.

Syria's uprising turned civil war, now in its 13th year, has killed nearly half a million people and displaced half of its prewar population of 23 million.

Jordanian Foreign Minister Aymaan Safadi spoke about the kingdom's inability to fill in funding gaps at this year's annual donor conference on Syria in Brussels last June. Last week, he warned again that "refugees will suffer."

"This is not on Jordan. It is on those who are cutting support," he said. "Providing dignified lives to refugees is a global responsibility. It is not ours alone as host country."

Dominik Bartsch, the U.N. refugee agency's representative to Jordan, said the aid rollback has forced agencies to look only to the most vulnerable families, leaving many in need without assistance.

"There is an imminent risk that the situation is sliding back into a humanitarian crisis with serious consequences for refugees and host communities," Bartsch said.

Also:

BEIRUT: Israeli airstrikes hit the area of Damascus early Wednesday, Syrian state media reported.

Syrian state-run news agency SANA reported that Syria's air defenses had shot down "most of" the missiles. It said in a statement, citing military sources, that two soldiers were injured and there were "some material losses" from the airstrikes.

Israeli authorities did not comment immediately.



A man walks past the rubble of a demolished al-Siraji Mosque in Basra, Iraq, on Monday, July 17, 2023. An official said the old mosque would be replaced with a modern, better-designed one that would not impede traffic flow. (AP)

Demolition of Basra minaret stirs anger

BASRA, July 19, (AP) - For three centuries, the al-Siraji Mosque, with its minaret fashioned from weathered bricks and its pinnacle inlaid with blue ceramic tiles, was a distinctive feature of the city of Basra in southern Iraq.

In recent years, it was one of the few tourist attractions in the oil-rich but neglected city, although locals complained that the minaret jutted out into the street, snarling traffic.

In the early hours Friday morning, the 11-meter-high (33-foot-high) minaret was razed to the ground, with the governor of Basra attending the demolition, igniting a wave of social media backlash among advocates for the preservation of Iraq's cultural heritage.

Heritage sites in Iraq, home to multiple civilizations going back more than six millennia, have been hard hit by looting and damage over the decades of conflict

Continued on Page 5

Day by Day

WHAT is most dangerous in the world today is the governments selling illusions to the people - promises of undertaking huge and impressive projects. To add insult to injury some people drum support for these illusion at every given opportunity including at forums, but at the end of the day they realize that they were day dreaming.

Undoubtedly what is being said makes people happy but in reality as time passes by they realize the beautiful slogans have vanished in thin air.

... Yet tomorrow is another day.

Zahed Matar



OPINION

OTHER VOICES



Yulia Movchan, the wife of a Ukrainian serviceman who was killed in battle with Russian troops, shows photos of her husband in an art studio in Kyiv, Ukraine, Saturday, June 3, 2023. For some Ukrainian women, painting has become a form of therapy to help them cope with the loss of their partners who died in the war. In a sunlit art studio in Kyiv, they create artworks depicting their grief. (AP)

Therapy to cope with loss

Pastel blues paint over the pain, but the crimson reds of blood remain

In a sunlit art studio in Kyiv filled with easels and canvases, Iryna Farion puts the finishing touches on an oil painting with a predominantly dark color palette in shades of blue and brown.

The artwork depicts two intertwined trees held together by their roots, as though in embrace, and a radiant yellow sun shining against a moody blue background.

"I feel like it's me and my husband, who was killed in the war," Farion says of the trees. "They are like two souls, like two hearts, like one body."

Farion is among thousands of Ukrainian women who have lost their partners in the war Russia launched against their homeland nearly 17 months ago. Tens of thousands of Ukrainians have been killed on the battlefield - most of them men who once led ordinary lives before dropping everything to join the fight for their country.

Farion's husband, Oleksandr Alimov, died in December after being shot on the Donetsk front line. Overwhelmed with grief, she says she has found some consolation in painting alongside other women who lost their partners on the battlefield.

The women are part of an art therapy project called "Alive. True Stories of Love," which seeks to honor the memory of those who died while helping the women cope with the pain of their loss.

Alimov voluntarily joined the army in the early days of the war after working as an IT specialist for a well-known company. "I don't want us to live in a country where we are not free," Farion says her husband told her before going off to war. The couple had been together for 10 years.

She still wears her wedding ring, while his hangs around her neck on a chain. "I can't take off the ring yet," she says. "It feels better for me this way."

On a recent day, Farion visited the art studio with her friend Olesia Skalska, whose husband was killed in January. The two women initially met at a cemetery, a place where Ukrainian widows commonly find solace in each other's company and form friendships bound by shared grief.

Skalska's husband, Roman Skalskyi, 26, also voluntarily joined the military without prior combat experience.

"Of course, I supported him because he went to defend me and his whole family," she says.

The couple was supposed to celebrate their first wedding anniversary in June. But instead, Skalska works on a painting - the only place where they can be together again.

"A man is carrying a girl across a field of wheat that has been cut, and I imagine that he is carrying her so that she does not prick her legs," says Skalska, 24, describing her artwork.

Her voice occasionally breaks into sobs as she speaks. "To others, I may seem like an ordinary person. But no one knows what's happening inside," she says. "It's impossible to escape."

The art project was launched in January by Olena Sokalska, who lost her husband years ago in a car accident and says she understands the emotional journey of widowhood.

When she spoke to AP reporters in June, approximately 40 widows were participating in the art project.

"It's called 'Alive' because the girls should feel alive since they all feel lifeless right now," she explains. "When you paint, you only



Iryna Farion holds a photo depicting her with her husband Oleksandr Alimov, who was killed in a battle with Russian troops, in an art studio in Kyiv. (AP)

think about that. And I thought these women should have some time for themselves."

The project is free to join and local artists volunteer their time to guide the women as they express their sorrows on canvas.

A Facebook community for the project has over 1,000 participants. "And the community keeps growing," says Sokalska, noting the trag-

edy of what that means to many.

"They find themselves in a complete void. It's like a black hole and nobody truly understands what a woman who has lost her husband feels," she says.

Oksana Kordina and her husband, Andrii Volkov, had been married for almost 10 years when the war began. On the morning of February 24th, 2022, the day Russia invaded Ukraine, Volkov gathered his belongings and got dressed. Oksana prepared a first-aid kit for him. He walked to the military office as Kyiv reeled with shock from the invasion.

He died nine days later defending the capital.

More than a year later, Kordina says she still has not recovered emotionally. "I'm not a creative person, but I realized I needed to try something," she says, explaining her decision to try painting.

"This pain is impossible to explain or convey," she says.

Recently, she rediscovered a lake near Kyiv that her husband had loved dearly. The couple had gone there together before, but she had forgotten the way and struggled to find it for a long time. Now she visits it regularly.

Her painting depicts the lake surrounded by green trees, reflecting the soft light of dawn. A ginger cat painted in the left corner of the canvas appears lonely and contemplative against the backdrop of nature.

"I walk to the lake and dream just like this cat," she says. "And it feels like he's there with me." (AP)

editor's choice



Prayer Timings

Fajr 03:28 Asr 15:29
 Sunrise .. 05:00 Maghrib .. 18:48
 Zohr 11:54 Isha 20:17

Local

Expected weather for the next 24 hours:

By Day: Very hot with light to moderate freshening at times northwesterly wind with speeds of 12-42 km/h with a chance for rising dust over open areas.

Weather

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

Station	Max Exp	Min Rec
Kuwait City	49	37

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

148 contractors caught violating sun ban

39,800 families benefit from govt assistance in first 6 months of '23

KUWAIT CITY, July 19: The semi-annual report issued by the Ministry of Social Affairs for the current year showed 39.8 thousand families benefited from the ministry's assistance during the first six months of this year, divided into 21 different categories, reports Al-Qabas daily.

This comes within the framework of the continuous efforts exerted by the government to support the needy Kuwaiti families and ensure that social assistance reaches those who deserve it, says the daily.

Abdulaziz Al-Mutairi, the Acting Undersecretary of the ministry said the measures recently taken by the ministry, keeping pace with technological development and activating the mechanization system and linking with relevant government agencies, collectively contributed to activating electronic auditing, updating data of those who



Al-Mutairi

are eligible for social assistance continuously and disbursing assistance to the beneficiaries only.

Al-Mutairi added the ministry from time to time, through its concerned departments, runs a check on the files, updates data, checks the financial deficit files, and in the event of a change appearing, the disbursement is stopped, and the parties are summoned, to clarify the conditions and take decisions through the specialized committees.

According to the recent report, there are 21 categories to which the state provides social assistance. During the first half of this year, 119,899,000 dinars were spent, the highest of which was spent on the "housewives" category, followed by the old age category and divorced women. Social assistance also includes disbursement for orphans.

Kuwaiti 3035 unmarried women received 7,250,000 dinars in aid during the aforementioned period and 682 widows received 1,329,000 dinars. The aid also supports 190 cases which fall within the the financial disabil-

ity category, who were paid 729,000 dinars, in addition to 2,471 million to deserving patients.

□ □ □

148 warnings issued: The Public Authority for Manpower (PAM) revealed that the inspection team tasked to implement the ban on work under the direct heat of the Sun during summer issued 148 warnings to the owners of several work locations, as per the decision prohibiting work in open spaces from June 1 to Aug 31, reports Al-Anba daily.

In a press statement, PAM stated that no violations were recorded during the re-inspection of sites where violations were uncovered earlier; while 132 sites met the conditions and are committed to the decision. It then reiterated the call for all concerned employers to fully abide by the decision to ensure the safety of workers and avoid legal problems.

PAM added the inspection team will continue checking open working sites in all governorates until Aug 31 to ensure strict compliance with the decision.

British minister visits Kuwait

'Invest in UK technology field'

By Abdullah Al-Enezi

KUWAIT CITY, July 19, (KUNA): A visiting British official has declared that London aspires to see Kuwait expand its enterprises in the United Kingdom to the technology field.

Lord Dominic Johnson, Britain's Minister of State in the Department for Business and Trade, indicated in an exclusive interview with Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) that upon this aspiration, his current mission in the country mainly aims at bolstering mutual cooperation and partnerships to cover environmentally friendly technology.

Lord Johnson, in the interview of KUNA, shed much light on the existing business and investment cooperation between the State of Kuwait and the UK, underlining that the two countries are celebrating the 70th anniversary of opening Kuwait Investment Office (KIO) in London.

The KIO, one of the oldest of this level in the UK, has invested in many vital sectors, namely real estate and infrastructure, said the British minister of state.

In fact, the Kuwaiti office was the first of its kind to be established worldwide, Lord Johnson affirmed, adding that many states took lessons from the Kuwaiti business experience.

Shifting to other aspects of the historical Kuwait-British relationship, dating back to early times of the past century, Lord Johnson said these ties have not been restricted to investments, also involving the arenas of defense and cyber security.

Moreover, the two countries share a joint vision with regard of regional and international affairs.

Kuwait and Britain regularly examine



Lord Dominic Johnson

issues of joint concern within framework of the steering committee that meets every six months for this purpose.

Regarding the UK-GCC negotiations on the free trade zone, third round of which were held in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, on March 23, Lord Johnson said the fourth round would be organized next week, noting that the planned talks would cover information security and transfer of commercial data, and not only issues related to exports and imports.

He indicated that the UK and the GCC would examine hurdles facing the mutual cooperation and facilitating personnel's movement among the involved countries.

In conclusion, Lord Johnson expressed satisfaction at presence of many Kuwaitis in the UK for tourism and education and urged the Kuwaiti citizens who have not visited his country to go there to explore the nation's landmarks.

Palestinians laud Kuwait support

We stand by brothers everywhere: Al-Hajri



KUNA photo

Charge d' Affaires of the Kuwaiti Embassy in Jordan counselor Mubarak Al-Hajri honored by Jenin Province.

RAMALLAH, July 19, (KUNA): A number of Palestinian officials commended Wednesday Kuwait's supportive role to their people and cause.

During several meetings and activities held since the arrival of the Kuwait Embassy delegation to Jordan and non-resident to Palestine, the officials stressed the deep-rooted ties between the two sisterly countries.

The delegation includes charge d'affaires of the Kuwaiti Embassy in Jordan counselor Mubarak Al-Hajri and societies' official Mishal Al-Mutairi who met with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas.

Abbas briefed the Kuwaiti officials on the latest situation in the Palestinian territories and the Israeli occupation force's practices.

Secretary General of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization Hussein Al-Sheikh met the delegation in his office in Ramallah, and expressed Palestine's appreciation to Kuwait, His Highness the Amir, the government and Kuwaitis for their continued support to Palestinian people.

The delegation also met with Palestinian Authority General Intelligence Services chief Majed Faraj who described the visit as important.

He said in a statement that the visit came to boost the historical ties between the two countries, and discuss means of promoting cooperation and enhancing relations between the two sides.

Kuwait's have great positions in the hearts of Palestinians, he said, referring to continued coordination and consultation between the two countries.

In addition, the delegation held a meeting with Secretary General of the Central Committee of Fatah Movement Jibril Rajoub in Jericho and its governor Jihad Abu Assal as well as Prime Minister's Advisor to the Arab and Islamic Funds Minister Nasser Qatami.

In a statement to KUNA after a meeting between the two sides, Qatami said Kuwait has been backing Palestine's cause politically and financially.

Shared

Qatami and Governor of Jenin Akram Rajoub as well as some officials shared the residents of Rummanah village last Monday unveiling the memorial to the martyrs of Kuwait and laying the cornerstone for the Martyr Sheikh Fahd Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah medical center project in the village, under the auspices of President Abbas.

This is a message that show loyalty to Kuwait, which is also loyal to Palestinians, he said.

Rummanah Council Chief Hasan Subeihat told KUNA that the center was named after Sheikh Fahad Al-Sabah in remembrance of his struggle and participation in battles against Israeli occupation forces in the north of Palestine.

He said the center's area is 1,500 square meters, and it is an initiative of the residents of the village.

He lauded sacrifices of martyr Sheikh Fahad Al-Sabah for the sake of Palestine.

Meanwhile, head of Wafaa Capacity Building and Micro-finance Mohasen Atawneh told KUNA that the Kuwaiti delegation's visit was briefed closely to the Kuwaiti-supported projects carried out in Palestine, within the framework of improving the situation of the needy.

Kuwait stands side by side with brothers everywhere and in Palestine in particular, he said, adding that President Abbas and officials he met stressed the Kuwaiti pivotal role in backing Palestine's cause.

Furthermore, Al-Hajri stressed that the visit came in difficult circumstances Palestinian people are facing, especially in Jenin, which is subject to repeated attacks by the Israeli occupation forces.

He noted that he carried a message to the Palestinian people that "you are not alone and the State of Kuwait stands by you".

Helping

The State of Kuwait has always been helping and supporting "brothers everywhere, Palestinians in particular", said Al-Hajri.

"Palestine has been present and well-seated in the minds and hearts of the Kuwaiti people, as well as in our curricula, newspapers and discussions," Counselor Mubarak Al-Hajri said to KUNA.

Al-Hajri said the visit came amidst tough circumstances experienced by the Palestinian people, especially in Jenin Province, where people have been under recurrent attacks by Israeli occupation forces.

He added that the tour mainly aimed at delivering a message of Kuwait's unwavering and persistent support to the defenseless Palestinian people.

Speaking highly of the visit as a sign of deep relations between Kuwait and Palestine, the diplomat quoted the Palestinian leader as underscoring Kuwait's central and significant backing to the Palestinian cause.

The Kuwaiti diplomats also met with Secretary of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) Hussein Al-Sheikh and Prime Minister's Advisor for Arab and Islamic Funds Nasser Qattami, who appreciated Kuwait's relentless solidarity with the Palestinian people and their just issue. A monument remembering Kuwaiti martyrs, who were killed while defending Palestine against Israeli occupation forces, had been erected in Rummanah Village in Jenin Province.

A medical center, named after Kuwaiti martyr Sheikh Fahad Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, is also to be launched soon in Rummanah Village in Jenin Province.

Rummanah Council Chief Hasan Subeihat told KUNA that the center was named after Sheikh Fahad Al-Sabah in remembrance of his struggle and participation in battles against Israeli occupation forces in the north of Palestine.

Other Voices

Scandalous state at airport

By Ahmad alsarraf

The remarks made by Representative Janan Bushehri a few days ago in the National Assembly aroused the attention of many stakeholders. She said she had previously warned, during the annulled council, about the way the Minister of Works dealt with the new international airport building project, and that she had drawn the minister's attention to the fact that there were files on her desk that required attention, but the minister chose not to take any action on them, which only worsened the situation at the Kuwait airport.

She said that it was assumed that this project would provide job opportunities for young people, and it does not seem that any of this will happen. It was also assumed that the new airport would stimulate the economy and air traffic, and increase the state's revenues from this movement and transit, but its fate would not be better than the fate of any other government project.

Representative Bushehri added, according to an expert in the security of civil airports, the security of the new Kuwait International Airport has been breached, and there is no guarantee that it will be safe, when the time for its operation comes, if and when that happens.

Through my research on this matter and my communication with those who have experience and knowledge of civil airport security, I

was assured of the validity of the accusations and warnings received by MP Bushehri, and those concerned with the matter supported her. Penetrating airports in Kuwait is not only easy, but it actually exists and is being practiced, and it is not new!

For example, Building No. 4 or T4 was hacked for a reason due to the fact that the company that implemented the project used Access Control, which is of poor quality, even if it was produced by an internationally known company, and it was chosen for the low price factor, without regard to the quality factor. A specialized company was able to hack the secret code number and imitate it, and all that within less than a minute, through a Chinese device whose price does not exceed thirty dollars.

The authority responsible and entrusted with the implementation of these projects is the Directorate-General of Civil Aviation, but it did not take into consideration, and within its priorities, the contracting of devices and systems that are not subject to security penetration, under any circumstances, but was only keen to choose the lowest prices, and this places responsibility on it; and the laws of the Tenders Committee, which often insist on awarding any tender to the lowest bidder.

Note: An informed official told me that the contract for the Turkish contractor, Limak, and the contract for the international airport consultant have expired, and they have not been officially extended. Also, payments to them stopped five months ago, and chaos paralyzes many businesses, and everyone works slowly, without any legal coverage.

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alsarraf

'Kuwaitis safe after Spain gun attack'

MADRID, July 19, (KUNA): The Kuwait Embassy in Madrid said Tuesday the Kuwaiti nationals in Marbella city, Malaga province, south Spain, were safe and sound after a shooting attack in the city.

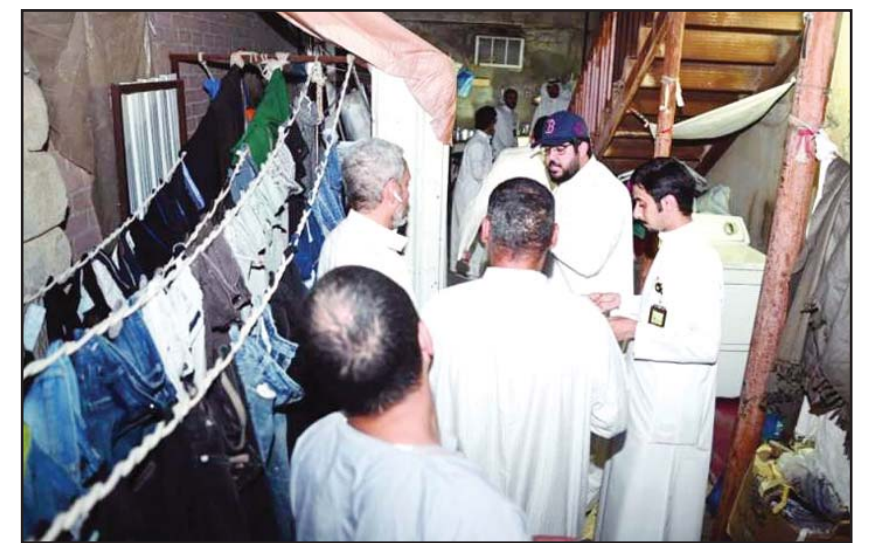
The embassy has been in touch with the competent agencies in the province who verified the safety of all Kuwaiti nationals.

It called on all Kuwaitis in Marbella to be cautious and abide by the safety instructions specified by the Spanish authorities, according to a statement from the embassy.

The embassy advised its nationals who might need help to dial the phone number: 34680600000+.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs expressed on Tuesday Kuwait's sympathy and solidarity with the Republic of Korea over the flash floods and landslides that hit Cheongju city and left dozens of casualties.

The Ministry expressed sincere condolences for the government and people of South Korea as well as the families of the victims, wishing the wounded quick recovery.



A laundry set up in a private home in Qasr area.

Violations in Qasr area

Laundry, tailor in private house

KUWAIT CITY, July 19: The Kuwait Municipality landed a new blow to the landlords of violating real estate, after the emergency team of Jahra Municipality discovered real estate in Qasr area that had been completely transformed into buildings in violation of the laws, regulations, and technical requirements followed in the municipality and the rest of the relevant authorities, reports Al-Rai daily.

It was evident from the inspection of the team that these properties were no longer used for the licensed purpose, but they were instead used commercially as central market, electronic store, tailor shop and laundry shop.

The emergency team had received direct instructions from the Director General of Kuwait Municipality Eng. Saud Al-Dabbous to follow up and monitor a number of properties that were confirmed to be in violation of the law. The team worked on carrying out an extended inspection campaign

in Qasr area on Tuesday, accompanied by officers from the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Electricity and Water. They monitored four houses which were in violation as they were used as residences for bachelors, a central market, a laundry, and a tailor shop.

In the same context, Head of the rapid intervention team and Head of the emergency team in Jahra Municipality Thuwaini Al-Mutairi revealed that the team monitored properties that were rented out to bachelors in Qasr area.

He affirmed that electricity supply was partially cut off for three violating properties, and it was completely separated from a violating house because it was rented entirely to bachelors.

Al-Mutairi said, "The campaign will continue for the next five months, in addition to a direct and integrated linking process with the Ministry of Justice and Ministry Interior to check real estate and bachelors at the same time.



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KUNA photo
Kuwait News Agency honoring a group of its veteran employees.

KUNA honors retiring veterans

KUWAIT CITY, July 19, (KUNA): Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) on Tuesday honored a group of its veteran employees, who are retiring this year in recognition of their efforts.

The honorees are Abulhakeem Al-Rifaie, Nabila Hayat, Deyaa Al-Tabtabaie and Amina Al-Surraa.

Rescue move meets power demand

Kuwait imports 543 megawatts from Gulf network to offset loss

KUWAIT CITY, July 19: The Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy said the Gulf interconnection network came to the rescue of the ministry, following the stoppage of two gas units at the Az-Zour North station which has a production capacity of 470 megawatts, in addition to the decrease in two steam units linked to the two gas units to 160 megawatts, bringing the total power lost to 720 megawatts,

reports Al-Rai daily.

Sources told the daily to meet the power consumption demand, the ministry saved the situation by importing 543 megawatts from Gulf network.

The sources indicated that the power network was not affected by the exit of the gas and steam units, after the situation was saved through the Gulf interconnection network and the state of emergency declared

Kuwaiti youth submit 30 environmental initiatives

KUWAIT CITY, July 19: The Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Eco Incubator for Environment and Renewable Energy Projects, Jassim Al-Aba'a, announced the availability of 30 environmental initiatives, submitted by Kuwaiti youth, that were studied and tested on a narrow axis, to ensure their effectiveness, in preparation for presenting them to the competent government agencies, and benefiting from them, reports Al-Qabas daily.

Al-Aba'a told the daily that "the 30 projects will have

a direct positive impact on the environment," pointing out that "they will be presented to the relevant government agencies for support and implementation."

The package presented a project for reducing temperatures on the asphalt, revealing that the temperature at noon would be 67 degrees Celsius, while after coating it with a special material, which was applied by one of the initiators, it decreased by 8 degrees.

Kuwaiti envoy to US stresses KAF vital role in renouncing violence in societies

43 students honored from across US

By Ahmad Al-Mazyad

WASHINGTON, July 19, (KUNA): Kuwait's Ambassador to the US Sheikha Al-Zain Al-Sabah stressed on Wednesday the importance of role by Kuwait-America Foundation (KAF) in stimulating peace, understanding between individuals and renouncing violence in societies.

This came in a ceremony hosted by KAF in partnership with the US National Campaign to Stop Violence entitled "Do the Right Thing", during which it honored 43 students from across the US and naming them "Student Ambassadors" for their efforts to protect societies from violence.

Educational program

Sheikha Al-Zain told KUNA that the "Do the Right Thing" program is a unique educational program that gives middle school students an outlet to express through their writings the violence and its impact on their daily lives.

She also praised the work done by KAF in providing a safe space for



Kuwait-America Foundation (KAF) ceremony to honor students.

young people, adding that the annual event aims to reveal the cause and effect of violence and empower young people to reduce negative phenomena in their communities.

For his part, Chairman of KAF Dr. Hassan Al-Ibrahim said in a similar statement to KUNA, "We as Kuwaitis are proud to provide and support this program for more than 30 years due to its importance in reducing violence against young people in schools and communities across the US."

Al-Ibrahim expressed his hope that the program will include children from around the world to instill tolerance and peace in the world.

In addition, it is scheduled that the participating students writing will be

preserved in a book and deposited in US Congress library.



KUNA photos
Dr. Hassan Al-Ibrahim, Chairman of Kuwait-America Foundation.

During the ceremony, a number of student ambassadors gave expressive speeches about touching stories of violence and its motives, as well as their experiences when they were exposed to violence in different situations.

More than two million students have participated in the "Do the Right Thing" event since its launch in 1994.

Meanwhile, KAF was established in 1991 with a primary goal inspired by the liberation of Kuwait from the brutal Iraqi invasion at the hands of the international coalition forces in the Gulf War, in appreciation of the American sacrifices and the strong relations between the two countries.

Ransomware groups targeting macOS

LockBit expands its reach

LONDON, July 19: LockBit, one of the world's most prolific ransomware groups, has recently upgraded its operations with enhanced multiplatform functionality, according to cybersecurity experts at Kaspersky. LockBit gained notoriety for its relentless targeting of businesses globally, leaving a trail of financial and operational devastation in its wake. This recent report by Kaspersky showcases LockBit's determination to expand its reach and maximize the impact of its malicious activities.

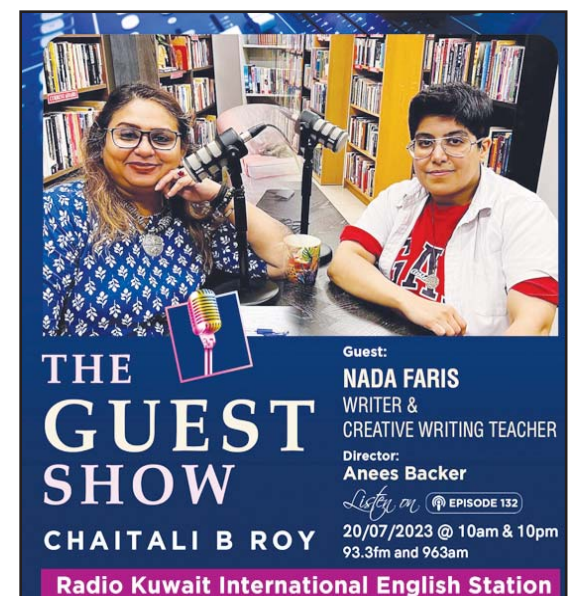
In its early stages, LockBit operated without leak portals, double extortion tactics, or data exfiltration before encrypting victim data. However, the group has continuously developed its infrastructure and security measures to protect its assets against various threats, including attacks on its administration panels and disruptive distributed denial-of-service (DDoS) attacks.

The cybersecurity community observed that LockBit is adopting code from other infamous ransomware groups, such as BlackMatter and DarkSide. This strategic move not only streamlines operations for potential affiliates but also broadens the range of attack vectors employed by LockBit. Recent findings by Kaspersky's Threat Attribution Engine (KTAE) shed light on the fact that LockBit incorporated approximately 25 percent of the code previously used by the now-defunct Conti ransomware gang, resulting in a new variant known as LockBit Green.

In a significant breakthrough, Kaspersky researchers uncovered a ZIP file containing LockBit samples specifically tailored to multiple architectures, including Apple M1, ARM v6, ARM v7, FreeBSD, and more. Through analysis and investigation using the KTAE, they confirmed that these samples originated from the LockBit Linux/ESXi version previously observed.

While some samples, like the macOS variant, require additional configuration and are not signed properly, it is evident that LockBit is actively testing its ransomware on various platforms, indicating an imminent expansion of the attacks. This development underscores the urgent need for robust cybersecurity measures across all platforms and an increase of awareness within the business community.

"LockBit is a highly active and notorious ransomware group known for its



The Guest Show poster

TGS presents Nada Faris

THIS Thursday, The Guest Show (TGS) is very happy to present Nada Faris, an extraordinary young Kuwaiti.

Nada is a writer, poet, creative writing teacher and coach and a lot more. She has authored three international books including Fountain of Youth, a 2016 Vine Leaves Vignette Collection Awards semi-finalist (Vine Leaves Press, 2016, Australia), poetry and numerous essays on culture and politics all of which have been widely published.

Over the years, Nada has been recognized for her work on different platforms.

In 2015 and 2016, she joined the Board of Trustees for the Cultural Circle Prize for the Arabic Short Story (Almultaqa), the first international award for short story collections in Arabic.

In 2018, she received an Arab Woman Award from Harper's Bazaar Arabia as an Inspirational Woman for her impact on Kuwait's creative sector.

Nada is a voracious reader and creative. She holds an MFA in Creative Writing from Columbia University (concentration in poetry and translation).

That is not all. Nada is also a member of the International Coaching Federation and as a coach works with creatives, graduate students, writers, and other artists hoping to become professional at their chosen crafts.

At present, Nada is looking forward to the publication of her translated work 'Lost in Mecca' written by the remarkable Bothayna Al-Essa.

In this episode of The Guest Show, Nada Faris and Chaitali B. Roy come together to talk about Anglowaiti literature, writing in English in Kuwait, and about her personal and professional journey as a creative.

devastating cyberattacks on

businesses worldwide. With its continual infrastructure enhancements and incorporation of code from other ransomware gangs, LockBit poses a significant and evolving threat to organizations across various industries. It is imperative for businesses to reinforce their defenses, regularly update security systems, educate employees on cybersecurity best practices, and establish incident response protocols to effectively mitigate the risks posed by LockBit and similar ransomware groups," comments Marc Rivero, senior security researcher at Kaspersky's Global Research and Analysis Team.

Learn more about LockBit's updated toolset on Se-

curelist.

To protect yourself and your business from ransomware attacks, consider following the rules proposed by Kaspersky:

□ Always keep the software updated on all the devices you use to prevent attackers from exploiting vulnerabilities and infiltrating your network.

□ Focus your defense strategy on detecting lateral movements and data leaks to the internet. Pay special attention to outgoing traffic to detect cybercriminals' connections to your network. Set up offline backups that intruders cannot tamper with. Make sure you can access them quickly when needed or in an emergency.



July

Room Promotion





Weekdays (Saturday - Wednesday)	
Queen Cabana (2 persons inclusive of breakfast) per night.	2 Bedroom Chalet (4 persons inclusive of breakfast) per night.
NOW	NOW
BHD 61.000/-net	BHD 136.198/-net
Weekends (Thursday & Friday)	
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NOW	NOW
BHD 69.000/-net	BHD 153.222/-net

Promo period from 4th – 31st July 2023 Terms & conditions apply*

diwaniya ديوانية

A DIGEST OF PUBLIC OPINION

'Need to pay attention to warning in SAB president resignation letter'

"COLLEAGUE Ahmed Al-Sarraf and Brother Youssef Al-Fadala wrote about the details of the circumstances of the resignation of the President of the Audit Bureau, the honorable brother Faisal Al-Shaya, where the colleague Ahmed Al-Sarraf quoted from the book of resignation verbatim what was mentioned by the president of the bureau, when he said: 'After the intentions were bad and the purposes were deviated, the structure of the State Audit Bureau became the arm of the oversight of the National Assembly, threatening to be destroyed and sabotaged under the anvil of extremist politics, and the hammer of private benefit,' and here my national responsibilities are multiplied, so I must ring the alarm bell, if the resignation from the position of the presidency of bureau is necessary for the national consciences to awaken in defense of the people's apparatus to protect their money, then I put it today in front of you, perhaps a warning before it is too late and I rest my case," columnist **Souad Fahad Al-Mojil** wrote for **Al-Qabas** daily.



Souad Al-Mojil

"I am not here in the defense of the virtuous brother Faisal Al-Shaya, as he is definitely more capable of this task than me, but there is a need to pay attention to the warning, which was mentioned in the resignation letter, especially with regard to the SAB falling prey under the 'anvil of extremist politics and the hammer of private benefit.'"

"And when something like that is said by a personality whose patriotism, cleanliness and competence are agreed upon, it is wise and skillful to investigate the facts and make inventory of the details leading to and causing them at the same time, especially since they came without technical or objective justifications related to the performance of the Chief of Staff."

"It is not only the resignation that raised signs of astonishment among many citizens. Rather, the state of sorting out the political climate that Kuwait has recently experienced and which prompted more than one exclamation and question mark."

"And it began to suggest that there is an atmosphere of political revenge, which may not distinguish between good and bad performance, but rather proceeds according to the location within the competing camps today."

"Among what was mentioned by Brother Youssef Al-Fadala in his article on the Audit Bureau and the political struggle, he cited a statement by the former president of the Audit Bureau, Barak Al-Marzouq, when he was asked a question about the role of the Audit Bureau, and Al-Marzouq answered at the time that the functions of the bureau are considered among the most dangerous tasks in the State of Kuwait."

"Indeed, the bureau, since its inception on November 11, 1962, has played a role in financial control, and its first article stipulates the following: 'To establish an independent financial control body called the Audit Bureau and attached to the National Assembly.'"

"Therefore, it is very unfortunate that the bureau is falling victim to the cycle of conflict and political revenge today, in a way that will not only lose its independence, but also its primary role."

"Everyone knows the sensitivity of the current stage in Kuwait, and everyone follows in a clear way the features of the new conflict, whose news and the contributions of the main players have become circulated by electronic means of communication, and this is perhaps a normal issue that occurs in any society and under any political climate, as the rule speaks of the inevitability of political conflict."

"The danger of being a political player may always be exposed to the fluctuations and transformations of politics, but at the same time crossing sensitive stages requires taking steps and exercising caution so as not to get carried away with them or on their way bright features and valuable foundations in building the state."

"The transitional stages in the history of all peoples come as very sensitive stages, in which voices calling for revenge usually come out, but on the other hand there remain voices calling for justice and fairness and purging the memory of some lies and rumors, which may find refuge in such a climate, as only justice neutralizes the desire for revenge and the consolidation of the conditions of integrity and transparency, which will inevitably benefit everyone."

"What happened recently in Kuwait, whether in the resignation of the head of the Audit Bureau, or in the exclusion of some leaders known for their integrity and competence, does not enhance the balance of justice, but rather establishes the principle of the desire for revenge, which is undoubtedly a very dangerous matter for everyone."

"The articles, which denounced the strange resignation of the SAB chief were not for the sake of Faisal Al-Shaya as an individual, but they were all tantamount to words of truth against Al-Shaya and his official capacity, and a denunciation of the insertion of the struggle of the Council and the government into the structure of the state's long-standing institutions, and a violation of Article 151 of the Constitution and the law establishing the bureau."

"Perhaps the statement issued by some public benefit associations summarizes the essence of the crisis, as they emphasized that the main issue that concerns them is the independence of the bureau and the integrity of the mechanism for dismissing its officials, as it must be gradual through investigation supported by material facts, so that it is not subject to a change of mood, political account settling of the current stage."

Also:

"In most countries, if not all, there are things that cannot be bypassed or tolerated related to the security of the country," columnist **Abdul Aziz Al Sanan** wrote for **Al-Qabas** daily.

"Everyone agrees that there are important sectors and jobs in the country that should only be occupied by his children who are Kuwaiti citizens. In addition to the important government sectors that should be given only to Kuwaitis."

"There are equally important sectors in the private sector that should not be occupied except by Kuwaiti nationals, and who are registered in chapters five and three of the Public Institution for Social Security (PIFSS) such as 'the exchange sector, gold, buying and selling real estate, brokerage, and auctions,' in which semi-money laundering and major thefts may happen, due to the large amounts of money that are dealt with."

"We hear a lot about addressing the demographics, or the tendency to encourage young people to self-employ in the private sector, but these statements will remain just in on paper or words that go with the wind if they are not accompanied by parliamentary legislation and government decisions that protect the youth and support them in building a free youth economy, which represents a fundamental pillar in the diversification of the national economy."

"This is in addition to encouraging young people to engage in self-employment and not relying on government employment, which represents an important aspect of the government's economic integration."

"The son of the country is a sentinel over the citizens of the national security of his country, and is linked to some activities in the private sector, and this requires a legislative stance from the honorable members of the National Assembly to make these activities the monopoly of the citizens of the country."

"Moreover, the government decisions that support and encourage young people to do these jobs and provide them with incentives, needs cooperation from the Kuwait

Chamber of Commerce and Industry, because the country's interest and security are more important than any other considerations."

"For many years, we have been hearing about the development of domestic tourism and ambitious plans, while officials here and there confidently talk about change and realizing the aspirations of families and individuals in terms of entertainment. The strangest aspect is the existence of a specialized company called Touristic Enterprises, but has anything been achieved despite the urgent need to develop this facility?" columnist **Abdallah Al-Afasi** wrote for **Al-Rai** daily.

"One of the famous contradictions in Kuwait is that despite the Kuwaitis' interest in tourism and the huge amount they spend on tourism annually, the local tourism suffers from abject poverty due to the government's negligence of this vital facility. In short, the development of tourism in Kuwait is the same - without any change."

"If we say that the expenditure of Kuwaitis on foreign tourism is huge, then this is not an exaggeration, but a real description confirmed in a study conducted by Touristic Enterprises Company recently. The study revealed that Kuwaitis spend more than KD4 billion (\$14 billion) on foreign tourism annually. This amount is equivalent to about 11 percent of Kuwait's GDP."

"The painful irony is that the same study was submitted to the Council of Ministers, stating 'Kuwait's annual revenues from tourism do not exceed 300,000 dinars!'"

"It is a matter of objectivity, not intellectual luxury. In Kuwait, where can you go in the morning or evening if you decide to take a family vacation or even alone?"

"The answer does not need thinking - the citizens and expatriates have limited options in domestic tourism, prompting them to think of foreign tourism as their only way out of the crisis of lack of entertainment facilities in Kuwait."

"Despite all of the above, interest in developing domestic tourism is still weak. Tourism projects provide important opportunities for countries to contribute to the establishment of infrastructure."

"Unlike other Gulf countries with a similar climate, the tourism file in Kuwait remains outside the scope of service. Citizens and expatriates have been disappointed in the search for alternatives to domestic tourism."

"Therefore, the weakness of the tourism sector must be addressed. This is a result of the institutional weakness of Touristic Enterprises Company, in addition to the government's lack of interest in this facility, in spite of the advancement demand for many years."

"In the midst of successive global crises - whether economic, political or military, the income from tourism is turned into a tool for revitalizing the national economy of any country, especially those directly affected by events and problems around them," columnist **Nafe'a Al-Dufairi** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

"This is the reason why some countries, especially in Eastern Europe, make their territories attractive for foreign tourists, not to mention the domestic tourism. Therefore, they made the entry procedures simple and easy for the tourist to feel that everything is prepared for him, and that he is in his second home. This has prompted tourists, who frequented Western Europe, to change their destination, considering the obstacles and complications set by the European Union countries."

"In our special case as Kuwaitis, we are now tired of bright promises about easing travel procedures for us. Just imagine that every country visited by one of our officials (they are many at this time of the year due to the mild weather in those countries) are ready to open their ports to us for the following purposes: tourism, study and search for investment opportunities."

"In the past year, many Kuwaiti officials visited Brussels - where the European Parliament is located, especially after the strong hints given by the European Union Secretariat on agreeing to exempt Kuwaiti citizens from the Schengen visa. This prompted our officials to race to that country."

"In the end, what is the result? Nothing. Visits did not falter and we did not grow weary. The file of the State of Kuwait is now back to square one. With all due respect and calmness, we are waiting for the wheel to turn again in another summer. In the meantime, we continue to wait for the release of visas. Only God knows when, because European officials usually give rosy promises."

"Thus, the visa exemption dream has become like Turkey's dream of joining the European Union. It has been waiting for more than 37 years to be a part of the union. It is better for us to ask the European Union for a five-year visa, until God is kind to us and the union agrees to exempt us, so we do not go back to being tormented by tiring appointments and annoying crowds every year."

"Amid the rapid developments and challenges in the region, we still hear the cacophony of voices that impede renewable, urban, tourism, entertainment or investment projects, which could diversify sources of income so we do not depend on oil," columnist **Dr Ghadeer Aseeri** wrote for **Al-Qabas** daily.

"It has become important to adopt urgent, advanced and bold legislative policies to address the deficit in the State budget for fiscal 2022/2023 amounting to KD3.1 billion. This deficit continued over the last five years without withdrawing from the State's general reserve. The implementation of projects included in the 2035 Development Plan is important, considering a lot of money and effort were spent for its preparation."

"One of the major factors that paralyzed the economy of the country is the confusion between politicians and economic decision-makers in the country."

"Although several entities monitor this uncivilized behavior, many of them are considered to be in a palliative political position for the benefit those who have no qualifications and professional experience. This contributes to the marginalization of public interests in order to implement electoral rules that lead to the success of the representative who legislates and monitors parliamentary elections in exchange for positions or a part of general economic contracts awarded to those who have neither competence nor ability to implement them."

"The audacity in the economic and development progress that the region is witnessing is the result of decisions which are not in the interest of individuals. Nevertheless, such decisions are related to development and proactive plans that can be implemented. The most important factor is implementation, because promises and paper plans become dreams if they are not applicable."

"The security challenge has also become an important factor for border construction and the recovery of Kuwait from future greed over any part of its borders, as global warnings are escalating. The best and quick solution lies in border construction and reviving Kuwait to be a global station with a prominent activity. The exploitation of its wealth and land could be among the sources of income."

"Other solutions include the establishment of various centers for projects that can enhance local tourism, instead of massive external spending. This is in addition to industrial and modern development projects, similar to those implemented in the civilized world. Kuwait must benefit from the experience of the civilized world, because the people can innovate once they find support for the completion of strong, bold and unconventional projects."

— Compiled by Mai Eisoukry



Training ships of the Qatari Mohammad Bin Ghanem Al-Ghanem Maritime Academy with navy students on board docked at Kuwait's Shuwaikh Port (above) on a several-day-long visit. The visit comes in the context of the academy's student training programs and joint cooperation between the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) navies with a view to sharing expertise and promoting joint coordination in educational and training domains, the Defense Ministry said in a press release. Inset: Qatari Mohammad Bin Ghanem Al-Ghanem Maritime Academy officers being welcomed. (KUNA)

Ex-army attaché gets 7 years jail, \$536K fine in fraud case

Mol acts to rid country of drug addiction, 22 held

KUWAIT CITY, July 19: The Court of Appeal, headed by Counselor **Fahd Bu Sulaim**, has sentenced a former Kuwaiti military attaché to 7 years imprisonment and ordered him to pay \$536,000 in fine and ordered his removal from job after finding him guilty of misappropriating the state money, reports **Al-Rai** daily.

The Public Prosecution had accused the attaché working in one of Kuwait's overseas embassies, of embezzling more than \$100,000 by forging checks, pocketing a down payment which was paid in favor of an officer to buy a house and facilitating foreigners to obtain more than \$64,000 worth of tickets even though they didn't work for the embassy.

The man denied the accusations filed against him saying he had paid the money in question to be used in security operations, and despite having paid part of the amount, the Criminal Court ruled that he be imprisoned for 7 years and fined \$804,000 and dismissed from his job after paying back the embezzled money and double the fine.

However, the Court of Appeal amended the verdict of the Court of Appeals and fined him \$536,000 while keeping intact the 7 years imprisonment and removal from his job.

Drugs seized: The Ministry of Interior announced it has arrested 22 people of different nationalities during security campaigns in various regions of Kuwait, reports **Al-Qabas** daily.

The ministry added, personnel from security sector in separate incidents have also seized from the suspects about 16,500 kilos of narcotics, 2,400 psychotropic pills and money.

According to the Public Relations and Security Media Department of the Ministry of Interior these arrests come as a continuous effort of the Ministry of Interior to rid the nation of the drug menace and protect the youth from drug addiction. The ministry explained, among those arrested are people of different nationalities - four Arabs, two Westerners, three Asians, seven Kuwaitis and six bedouin."

The ministry added that the suspects have confessed that the seized items belonged to them for the purpose of trafficking and abuse, following which they and the seized items were referred to the competent authority to take legal action against them.

The ministry added, that the security efforts are continuing to control and arrest traffickers in narcotic substances, to protect society from these dangerous pests, stressing the need for concerted efforts to eliminate drug dealers and promoters.

The ministry called on everyone to cooperate with the security men and report any negative phenomena to the emergency phone 112 or the hotline of the General Administration for Drug Control 1884141.

67 illegals arrested: The Ministry of Interior has confirmed the arrest of 67 individuals who violated the Residency and Labor laws through its continuous security campaigns in Fahaeel, Hawally and Farwaniya, reports **Al-Rai** daily.

The Public Relations and Security Media General Department at the ministry disclosed this is the result of the concerted efforts of the Residence Affairs Investigations General Department and the Public Authority for Manpower to track down violators.

The department added that all those arrested were referred to the concerned authorities.

Security plan devised: Assistant Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior for Public Security, Operations and Traffic Sector Major General **Abdullah Al-Rajeb** inspected a number of Husseiniyas on the first day of the month of Muharram as citizens and residents prepared to perform their religious rituals, reports **Al-Rai** daily.

The daily added, **Al-Rajeb** has issued instructions to all securitymen who are tasked with guarding the Husseiniyas to work with caution and cooperate with the owners of Husseiniyas councils in line with the security plan that has been approved by the Ministry of Interior and the owners of Husseiniyas.

Workshop held

Ministry will take measures to protect charity work from money laundering - Al-Ajmi

KUWAIT CITY, July 19: The Ministry of Social Affairs says it will take all necessary measures to protect charity work from money laundering operations, reports **Al-Qabas** daily.

During a workshop held under the title 'Anti-Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing and its Applications in Charitable Institutions', Director of the Department of Charities and Foundations at the Ministry of Affairs, **Abdulaziz Al-Ajmi**, said the workshop targeted workers in charities and social work institutions, as well as financiers and financial controllers of charity institutions and foundations affiliated to the Ministry of Social Affairs.

Al-Ajmi added the ministry is keen to develop charity organizations and work to better distribute money donations to those who deserve, indicating that the lecturers during the workshop looked into 40 recommendations submitted by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF).

Nassar Al-Shariaan, Head of the Governance and Combating Financial Crimes Department at the Insurance Regulatory Unit, told the daily, that "The sector of non-profit organizations (charities and foundations) is a humanitarian sector in which others are helped through donations, alms, zakat and other charitable matters, which result in financial operations that are transferred internationally in large amounts to carry out construction or charity projects, and these funds may be subject to violations by weak-minded officials in charge of those projects and may cover suspicious financial



Abdulaziz Al-Ajmi

operations to finance terrorist or other related operations.

Al-Shariaan added, "Because of the importance of this sector in the field of combating money laundering and terrorist financing, the FATF made a special recommendation for it."

Deputy Director of the Anti-Money Laundering and Terrorism Financing Department at the Ministry of Interior, **Fahd Al-Dakhil**, affirmed that the ministry is keen to provide community awareness and preserve the country's reputation at local and international levels.

"The workshop was held in partnership with the International Islamic Charitable Organization to develop and tighten control over charitable societies, especially as "we are about to evaluate Kuwait next November," said **Al-Shariaan**.

Kuwait bans

Continued from Page 1

A letter from the Central Bank of Kuwait to the Ministry of Commerce and Industry included two tranches of transactions that the ministry must refer to before completing them - the transactions of joint-stock companies, both public and closed, and the transactions of companies of persons with activities that are subject to its supervision.

The transactions of the joint-stock companies included 21 transactions that are required to be referred to the Central Bank in the event that they are submitted by one of the entities subject to its supervision. The most important of them are the transactions for incorporating a public or closed Kuwaiti shareholding company, converting the legal entity from a partnership to a closed Kuwaiti shareholding company, increasing the capital through bonus shares, and decreasing the capital. They also include the transactions for dividing the company into more than one joint stock company, merging between two companies of the same legal form or from another form, and converting a legal entity from a joint stock company to a limited liability company or a one-person company (companies of persons).

Regarding partnership companies, it included 25 transactions and procedures, the most important of which are revoking the company's license, transforming the legal entity of the company, issuing a Gulf branch, converting the legal entity from a joint-stock company to a partnership, changing the address (online), changing the name or commercial address, deletion or change of activity, increasing or decreasing of the company's capital, redistribution of shares, entry or exit of the minor, natural or legal partner, and amending the management clause, including the removal or appointment of a manager.

In a related matter, the Central Bank of Kuwait addressed the Ministry of Commerce and Industry regarding Kuwait's implementation of the agreement to harmonize the names and activities of companies in accordance with the international code of the United Nations' classification of economic activities.

It highlighted eight international activities for the entities subject to supervision and the extent to which they can be added to any other activities, as well as the legal entity for them.

The bank stressed that it is not per-

missible to add the activity of practicing the business of conventional, Islamic or industrial banks to any commercial license except for joint stock companies. As for the activity of financing services, it can be added to the activity of a company that has other activities, provided that the company is a joint stock company.

The Central Bank asked the Ministry of Commerce and Industry not to add the activity of "electronic payment and settlement or banking systems business" to any other activity, and with the obligation that the license of the company that chooses to practice the business of the two activities be in accordance with the joint-stock companies or limited liability companies.

According to informed sources from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, all companies and commercial establishments that operate under the umbrella of Law No. 111/2013 for regulating the licensing of commercial stores must work to reconcile the conditions of their activities, if required, by amending, deleting or changing, and specifying their designations in licensing activities or establishment contract. These should be in line with the international economic activities, the international code, and in accordance with the system of matching or harmonization of activities and their equivalent in the unified guide for the classification of economic activities in the Gulf Cooperation Council.

The sources affirmed that reconciling the companies' conditions has become mandatory due to the signing of international agreements by the State of Kuwait, as well as at the level of the Gulf Cooperation Council in this regard.

Demolition of

Continued from Page 1

before and after the U.S. invasion of 2003.

Most notoriously, the militant Islamic State group demolished numerous ancient sites in northern Iraq, including Islamic shrines, raising outrage among Iraqis and abroad.

Amid the relative calm that has prevailed in recent years, the country has seen a resurgence of archeology. Many stolen artifacts have been returned, and damaged heritage sites like the Al-Nouri mosque in Mosul wrecked by IS have been restored after Iraq appealed for international funding to help.

New test requires a larger base of US history knowledge

US citizenship test changes worry low English skills applicants

ST. PAUL, Minn., July 19, (AP) — The US citizenship test is being updated, and some immigrants and advocates worry the changes will hurt test-takers with lower levels of English proficiency.

The naturalization test is one of the final steps toward citizenship — a months-long process that requires legal permanent residency for years before applying.

Many are still shaken after former Republican President Donald Trump's administration changed the test in 2020, making it longer and more difficult to pass. Within months, Democratic President Joe Biden took office and signed an executive order aimed at eliminating barriers to citizenship. In that spirit, the citizenship test was changed back to its previous version, which was last updated in 2008.

In December, US authorities said the test was due for an update after 15 years. The new version is expected late next year.

US Citizenship and Immigration Services proposes that the new test adds a speaking section to assess English skills. An officer would show photos of ordinary scenarios — like daily activities, weather or food — and ask the applicant to verbally describe the photos.

In the current test, an officer evaluates speaking ability during the naturalization interview by asking personal questions the applicant has already answered in the naturalization paperwork.

"For me, I think it would be harder to look at pictures and explain them," said Heaven Mehreeta, who immigrated from Ethiopia 10 years ago, passed the naturalization test in May and became a US citizen in Minnesota in June.

Moving

Mehreeta, 32, said she learned English as an adult after moving to the US and found pronunciation to be very difficult. She worries that adding a new speaking section based on photos, rather than personal questions, will make the test harder for others like her.

"Sitting next to someone from the federal government, it can be intimidating to talk and speak with them. Some people have this fear anyway. When it's not your first language, it can be even more difficult. Maybe you will be nervous and you won't find the words to tell them what you need to describe," Avny said. "It's a test that will determine if you are going to be a citizen. So there is a lot to lose."

Another proposed change would make the civics section on US history and government multiple-choice instead of the current oral short-answer format.

Bill Bliss, a citizenship textbook author in Massachusetts, gave an example in a blog post of how the test would become more difficult because it would require a larger base of knowledge.

A current civics question has an officer asking the applicant to name a war fought by the US in the 1900s. The applicant only needs to say one out of five acceptable answers — World War I, World War II, Korean War, Vietnam War or Gulf War — to get the question right.

But in the proposed multiple-choice format, the applicant would read that question

and select the correct answer from the following choices:

- A. Civil War
- B. Mexican-American War
- C. Korean War
- D. Spanish-American War

The applicant must know all five of the wars fought by the US in the 1900s in order to select the one correct answer, Bliss said, and that requires a "significantly higher level of language proficiency and test-taking skill."

Currently, the applicant must answer six out of 10 civics questions correctly to pass. Those 10 questions are selected from a bank of 100 civics questions. The applicant is not told which questions will be selected but can see and study the 100 questions before taking the test.

Lynne Weintraub, a citizenship coordinator at Jones Library's English as a Second Language Center in Massachusetts, said the proposed format for the civics section could make the citizenship test harder for people who struggle with English literacy. That includes refugees, elderly immigrants and people with disabilities that interfere with their test performance.

Determine

"We have a lot of students that are refugees, and they're coming from war-torn countries where maybe they didn't have a chance to complete school or even go to school," said Mechelle Perrott, a citizenship coordinator at San Diego Community College District's College of Continuing Education in California.

"It's more difficult learning to read and write if you don't know how to do that in your first language. That's my main concern about the multiple-choice test; it's a lot of reading," Perrott said.

US Citizenship and Immigration Services said in a December announcement that the proposed changes "reflect current best practices in test design" and would help standardize the citizenship test.

Under federal law, most applicants seeking citizenship must demonstrate an understanding of the English language — including an ability to speak, read and write words in ordinary usage — and demonstrate knowledge of US history and government.

The agency said it will conduct a nationwide trial of the proposed changes in 2023 with opportunities for public feedback. Then, an external group of experts — in the fields of language acquisition, civics and test development — will review the results of the trial and recommend ways to best implement the proposed changes, which could take effect late next year.

The US currently has the easiest citizenship test compared to other Western countries — including Germany, Canada and the United Kingdom — according to Sara Goodman, a political science professor at the University of California, Irvine.

Goodman said she uses the following metrics to determine the difficulty of a test: the number of questions required to pass and the number of questions overall, the percentage of applicants who pass the test, the language level of the test, and whether or

not questions with answers are made available to study before taking the test.

In the US test, applicants must answer six out of 10 questions correctly to pass. About 96% of applicants pass the test, according to recent estimates. The test is at a "high beginner" level of English, Goodman said, and a question bank with answers is made available to study beforehand.

But in the German test, Goodman said applicants must answer 17 out of 33 questions correctly to pass. About 90% of applicants pass the test, according to recent estimates. The test is at an "intermediate" level of German, according to Goodman. And a question bank with answers is made available.

The Canada and United Kingdom tests are even harder, and a question bank is not provided in the latter, Goodman said. Elizabeth Jacobs, director of regulatory affairs and policy at the Center for Immigration Studies — a nonprofit research organization that advocates for less immigration — said the proposed changes would make the US citizenship test even easier for many people.

"We think that's in the wrong direction," Jacobs said on behalf of the organization. The proposed multiple-choice format for the civics section would put the answer to each question in front of applicants, Jacobs said, and would get rid of the memory challenge that's in the current test.

Jacobs said her organization would prefer a test that includes more material and emphasizes American values, such as religious freedom and freedom of speech.

She added that most people who naturalize are not in the US because of merit or refugee status, but because of family sponsorship, where someone in their family became a citizen before them and petitioned for them to naturalize.

Engagement

Jacobs said having a stricter test would help ensure that new citizens integrate into American society — and the economy — with sufficient English language skills, as well as promote a healthy democracy with civics knowledge and engagement.

Not everyone agrees.

"Is it important for us to even have a civics test in the first place? I don't know the answer to that question," said Corleen Smith, director of immigration services at the International Institute of Minnesota, a nonprofit that connects immigrants to resources.

Smith said USCIS already evaluates whether applicants have past criminal histories, pay taxes and support their children financially.

"They're already evaluating that portion of your background. Is it also important to know this information about history and government and be able to memorize it?" Smith said, adding: "People that were born in the US and are natural-born citizens — a lot of those folks don't know many of these answers to the history of government questions."

More than 1 million people became US citizens in fiscal year 2022 — one of the highest numbers on record since 1907, the earliest year with available data — and USCIS reduced the huge backlog of naturalization applications by over 60% compared to the year before, according to a USCIS report also released in December.



Photos from the event.

Renowned Pakistani artists perform

KPEWS holds extravaganza 'Ranga Rang'

By M. Irfan Shafiq

KUWAIT CITY, July 19: In commemorating the 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Kuwait and Pakistan, Kuwait Pakistan Ethihad Welfare Society Kuwait organized a prestigious extravaganza Ranga Rang season 3 night along with artists from Pakistan. The event, held in Kuwait, was attended by more than 2000 people. Renowned personalities including Ali Abbas, Ali Sher, Menahl Ibrar, Kashif Hosni, and comedian Yasir Abbas Malangi were flown from Pakistan specially to perform.

Ambassador of Pakistan to Kuwait, Malik Farooq, representatives from the Embassy of Pakistan, Community Welfare Attaché Farrukh Amir Sial, Faisal Majeed, Chairman of Kuwait Pakistan Ethihad Society Sultan Al Kandri, Pir Amjad Hussain along with

many dignitaries from Pakistani Community graced the occasion.

Renowned host from Pakistan Jehanzaib Zebi along with Naeem Jan hosted the event. Famous Kuwait singer Mubarak Al Rahsid and Irfan Hassan also performed in the event.

Pakistani Artist Ali Abbas, Ali Sher, Menahl Ibrar, Kashif Hosni, and comedian Yasir Abbas Malangi entertained the participants with their performances. The musical night included Sufiana kalam, Milli songs and Bhangra which entertained the audience immensely. The audience enjoyed the event.

Ambassador of Pakistan to Kuwait, Malik Muhammad Farooq, Chairman of Pakistan Ethihad Welfare Society, Sultan Al-Kandri, along with the staff

of the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, cut the cake for the 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Kuwait and Pakistan. On this occasion, the Ambassador of Pakistan said that this is a fascinating program by the Pakistani community after COVID-19 pandemic and he congratulated all those responsible for it. He said that in the coming days more programs have been organized accordingly, which will always be remembered in the history of Kuwait.

On this occasion, Chairman of Kuwait Pakistan Ethihad Welfare Society Sultan Al-Kandri thanked the Embassy of Pakistan, sponsors, attendees and media representatives and expressed hope that Pakistani community will continue to encourage their artists in the same way in future as well.

The Conversation

Spellings offer clues

Unabomber unique linguistic fingerprints led to his capture

By Roger J. Kreuz
University of Memphis

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

□ □ □

Can the language someone uses be as unique as their fingerprints?

As I describe in my forthcoming book, "Linguistic Fingerprints: How Language Creates and Reveals Identity," that was true in the case of Theodore Kaczynski.

Kaczynski, who was known as the Unabomber, died in a North Carolina prison on June 10, 2023, reportedly by suicide.

Kaczynski had been a math prodigy and a professor at the University of California, Berkeley, before he withdrew from society and declared war on the modern world.

From a remote cabin in Montana, he sent a number of explosive devices through the mail. In other cases, he planted them. Between 1978 and 1995, 16 of his bombs killed three people and seriously injured nearly two dozen more.

Kaczynski's crimes triggered the longest and most expensive criminal investigation in U.S. history. Law enforcement had little to go on other than a few letters that the terrorist had sent to the media, as well as fragments of notes that had survived his device's detonations.

In 1995, there was a breakthrough. That's when the Unabomber offered to pause his attacks if a newspaper published his manifesto about the evils of modern society. Controversially, The Washington Post did so. The FBI supported the paper's decision, hoping that someone would recognize the terrorist based on the writing style of the 35,000-word essay.

FBI forensic linguist James Fitzgerald and sociolinguist Roger Shuy were able to uncover several clues about the terrorist's identity based on the manifesto and his other writings.

Strange

For example, the Unabomber used strange misspellings for some words, such as "wilfully" for "willfully," and "clew" for "clue." Shuy recognized these as spelling reforms that had been championed by The Chicago Tribune during the 1940s and 1950s, although they were never widely adopted.

Their use by the bomber suggested he might have spent his formative years in or near Chicago. Fitzgerald noted the use of terms like "broad," "chick" and "negro" in the manifesto was consistent with the vocabulary a middle-aged person from that era.

The Unabomber also referred to "rearing children" as opposed to "raising children." The former term is characteristic of the northern US dialect and would be consistent with someone who grew up in or near the Windy City.

The manifesto also contains such fairly esoteric terms as "anomnic" and "chimerical," suggesting that its author was highly educated.

But the move to publish the manifesto ended up being the de-

cisive factor.

It was read in Schenectady, New York, by Linda Patrik, who showed it to her husband, David Kaczynski. She asked if he thought it sounded like something his brother Ted could have written.

David was initially skeptical. Then he noticed that the essay contained unusual expressions, like "cool-headed logicians," that he remembered his estranged sibling making use of. He approached the FBI with his suspicions, and it was noted that David's brother had been born in Chicago in 1942.

A search of Kaczynski's cabin turned up explosive devices, as well as the original copy of the manifesto. Kaczynski pleaded guilty in 1998 and was incarcerated until his death at age 81.

The Unabomber investigation has been justifiably hailed as a triumph of forensic linguistics. But sleuths of prose and punctuation have had other notable victories.

Provide

Even something as seemingly trivial as unusual punctuation can provide clues to a suspect's identity — which is what happened in 2018, when a forensic linguist was able to pin a murder on a British man because of his unusual use of commas and spacing when sending text messages.

Similar techniques have been used by language experts to identify authors. In 1996, "Primary Colors," a novel based on Bill Clinton's presidential campaign, was published by "anonymous." English professor Donald Foster was able to finger Newsweek columnist Joe Klein as the author of the work, noting similarities between the text of "Primary Colors" and Klein's other published work, which included the use of unusual adverbs ("goofily"), states described as modes ("crisis mode") and drawn-out interjections ("naww").

And in 2013, "The Cuckoo's Calling," a novel authored with the pen name Robert Galbraith, was exposed as having been written by J.K. Rowling. Patrick Juola, a computer scientist, and Peter Millican, a philosopher, independently identified the author of the Harry Potter series as the crime novel's true author. Both men used computer programs to analyze such factors as the distribution of word lengths and common word usage in books written by several suspected authors. They then compared the results to "The Cuckoo's Calling" and identified Rowling as the closest match.

These techniques seem almost magical when they work. But they're not foolproof.

In 2018, The New York Times published an op-ed written by an anonymous "resister" inside the Trump administration. However, the editorial was too short for linguistic analysis.

Even after the resister published a full-length book, titled "A Warning," it wasn't possible to identify the author. He eventually outed himself as Miles Taylor. He had served as the chief of staff in the Department of Homeland Security. (AP)

European spyware firms added to US export blacklist

The U.S. Commerce Department added two Europe-based spyware companies to its technology export blacklist on Tuesday for developing surveillance tools deemed to have threatened U.S. national security as well as the privacy and integrity of individuals and organizations worldwide. Such tools are regularly used for political repression and other human rights abuses, including for spying on journalists and in-

timidating political dissidents. The sanctioned companies are in Greece-based Intellexa S.A., Hungary-based Cytrox and related entities in Ireland and Macedonia. Intellexa and Cytrox have been linked to Predator spyware, whose reported use in Greece helped precipitate the resignation last year of two top government officials, including the national intelligence director. Commercial spyware firms

already on the Commerce Department's so-called Entity List - essentially making it illegal for U.S. companies to do business with them - include Israel's NSO Group, maker of the much better known Pegasus spyware. It was added in November 2021. The exact business relationship between Intellexa and Cytrox is unclear and the Commerce Department did not specify it. (AP)

UK inflation falls by more than anticipated to 15-mth low

Inflation in the U.K. has fallen by more than anticipated to a 15-month low, official figures showed Wednesday, a development that may ease the pressure on the Bank of England to raise interest rates sharply over the coming months, to the potential relief of struggling households. The Office for National Statistics said that inflation, as measured by the consumer prices

index, fell to 7.9% in the year to June from 8.7% the previous month. Most economists had expected a more modest decline to 8.2%. The statistics agency said the falling of fuel prices was the biggest driver behind the drop, while food price inflation also pared back, though they remained historically high. Despite the decline, inflation is still running far higher than the Bank of England's target rate of

2%. As a result, the central bank is expected to raise its main interest rate further at its upcoming meeting in early August. However, the bigger-than-expected fall may mean it only raises it by a quarter of a percentage to 5.25% rather than a half-point. That may provide homeowners who are looking to get a new mortgage deal some comfort if the sharp upward pressure on mortgage rates starts to decline. (AP)

Market Movements

19-07-2023

	Change	Closing pts		Change	Closing pts
JAPAN - Nikkei	+1.24	32,896.03	UAE - DFM	-0.85	3,987.76
PAKISTAN - KSE 100	+0.15	45,086.33	SAUDI - Tadawul	-0.14	11,752.63
PHILIPPINES - PSEI	+0.20	6,541.91	EGYPT - EGX 30	-0.17	17,578.67

Business

Chinese 'livestreamers' set their sights on TikTok sales to shoppers in US and Europe

HONG KONG, July 19, (AP) - Chinese livestreamers have set their sights on TikTok shoppers in the U.S. and Europe, hawking everything from bags and apparel to crystals with their eyes on a potentially lucrative market, despite uncertainties over the platform's future in the U.S. and elsewhere.

In China, where livestreaming e-commerce is forecast to reach 4.9 trillion yuan (\$676 billion) by the year's end, popular hosts like "Lipstick King" Austin Li rack up tens of millions of dollars in sales during a single livestream. Many brands, including L'Oreal, Nike and Louis Vuitton, have begun using livestreaming to reach more shoppers.

But the highly-competitive livestreaming market in China has led some hosts to look to Western markets to carve out niches for themselves.

Oreo Deng, a former English tutor, sells jewelry to U.S. customers by livestreaming on TikTok, delivering her sales pitches in English for about four to six hours a day. "I wanted to try livestreaming on TikTok because it aligned with my experiences as an English tutor and my past jobs working in cross-border e-commerce," Deng said.

Since 2019, western e-commerce platforms like Amazon and Facebook have experimented with livestreaming e-commerce after seeing the success of Chinese platforms like Alibaba's Tmall and Taobao, and Douyin, TikTok's Chinese counterpart in China. TikTok started testing its live shopping feature last year. Registered merchants from the U.S., Indonesia, Vietnam and Singapore, among other countries, can now sell via livestreams online.

But livestreaming e-commerce has yet to take off in the U.S. The livestreaming e-commerce market in the U.S. - the world's biggest consumer market - is expected to grow to \$68 billion by 2026, according to research and advisory firm Coresight Research. The relatively lukewarm reception led Facebook to shut down its live shopping feature last year. As for TikTok, the platform has the added risk of potentially facing U.S. restrictions due to tensions between Beijing and Washington.

TikTok, whose parent company is Chinese technology firm ByteDance, has been criticized for its Chinese ties and accused of being a national security risk due to the data it collects.

TikTok did not provide comment for this story.

Despite the scrutiny faced by TikTok, many Chinese hosts view the U.S. as a

Facebook parent Meta makes public its ChatGPT rival Llama

MENLO PARK, Calif. July 19, (AP) - Facebook parent company Meta Platforms has built an artificial intelligence system that rivals the likes of ChatGPT and Google's Bard but it's taking a different approach: releasing it for free.

Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg said Tuesday that the company is partnering with Microsoft to introduce the next generation of its AI large language model and making the technology, known as Llama 2, free for research and commercial use.

Much like tech peers Google and Microsoft, the social media company has long had a big research team of computer scientists devoted to advancing AI technology. But it's been overshadowed as the release of ChatGPT sparked a rush to profit off of "generative AI" tools that can create new prose, images and other media.

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TikTok did not provide comment for this story.

Despite the scrutiny faced by TikTok, many Chinese hosts view the U.S. as a

vast ocean of opportunity, an emerging market that has yet to be saturated with livestreaming hosts.

"There's more opportunity for growth to target America because the competition is so fierce in China," said Shaun Rein, founder and managing director of China Market Research Group in Shanghai. "Livestreaming in the U.S. is at a beginning starting point. There's more opportunity to grab market share."

Rein also said that Chinese merchants can often price items higher in the U.S., where customers are accustomed to paying higher prices compared to in China, where product margins are often razor-thin.

"The format is going to work, because it's been proven," said Jacob Cooke, CEO of e-commerce consultancy WPIC. Smaller companies, including those in China that are attempting to sell on TikTok, might lack enough data on what customers want in markets like the U.S., he said. "Once they do get that figured out, they'll start to have very good success," Cooke said.

For some U.S. shoppers, the livestream format is a fascinating form of entertainment.

Wall St 'ticks' higher, adds to its big rally following profit reports

Asian shares mixed after Wall St logs 15-month high close

NEW YORK, July 19, (AP) - Stocks were ticking higher Wednesday, adding to the strong run that has pulled Wall Street to its highest levels in more than 15 months.

The S&P 500 was 0.4% higher in afternoon trading, coming off its highest closing level since early April 2022. The Dow Jones Industrial Average was up 164 points, or 0.5%, at 35,114, as of 12:20 p.m. Eastern time, and the Nasdaq composite was 0.4% higher.

Elevance Health was helping to lead the market after it climbed 5.7%. The insurance provider reported stronger profit and revenue for the spring than analysts expected, while raising its forecast for earnings over the full year. Stocks also broadly got a boost from easing pressure from the bond market. Yields there were holding steady or falling after a report showed U.K. inflation cooled by more than expected. It eased to 7.9% in June, a 15-month low.

The U.K. data follows encouraging U.S. reports that have raised hope inflation is moderating enough to convince the Federal Reserve to halt its hikes to interest rates soon. That could help the economy avoid a long-predicted recession.

The pressure caused by high rates has already helped cause the collapse of several U.S. banks, which saw customers suddenly flee in flocks. Other smaller and mid-sized banks have since been under heavy scrutiny by investors, and they're beginning to report their results for the spring.

Western Alliance Bancorp bounced from an early loss to a gain of 7.4% after reporting weaker profit for the latest quarter than analysts expected. It also said customers added \$3.5 billion in deposits from April through June.

U.S. Bancorp rose 5.9% after reporting weaker profit than expected but slightly stronger revenue. It also said its deposits grew 3.2% from the start of the year. M&T Bank gained 2.4% after reporting stronger profit than expected and higher deposits. Investment bank Goldman Sachs added 1.4% after it fell short of profit expectations for the latest quarter but topped forecasts for revenue.

One of Wall Street's biggest winners was Carvana, which jumped 28.5%. The used-car dealer agreed with its lenders to reduce its debt by more than \$1.2 billion. It also reported a milder net loss for the latest quarter than analysts expected.

The earnings reporting season is picking up momentum in its second week, and expectations are broadly low. Analysts are forecasting a third straight quarter of drops in earnings

Combs aspires to create new Black Wall Street through online marketplace 'Empower Global'

LOS ANGELES, July 19, (AP) - Sean "Diddy" Combs wants to strengthen the Black dollar: The music mogul is spearheading a new online marketplace called Empower Global that will specifically feature Black-owned businesses.

"I want to create our own Black Wall Street," Combs told The Associated Press about his e-commerce platform, which launched last week. He feels passionate about building substantial wealth in his community similar to the Greenwood community, the thriving Black-owned business district in Tulsa, Oklahoma, that was decimated in a two-day attack by a white mob in Oklahoma in 1921.

Combs said he's not looking for financial benefit after he invested \$20 million into Empower Global, which allows consumers to purchase products exclusively created and sold by Black entrepreneurs.

The curated marketplace featuring Black-owned brands will allow consumers to purchase clothing, shoes, beauty accessories including skin care and fragrances, and even wall art. The platform was designed and created by two Black-owned companies, TechSparq and ChatDesk.

The platform launched with 70 brands with plans to introduce new Black businesses monthly. He hopes to showcase more than 200 brands by the end of the year.

"This is about building our own infrastructure and ecosystem," Combs said. "I'm not doing this for profit. This is about us."

Combs said he feels more excited about launching into Empower Global than before the start of his widely-popular label Bad Boy Records.

"I'm going into these areas to diversify things and fight for our inclusion. This is a platform about sharing power and empowering each other," he said. "This is something that is for my people. It's a tipping point for us to wake up start paying attention and supporting each other while taking responsibility and accountability."

per share for S&P 500 companies, but that low bar also makes it easier for companies to top expectations.

Trucking company J.B. Hunt Transport Services reported a drop in earnings per share for the latest quarter that was worse than analysts expected. But its stock nevertheless rose 2.4%. Analysts pointed to the company's highlighting some encouraging trends, with a possible return to growth appearing closer on the horizon.

On the losing side of Wall Street was Omnicom Group. The marketing and communications company fell 11.1% after investors focused on its falling short of analysts' expectations for revenue growth during the spring. "Probably the best way to sum up this market at the moment is, 'can't stop, won't stop,'" said JJ Kinahan, CEO of IG North America.

Europe

Shares opened higher in Europe on Wednesday, taking their cues from gains in Asia and on Wall Street. U.S. futures were little changed and oil prices fell.

Britain reported inflation fell to 7.9% in June, a 15-month low. Economists had forecast inflation would de-

Combs, who's worked on the platform for years, said it's important for Black people to circulate money in their own community.

"It benefits the community to empower and take care of itself," he said. "Right now, our dollar in the Black community doesn't even last an hour. Most other communities and ethnic groups, they understand the power of unity. Their dollars stay in their communities for days and get passed on to other people that are like them and from their same community."

Combs said he's accomplished his dreams of building one of hip-hop's biggest empires, blazing a trail with several entities. He's the founder of Bad Boy Records and a three-time Grammy winner who has worked with top-tier artists including Notorious B.I.G., Mary J. Blige, Usher, Lil Kim, Faith Evans and 112.

He created the Sean John fashion clothing line, launched the Revolt TV with a focus on music and has his own vodka. He's also produced the reality show "Making the Band" on MTV.

"My dreams have always been to be successful in music, being obsessed with fashion and the greatest Black serial entrepreneur to ever live," said Combs, who along with Tyler Perry and Byron Allen is interested in purchasing the network BET. He's also in a dispute with spirits giant Diageo after he sued the company over allegations of racism over how they handled his liquor brands. Diago has denied Combs' racism allegations, saying the issue is a "business dispute."

"I've graduated from me to we. I'm able to use my God-given intelligence to create," he said. "I'm passionate about the possibility of showing Black economic unity. I'm not going to stop until I'm working with the best brands, the best Black-owned digital mainstream, so we can start fueling our own economic system."

clined to 8.2%, but it did better than that thanks to falling fuel prices and milder food price increases.

It's a relief for struggling consumers and is a further welcome sign that upward price pressures are abating. That has raised hopes among investors that central banks might begin winding down the latest cycle of interest rate hikes.

Britain's FTSE 100 advanced 1.3% to 7,552.03 and Germany's DAX was up 0.2%, at 16,165.07. In Paris, the CAC40 gained 0.6% to 7,360.78.

Asia

Asian shares were mixed on Wednesday after Wall Street's frenzy around artificial intelligence and stronger-than-expected profit reports from big financial companies helped pushed U.S. stocks to their best level in more than 15 months.

Shanghai and Hong Kong fell on selling of property shares after troubled developer China Evergrande reported its total debts rose in the past two years to about \$340 billion.

In Hong Kong, New World Development fell 2.2%, Country Garden declined 0.7% and China Resources Land gave up 0.8%.

Hong Kong's Hang Seng dropped 1.2% to 18,782.40 while the Shanghai Composite index declined 0.3% to 3,189.81.

The property market, a major driver of growth in China, has languished after regulators reined in lending to try to bring debt in the industry under control

In Tokyo, the Nikkei 225 gained 0.8% to 32,759.60 while the Kospi in Seoul lost 0.1% to 2,604.12. Australia's S&P/ASX 200 climbed 0.6% to 7,324.00.

Shares rose in India and Bangkok.

Oil

In other trading Wednesday, U.S. benchmark crude fell 29 cents to \$75.37 a barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. It climbed \$1.58 to \$75.66 a barrel on Tuesday.

Brent crude, the pricing basis for international trading, lost 19 cents to \$79.44 a barrel.

Currencies

The U.S. dollar climbed to 139.39 Japanese yen from 138.83 yen. The euro slipped to \$1.1222 from \$1.1230.

Exec tells first UN council meeting

'Big tech can't be trusted to guarantee safety of AI'

UNITED NATIONS, July 19, (AP) - The handful of big tech companies leading the race to commercialize AI can't be trusted to guarantee the safety of systems we don't yet understand and that are prone to "chaotic or unpredictable behavior," an artificial intelligence company executive told the first U.N. Security Council meeting on AI's threats to global peace on Tuesday.

Jack Clark, co-founder of the AI company Anthropic, said that's why the world must come together to prevent the technology's misuse.

Clark, who says his company bends over backwards to train its AI chatbot to emphasize safety and caution, said the most useful things that can be done now "are to work on developing ways to test for capabilities, misuses and potential safety flaws of these systems." Clark left OpenAI, creator of the best-known ChatGPT chatbot, to form Anthropic, whose competing AI product is called Claude.

He traced the growth of AI over the past decade to 2023 where new AI systems can beat military pilots in air fighting simulations, stabilize the plasma in nuclear fusion reactors, design components for next generation semiconductors, and inspect goods on production lines.

But while AI will bring huge benefits, its understanding of biology, for example, may also use an AI system that can produce biological weapons, he said.

Clark also warned of "potential threats to international peace, security and global stability" from two essential qualities of AI systems - their potential for misuse and their unpredictability "as well as the inherent fragility

of them being developed by such a narrow set of actors."

Clark stressed that across the world it's the tech companies that have the sophisticated computers, large pools of data and capital to build AI systems and therefore they seem likely to continue to define their development.

In a video briefing to the U.N.'s most powerful body, Clark also expressed hope that global action will succeed.

He said he's encouraged to see many countries emphasize the importance of safety testing and evaluation in their AI proposals, including the European Union, China and the United States.

Right now, however, there are no standards or even best practices on "how to test these frontier systems for things like discrimination, misuse or safety," which makes it hard for governments to create policies and lets the private sector enjoy an information advantage, he said.

"Any sensible approach to regulation will start with having the ability to evaluate an AI system for a given capability or flaw," Clark said. "And any failed approach will start with grand policy ideas that are not supported by effective measurements and evaluations."

With robust and reliable evaluation of AI systems, he said, "governments can keep companies accountable, and companies can earn the trust of the world that they want to deploy their AI systems into." But if there is no robust evaluation, he said, "we run the risk of regulatory capture compromising global security and handing over the future to a narrow set of private sector actors."

WH is taking on corporate mergers, landlord 'junk' fees and food prices

WASHINGTON, July 19, (AP) - The Biden administration on Wednesday proposed new guidelines for corporate mergers, took steps to disclose the junk fees charged by landlords and launched a crackdown on price-gouging in the food industry.

The announcements will be discussed as part of President Joe Biden's scheduled meeting with the White House Competition Council, a group of officials established under a 2021 executive order.

The council has focused on creating more transparency for consumers and finding approaches to limit the concentration of industries in ways that the Biden administration says lead to higher prices and hurt the ability of start-ups and small businesses to grow. Republican lawmakers and some business group critics counter that the Democratic president's effort will lead to greater regulatory costs that leave the economy worse off.

The Department of Justice and the Federal Trade Commission are proposing revised guidelines for how they evaluate mergers. Their goal is to pro-

vide more clarity on the impact mergers can have on workers and to update the guidance for a digital economy that is shaped by companies such as Apple, Amazon, Alphabet and Meta.

The government first issued its guidance on mergers in 1968. Officials stressed that the new guidance conforms to the laws set by Congress and the precedents of court rulings.

Republican lawmakers have accused FTC Chair Lina Khan of "harassing" Twitter since it was acquired by billionaire Elon Musk. They say her push to break up the concentration of corporate power amounts to government interference in business practices. Khan has said such interventions will enable more competition within the U.S. economy in ways that are positive for consumers, workers and new businesses.

Attorney General Merrick Garland said that the proposed guidelines "respond to modern market realities" and that "unchecked" mergers could threaten "the free and fair markets upon which our economy is based."

BUSINESS

Qatar sees gas major 'safe energy' until 2050

Gas will remain a safe energy source and can be counted upon for heavy loads until 2050, said Qatar's Minister of State for Energy Affairs Saad Al-Kaabi.

Al-Kaabi, cited by Qatar News Agency, was speaking at the 12th LNG Producer-Consumer Conference, hosted by the Japanese capital Tokyo. The gathering grouped officials from several countries including the US, South Korea and the European

Union.

Although the minister underlined the need for gas for years to come, he indicated that strategists must take a realistic approach and recognize need for low-carbon energy.

Al-Kaabi however criticized advocates of rapid transfer toward low carbon energy, advising for "fair and effective transfer balancing between mankind prosperity and environment pro-

tection."

"Qatar supplies the world the cleanest hydrocarbon energy," he said, alluding to its huge exports of gas. He added that by 2029, Doha would contribute with 40 percent of the liquid natural gas to the global markets.

He also indicated that gas along with solar energy would be helpful to cut carbon emission by 30 percent at the global level. (KUNA)

Tata to build a new electric car battery factory in the UK

India's Tata Sons plans to build a 4-billion-pound (\$5.2 billion) electric car battery factory in the U.K., the conglomerate said Wednesday. The plant is expected to become one of Europe's largest battery cell manufacturing sites when it begins production in 2026.

Britain's government said the new factory, the largest investment in the U.K. automotive industry in decades, will create 4,000 jobs directly and thou-

sands more in supply chains.

The plant is expected to produce about 40 gigawatt hours of battery cells every year, enough to provide half the U.K.'s electric vehicle batteries, Energy Security Secretary Grant Shapps said.

"Our multibillion-pound investment will bring state-of-the-art technology to the country, helping to power the automotive sector's transition to electric mobility, anchored by our own busi-

ness, JLR (Jaguar Land Rover)," Tata Sons chairman Natarajan Chandrasekaran said.

The new plant will supply batteries to other brands as well as JLR.

Britain's government reportedly offered substantial financial subsidies to attract the industrial giant to invest in the country, but officials declined to comment, saying it was commercially sensitive information. (AP)

Circuit denies bid by environmentalists and tribes to block Nevada lithium mine

RENO, Nev., July 19, (AP) - The latest bid by conservationists and tribal leaders to block construction of a huge lithium mine already in the works along the Nevada-Oregon line was denied by the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals on Monday.

A three-panel judge of the San Francisco-based appellate court rejected a half-dozen legal arguments the opponents had put forth in their appeal seeking to overturn federal land managers' approval of one of the projects at the forefront of President Joe Biden's plans to combat climate change.

The critics have been fighting it in federal court for two years. They claim the open-pit mine, as deep as the length of a football field, will violate multiple environmental laws and destroy lands tribal members consider sacred because they say dozens of their ancestors were massacred there in 1865.

Lithium Nevada Corp.'s mine at Thacker Pass, 200 miles (320 kilometers) northeast of Reno, has pitted environmentalists and Native Americans against Biden's efforts to accelerate the transition from fossil fuels to cleaner, renewable energy sources. The mine would involve extraction of the silvery-white metal used in electric vehicle batteries.

On Monday, the judges didn't specifically address the claims that the project fails to comply with a new opinion the 9th Circuit issued last year that blocked a copper mine in Arizona based on a more stringent interpretation of the 1872 Mining Law regarding the use of neighboring lands to dispose of waste.

Rather, they more generally deferred to the expertise of the U.S. Bureau of Land Management, which approved the mine in 2021, and the decision by U.S. District Judge Miranda Du in Reno earlier this year to allow construction to go forward

even though she concluded the mine was not in complete compliance with the new interpretation of the Civil War-era mining law.

The bureau's approval of the mine "was not arbitrary, capricious, an abuse of discretion or otherwise not in accordance with" the National Environmental Policy Act, the 11-page ruling said.

The bureau approved the mine in 2021 on an accelerated basis under Donald Trump's administration. The Biden administration has continued to embrace it in an effort to ramp up U.S. lithium production.

Officials for Lithium Nevada, a subsidiary of the Canadian-based Lithium Americas, say the Thacker Pass mine's reserves would support lithium for more than 1.5 million electric vehicles per year for 40 years.

Conservationists say the operation will pollute the groundwater and destroy precious habitat for sage-grouse, pronghorn antelope and other species in violation of environmental laws.

Their lawyers had argued that Du illegally exceeded her authority when she refused to revoke the mine's operation plan in March despite her conclusion that federal land managers had violated the law in approving parts of it.

The 9th Circuit ruling concluded Du applied the proper legal standard and found the bureau's sole error in approving the project "weighed against" vacating the entire approval of the mine.

Spokespeople for the plaintiffs said after Monday's ruling they were considering their legal options.

"We all recognize the need for renewable energy, but it can't come at the cost

of making the biodiversity crisis worse," said Erik Molvar, executive director of Western Watersheds Project.

Government lawyers had said much of the evidence the Western Shoshone and Paiute tribes presented about the sacred nature of the land came after a formal decision had been issued and that none of it clearly established the actual location of the massacre.

The 9th Circuit ruled the bureau acted "reasonably and in good faith" in its consultation with tribes potentially affected by the mine.

Company officials said Monday they were "pleased to see such a decisive ruling" and that construction was continuing.

"We have always been confident that the permitting process for Thacker Pass was conducted thoroughly and appropriately," Lithium Americas CEO Jonathan Evans said in a statement emailed to The Associated Press.

One independent analyst group said the "brisk" issuance of the ruling so soon after the June 27 oral arguments underscored the significance of what it considered an "important legal victory" for the mine that could become one of the largest lithium-producing operations in the world.

"Opponents could seek further review at the Ninth Circuit or may appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court, though we are skeptical their arguments would fare any better," Washington-based ClearView Energy Partners said in a note to clients.

Plaintiffs in the case said in emails to the AP that they hadn't decided whether to appeal.

Great Basin Resource Watch Executive Director John Hadder warned the ruling could set a dangerous precedent.

Americans 'bump up' spending in June as inflation eases in strong jobs market

Retail sales rose 0.2%

NEW YORK, July 19, (AP) - Americans increased their spending last month as inflation eased in many areas, and the job market remained remarkably strong.

Retail sales rose 0.2% from May to June, following a revised 0.5% increase the previous month, the Commerce Department reported Tuesday.

The figure matched the pace of consumer inflation in June from the prior month, underscoring that shoppers are just about keeping up with pricing pressures. While the headline number of 0.2% was a bit weaker than expected, economists Tuesday focused on data that excludes volatile autos, gas, building materials and food services, which rose a solid 0.6% in June. That 0.6% figure is used to help calculate overall economic growth in the U.S., and it was a pretty strong showing in June.

Shoppers increased spending at electronic stores and furniture and home furnishings stores after a recent pullback. Online sales also had a solid increase. But sales at grocery stores, gas stations and sporting goods stores fell. At restaurants, sales eked out a tiny increase.

The uptick in sales follows an increase in May that pointed to an economy that remains resilient despite rising prices. Yet spending has been volatile this year after surging nearly 3% in January. Sales tumbled in February and March before recovering in April and May.

"While they continue to spend, the June retail sales report suggests that consumers are becoming more thoughtful with their purchases,"



Shoppers glide past a display of big-screen televisions in a Costco warehouse on Tuesday, July 11, 2023, in Sheridan, Colo. On Tuesday, July 18, the Commerce Department released U.S. retail sales data for June. (AP)

wrote Oren Klachkin, U.S. economist at Oxford Economics. He pointed to the labor market losing some momentum, declining savings, and interest rates that have made borrowing money or using credit cards more expensive.

There is already early evidence of a pushback from consumers that is being reflected in financial reports from some of the country's biggest food producers.

Consumers, whose spending accounts for about 70% of all U.S. economic activity, have been the engine behind the economic recovery from a slowdown during the pandemic. Government relief checks, the suspension of student loan payments and super-low interest rates helped.

Demand outpaced what factories could produce and what ports and freight yards could handle, leading to shortages, delays - and skyrocketing prices.

That gave companies "abnormal power to push up prices" and pass higher costs along to consumers - clout they hadn't had for decades, Simon MacAdam, senior global economist at Capital Economics, wrote last month.

That dynamic has shifted, however. Low interest rates are long gone. The Federal Reserve began aggressively hiking rates in March 2022. The student loan moratorium - which allowed Americans to divert money that used to go to loan payments to dinners out and new furniture - ends later this year.

Bid to boost clean energy plans

India sets sights on home-mined minerals

KALIAPANI, India, July 19, (AP) - In the dusty mountains of eastern India, workers at the country's largest chromium deposit have mined for the essential ore, rain or shine, for around 60 years.

The industry is fruitful in some ways - hundreds of trucks stacked with mineral-rich soil journey back and forth regularly between the mine and processing plants - but it is damaging in others. Farmers say their fields are stripped of fertile earth and livestock desperately comb through now-barren lands for feed.

"We used to grow chilies and other vegetables earlier but now when it rains all the soil from the mines washes onto our fields," bringing with it harmful effluent, said Gurucharan Mohant, a 60-year-old farmer from the nearby village of Kaliapani. "Nothing grows here anymore."

Chromium, used mostly as a coating to stop rust in steel and car parts, has been deemed necessary for India's transition to cleaner energy. A layer of chromium makes solar panels more efficient, and the mineral is also used in wind turbines and batteries. Lawmakers - including at Wednesday's Group of Twenty ministerial talks on clean energy - want the country to expand its critical mineral mining operations and make its own clean energy infrastructure from start to finish.

Now other critical minerals, like lithium, cobalt and nickel, which are also used in solar panels, wind turbines

and batteries, are being discovered in India. It's a chance to build out more green infrastructure in a country with escalating energy needs and bolster mineral supply chains worldwide, but concerns remain about the environmental consequences mining will have on neighboring villages, like Kaliapani.

Kaliapani is impoverished, has little access to clean water and residents claim their chronic overexposure to chromium has caused health problems. Swarup Kumar Samal, an environmental officer at Odisha Mining Corporation, which runs the mine near Kaliapani, said the company is following India's environmental regulations.

"We are treating all surface run-off and water from the quarry bottom before discharging them to local water bodies," said Samal. He added that the company also has "sprinkler heads installed across the mines and specialized trucks constantly spray water at high pressure so that the area remains dust free." Dust from chromium mining operations can be toxic if inhaled.

But "any mining has impact," said Sandeep Pai of the think tank Swaniti Initiative. "India needs to be thinking of how everyone involved, including local communities, will benefit before they begin mining for critical minerals like lithium."

In June, India joined a U.S.-led critical mineral alliance during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's meeting with U.S. President Joe Biden. Then

earlier this month, India's mining ministry released its first-ever report on the minerals the country needs to grow its economy. It declared 30 minerals, including lithium, chromium, cobalt and nickel, as essential.

Mining minister Pralhad Joshi called the list "India's roadmap for 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat,'" a commonly-used Sanskrit term meaning "self-reliance."

Both moves were hailed by energy experts as steps in the right direction.

"International coordination is actually a major component of critical mineral security and to have access to the global supply chain, joining the U.S.-led alliance, is great news for India," said Ganesh Sivamani of the New Delhi-based think tank, Centre for Social and Economic Progress. Sivamani also credited the minerals list as the beginning of a strategy for India to better achieve its clean energy goals.

Eric Buisson, a critical minerals analyst at the International Energy Agency, also noted the "strong need" for minerals to crank up the move to cleaner energy.

"You need to make sure that you have access directly or indirectly to these raw materials," he said.

Developing vast amounts of clean energy is seen as essential to limit warming to the global goal of 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) as it can replace heat-trapping fossil fuels like coal, oil and gas with alternatives that emit little or no carbon

dioxide.

India plans to install 500 gigawatts of clean energy by the end of the decade - enough to power 300 million Indian homes. The country has currently installed 176 gigawatts of renewable energy and aims to reach net zero emissions by 2070.

The critical minerals market has doubled in the past five years, mostly down to the booming clean energy sector, according to a report by the International Energy Agency. The IEA also said that demand for minerals like lithium will balloon 40 times and demand for graphite, cobalt and nickel will likely grow up to 25 times by 2040 in an earlier report.

But "diversity of supply also remains a concern" the IEA's report said, with a handful of countries, particularly China, dominating the supply chain for many critical minerals.

Sivamani said work on finding minerals in India needs to ramp up, especially given geopolitical developments such as China banning exports of minerals such as gallium and germanium, both used for making electronics, in June.

"We don't want to be caught unaware," Sivamani said. "Our best bet is to be self-sufficient as much as possible so that we don't need to depend on anyone else to achieve our economic and climate goals."

Experts and activists want to see this done in a just way, with protections for workers and local communities.

'Deeply shocking ...'

Major US firms supplied equipment to keep Russian oil flowing after invasion

Major American providers of oilfield services supplied Russia with millions of dollars in equipment for months after its invasion of Ukraine, helping to sustain a critical part of its economy even as Western nations launched sanctions aimed at starving the Russian war effort.

The largest - SLB, formerly Schlumberger - maintained and even slightly grew its business after others eventually departed. It announced on Friday it would stop exporting equipment there as The Associated Press prepared to publish a report on the companies' Russian operations.

Russia imported more than 5,500 items worth more than \$200 million from the top five U.S. firms in the sector - led by SLB, Baker Hughes and Halliburton - in the year following the invasion that began in February 2022. That's according to customs data obtained by B4Ukraine and vetted by The AP.

The technology helped keep some of the world's most challenging oilfields operating in a sector that provided nearly half of Russia's federal revenues in 2021. Baker Hughes and Halliburton wound down their Russian operations several months after the invasion, but until last week, SLB still sold technology there.

It was "deeply shocking to find a U.S. company continuing to supply equipment to Russia's oil and gas sector," said Eleanor Nichol, executive director of B4Ukraine, a coalition of more than 80 nonprofits calling for multinationals to leave the Russian market.

The AP corresponded with SLB about the exports over several months beginning in February and asked the company for final comment on Wednesday. SLB announced two days later it would halt shipments of technology and equipment to Russia from all SLB facilities worldwide. The company said it was "in response to the continued expansion of international sanctions," including new EU ones at the end of June.

In April, Ukraine categorized SLB as a "sponsor of the war," a label aimed at deterring banks, investors and customers from doing business with companies still operating in Russia. Agiya Zagrebelska, Ukraine's sanctions chief, told AP that SLB had benefited financially by remaining in Russia as competitors left.

SLB spokeswoman Moira Duff rejected the idea that SLB's operations effectively support the Russian war effort. She said SLB voluntarily curtailed some activity starting the month after the invasion.

"Where permitted by evolving international sanctions, we have continued to provide certain products," Duff said before last week's announcement.

On Monday, Duff said SLB still has employees in Russia even though it will no longer send equipment there.



A sign for SLB, formerly Schlumberger, is displayed at the building on Tuesday, March 21, 2023, in Houston. Major American providers, the largest being SLB, of oilfield services supplied Russia with millions of dollars in equipment for months after its invasion of Ukraine, helping to sustain a critical part of its economy even as Western nations launched sanctions aimed at starving the Russian war effort. (AP)

'Diversify or die'

San Francisco's downtown a wake-up call for other cities

SAN FRANCISCO, July 19, (AP): Jack Mogannam, manager of Sam's Cable Car Lounge in downtown San Francisco, relishes the days when his bar stayed open past midnight every night, welcoming crowds that jostled on the streets, bar hopped, window browsed or just took in the night air.

He's had to drastically curtail those hours because of diminished foot traffic, and business is down 30%. A sign outside the lounge pleads: "We need your support!"

"I'd stand outside my bar at 10 p.m. and look, it would be like a party on the street," Mogannam said. "Now you see, like, six people on the street up and down the block. It's a ghost town."

After a three-year exile, the pandemic now fading from view, the expected crowds and electric ambience of downtown have not returned.

Storefronts

Empty storefronts dot the streets. Large "going out of business" signs hang in windows. Uniqlo, Nordstrom Rack and Anthropologie are gone. Last month, the owner of Westfield San Francisco Centre, a fixture for more than 20 years, said it was handing the mall back to its lender, citing declining sales and foot traffic. The owner of two towering hotels, including a Hilton, did the same.

Shampoo, toothpaste and other toiletries are locked up at downtown pharmacies. And armed robbers recently hit a Gucci store in broad daylight.

San Francisco has become the prime example of what downtowns shouldn't look like: vacant, crime-ridden and in various stages of decay. But in truth, it's just one of many cities across the U.S. whose downtowns are reckoning with a post-pandemic wake-up call: diversify or die.

As the pandemic bore down in early

As UK housing costs soar, anxiety grips homeowners, renters

LONDON, July 19, (AP): For Sadie James, the cost-of-living crisis in Britain just never seems to ease.

First, it was skyrocketing energy and food costs stemming from Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Now, the 61-year-old worries whether she can keep a roof over her head.

James, who lives in south London, has struggled for years to stay on top of her finances. Just as she was starting to clear her debts, she's back to square one: Her rent keeps rising, and on top of higher food and energy bills, her welfare payments just can't keep up.

"I'm actually in a meltdown each time I think about it," said James, who cannot work because of underlying health problems. "I'm literally depressed, I'm angry, I'm totally overwhelmed about it because I don't want to lose my home."

Interest rates have risen rapidly in recent months, which in turn have ratcheted up mortgages and rents across the

United Kingdom. Rates have hit 5% after being below 1% for the past decade as the Bank of England has tried to bring down the highest inflation in the Group of Seven major economies.

As is often the case, the poorest households are bearing the brunt. The rate hikes have led to the biggest fall in household wealth in Britain since World War II, according to new research from the Resolution Foundation think tank.

Unlike the United States, where many mortgages are fixed for up to 30 years, UK homeowners are more exposed to changes in the cost of borrowing because a large percentage of them have loans that need to be renewed every two or five years.

Around 2.5 million such deals are due to expire by the end of next year, with around a million households facing a 500-pound (\$655) monthly increase in their average mortgage repayments by 2026, Bank of England

Gov. Andrew Bailey said.

That has put pressure on both Bailey and Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, whose hold on power is tenuous ahead of a likely general election next year. Making it more expensive to borrow is how higher interest rates help lower inflation - people potentially spend less, reducing demand and pressure on prices.

Recession

Though inflation has eased from a double-digit peak last year, it's still stubbornly high at 8.7%, and the central bank is expected to keep hiking rates - already at a 15-year high. That has led to mounting fears of the economy sinking into recession.

Many landlords facing higher mortgage payments want to pass on those costs to renters. A dearth of rental options doesn't help either.

James says her landlord, a London housing organization that manages

affordable rental homes for lower-income tenants, has raised her rent yearly and most recently declared a 4% bump to 170 pounds (\$223) a week. For James, who is barely managing to cover her other bills, the rent increases seem relentless and she is terrified of being evicted.

"It's a nightmare, thinking they're going to come one day ... lock my door and I can't get in," she said.

Despite the sharp increase in mortgage rates, renters have struggled to afford their housing to a greater degree than homeowners, according to Britain's statistics agency. Renters typically spend a higher proportion of their income on housing costs, it said.

Jon Taylor, a debt manager at the charity Christians Against Poverty who has helped James, said his organization has seen a large increase in the number of people in rental debt in the past two years. Almost half of the charity's new clients seek help paying their rent.

like tech, said Karen Chapple, director of the School of Cities at the University of Toronto and author of the study.

San Francisco leaders are taking the demise of downtown seriously. Supervisors recently relaxed downtown zoning rules to allow mixed-use spaces: offices and services on upper floors and entertainment and pop-up shops on the ground floor. Legislation also reduces red tape to facilitate converting existing office space into housing.

Mayor London Breed recently announced \$6 million to upgrade a three-block stretch by a popular cable car turnaround to improve walkability and lure back businesses.

But Marc Benioff, chief executive officer of Salesforce, the city's largest employer and anchor tenant in its tallest skyscraper, said downtown is "never going back to the way it was" when it comes to workers commuting in each day. He advised Breed to convert office space into housing and hire more police to give visitors a sense of safety.

"We need to rebalance downtown," Benioff said.

Success

Downtown housing has been the key to success in Baltimore and Salt Lake City, Chapple said.

Real estate experts also point to office-to-housing conversions as a potential lifeline. Cities such as New York and Pittsburgh are offering sizeable tax breaks for developers to spur such conversions.

But for many cities, including San Francisco, it will take more than housing for downtowns to flourish.

Daud Shuja, owner and designer of Franco Uomo, a luxury clothier based in San Jose, said new customers who live in San Francisco drive at least an hour to the store. He plans to open a shop in a more convenient location in suburban Palo Alto next year.

2020, it drove people out of city centers and boosted shopping and dining in residential neighborhoods and nearby suburbs as workers stayed closer to home. Those habits seem poised to stay.

No longer the purview of office workers, downtowns must become around-the-clock destinations for people to congregate, said Richard Florida, a specialist in city planning at the University of Toronto.

"They're no longer central business districts. They're centers of innovation, of entertainment, of recreation," he said. "The faster places realize that,

the better."

Data bears out that San Francisco's downtown is having a harder time than most. A study of 63 North American downtowns by the University of Toronto ranked the city dead last in a return to pre-pandemic activity, garnering only 32% of its 2019 traffic.

Hotel revenues are stuck at 73% of pre-pandemic levels, weekly office attendance remains below 50% and commuter rail travel to downtown is at 33%, according to a recent economic report by the city.

Office vacancy rates in San Fran-

cisco were 24.8% in the first quarter, more than five times higher than pre-pandemic levels and well above the average rate of 18.5% for the nation's top 10 cities, according to CBRE, a commercial real estate services company.

Why? San Francisco relied heavily on international tourism and its tech workforce, both of which disappeared during the pandemic.

But other major cities including Portland and Seattle, which also rely on tech workers, are struggling with similar declines, according to the downtown recovery study, which

used anonymized mobile phone data to analyze downtown activity patterns from before the pandemic and between March and May of this year.

In Chicago, which ranked 45th in the study, major retailers like AT&T, Old Navy and Banana Republic on the Magnificent Mile have closed or soon will as visitor foot traffic hasn't rebounded.

And midwestern cities like Indianapolis and Cleveland already struggled pre-pandemic with diminished downtowns as they relied on a single industry to support them and lacked booming industries

'Focus on a plan for repayment'

Some tips on how to pay for an expensive summer move

By Jackie Veling
NerdWallet

Packing your things and moving to a new home is a financial hurdle even in the best of times, but higher demand for moving-related services in the summer can send prices skyrocketing.

If you're wondering how to pay for an upcoming move, there are financing options, including credit cards and unsecured personal loans. You'll want to minimize interest, though, and only borrow what you need.

By taking the time to get multiple quotes, moving some stuff yourself or getting rid of belongings, you can lower the amount you need to borrow or avoid financing altogether.

Moving prices

One piece of good news for prospective movers: The cost of moving this summer will likely be lower compared to summers prior.

"The COVID years proved to be some of our highest demand periods where people were making housing decisions and work location decisions that were completely out of the norm," says Steven McKenna, vice president and general manager of Allied Van Lines, one of the largest moving companies in the country. "This year, it's come back down to earth a bit."

Higher interest rates and a slower housing market are likely behind the decrease, says Ryan Carrigan, co-founder of moveBuddha, a website where you can compare and book movers. The company's data and data from major partners, he says, already show a drop in demand for the first half of this year.

Still, prospective movers shouldn't expect too much of a break. Though prices are down year-over-year, you can still expect to pay a 10% to 20% summer premium, says McKenna.

Financing options

It's best to pay for your move with savings, but if that's not an option, you could finance.

Rob Bertman, a certified financial planner based in St. Louis, advises picking the product with the lowest interest rate to reduce the cost of borrowing.

A credit card with an introductory 0% annual percentage rate may be an especially good option, says Bertman. These cards are interest-free if you pay off the debt during the promotional period, which can last up to 21 months. You'll likely need good or excellent credit to qualify.

Moving loans - unsecured personal loans offered by banks, credit unions and online lenders - are available to borrowers across the credit spectrum, but interest can be high, depending on the rate you qualify for.

Bertman urges borrowers to focus on a plan for repayment, regardless of the product they choose.

"That's actually the most important thing," Bertman says. "Above and beyond how someone goes about financing is, 'How am I going to pay this back and how long will it take me to pay it back?'"

Ways to save

There are ways to reduce moving costs, which can help you borrow less or even pay in cash. Though you can't control factors like distance, you can control hiring, packing and overall weight.

Get multiple quotes: Quotes from professional movers can vary by thousands of dollars, particularly if it's a long-distance move, Carrigan says, so get three to four quotes minimum.

Pricing is dynamic and comes down to factors like does the company

'Knock out important tasks'

Finances of new parents need some nurturing too

By Sara Rathner
NerdWallet

When you're caring for a newborn, it can be hard enough to carve out time to shower, let alone stay on top of money tasks. In the fog of sleep deprivation, you may miss a bill payment or impulse-buy random things online to help with infant care. Suddenly, your credit scores are down and your budget is stretched.

Planning for the baby itself - the name ideas, the nursery themes - is certainly more adorable than developing a system to make sure you remember to open the mail, but the last thing you'll want to do is leave money management up to chance when your baby arrives. Here are ways to start financially nesting.

Knock out important tasks

Take advantage of the pre-baby months to make some big decisions, including:

Health insurance for baby: Giving birth or adopting a child is considered a "qualifying life event" as far as health insurance coverage goes. That means you won't have to wait for open enrollment to add your child to your plan, but you'll have only a limited amount of time - about one or two months - after the birth or adoption to do so. Check your insurance plan's rules to know what your deadline would be. If you and your partner have separate plans, compare costs and decide who will take the baby on as a dependent.

Estate planning: Talk to an estate attorney about drafting a will, selecting a power of attorney and health care proxy, and establishing a trust for your child if appropriate for your situation. "If something were to happen to one of you or both of you at the same time, it would just create a myriad of problems for your child," says Paul Sydiansky, founder and senior adviser at Lake Road Advisors in Coming, New York.

Life insurance: A life insurance policy can provide vital funding for your family if something were to happen to you, your partner or both of you.

Get your budget baby-ready

From smaller ongoing purchases like diapers and formula to massive costs like child care, those baby expenses are going to add up. If you're taking unpaid parental leave or one parent is leaving their job to handle caretaking full time, the money com-

ing in is going to change dramatically.

Start by identifying cuts you can make or bills you can renegotiate to bring down costs. If you have credit card debt and there's room in your budget to pay it down aggressively, that can free up more money for necessities later. Begin to price out expected ongoing baby expenses, like the monthly cost of day care, so you can get a general sense of how your spending will change.

Next, automate bill payments for recurring costs, like credit cards, utilities and mortgage payments. If you rent your home and normally mail a check to your landlord, use your bank's bill-pay feature so it'll send checks on your behalf. Set up whatever you can in advance so these services will continue without interruption and late fees.

Expect the unexpected

Don't neglect to make room in your budget for unexpected costs.

Emily Rassam, a senior financial planner at Archer Investment Management in Charlotte, North Carolina, found herself spending more on self-care than she planned. "My interest level in grocery shopping and cooking plummeted during pregnancy," she says. That meant more of her food budget went toward restaurants and takeout.

Rassam also recommends confirming child-birth expenses with your insurance company in advance. She learned, for example, that the hospital she planned to deliver at was in her insurance network but the anesthesiologist wasn't. In that situation, getting an epidural would cost more than anticipated.

Tap into your village

Your loved ones aren't just great sources of hand-me-downs, advice and free babysitting. They can also help with financial tasks, whether that's checking in with you about your money goals or even reminding you of payment due dates.

Lori Gross, a financial and investment adviser at Outlook Financial Center in Troy, Ohio, says neighbors have the same deadlines for costs like property taxes and utilities, so ask them to text a reminder when they pay their bill so you don't forget.

"Family and friends are very good about helping out with those things, but a lot of parents hesitate to ask for help," Gross says. "They don't think they're going to need it." (AP)

tor in the cost of your move - and more stuff takes longer to load and unload. Sell or donate what you don't need.

Beware of scams: Look for online reviews or ask for references when considering a moving company. Interstate movers must be registered with the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration and have a US DOT number, a unique identifier that tracks safety information. If something feels off, listen to your gut. It can save you from a bigger financial headache later.

At the end of the day, you don't just want to go with the lowest-cost provider," Bertman says. "You want to go with the person who's going to do the best job at the lowest price." (AP)

An entrepreneurial incubator and accelerator

stc launches 'inspireU' to help startups and SMEs in Kuwait

KUWAIT CITY, July 19: Kuwait Telecommunications Company - stc, a world-class digital leader providing innovative services and platforms to customers, enabling the digital transformation in Kuwait, announced the launch of 'inspireU', an entrepreneurial state-of-the-art incubator and accelerator designed to support startups and SMEs in Kuwait. The incubator falls under stc's 'Weyak' initiative that focuses on supporting Kuwaiti SMEs and start-ups as well as other Kuwait-based innovative concepts, which reinforces supporting the youth, entrepreneurs, and innovators to pursue their creative visions.

All ambitious entrepreneurs who have innovative projects and startups, even if it is just an idea, can apply for the "inspireU" program by filling out the application form on www.stc.com.kw. It is worth mentioning that registration for the program is for a specific period only, as seats are limited. This is as a key step for applicants to share their Service/Product in a structured approach, where only complete applications will be evaluated according to the program criteria

Over the past 9 years, stc Group leveraged its regional expertise and extensive industry knowledge in the startup sphere to formulate and refine the inspireU initiative. stc is now proud to extend this comprehensive program to Kuwait, building on its existing support towards bolstering and empowering SMEs. The program offers a rich variety of support mechanisms for fledgling businesses and entrepreneurs. "inspireU" provides entrepreneurs with workspaces in both Kuwait and Saudi Arabia and assists in obtaining permits and licenses for winning projects in addition to providing practical guidance and targeted trainings.

Opportunities

Participants with winning projects will also have access to several networking opportunities through participation or visiting international conferences such as (MWC - Silicon Valley - LEAP). In addition, inspireU provides financial support, with a value of KWD 8,000, to enable startups to realize their ideas and dreams. This incubator will enroll the winning participants in a 6-month training program where they can enjoy all these services and benefits.

Danah AlJasem, General Manager of Corporate Communications at stc, said, "We are proud to launch this initiative, which is unique in kind, for the first time in Kuwait, especially following its success in Saudi Arabia. Launching inspireU aligns with our ongoing commitment to support aspiring entrepreneurs, who are considered the backbone of the Kuwaiti economy. This platform aims to assist ambitious



KIB team at the AI Kout Mall

'Latest special offers'

KIB spreads financial literacy, banking awareness at AI Kout

KUWAIT CITY, July 19: In continuation of its support for the Let's Be Aware "Diraya" campaign, Kuwait International Bank (KIB) designated a team of its finest talents to raise financial and banking awareness at AI Kout Mall. As part of its contribution to the campaign, which was initiated by the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) in cooperation with Kuwait Banking Association (KBA), KIB dedicates its efforts and resources to educating the public on the Bank's different services, products, and latest special offers.

Commenting on the initiative, Yacoub Ashkanani, Area Manager at KIB, said: "KIB has played a significant role in achieving the goals of the 'Diraya' campaign. This can be witnessed in its unwavering efforts toward spreading financial literacy across society and raising awareness of the vital importance of the banking sector. Furthermore, the Bank continues to point the public audience to the best means for benefiting from the various banking services - which many banks today continue to develop in a bid to offer their customers the best possible banking experience."

Ashkanani further noted that the KIB employees were present at the Bank's designated booth in AI Kout Mall to actively participate in raising awareness on the campaign's multiple focal points, such as customer rights and duties when dealing with banks under the rules and regulations of the CBK. Other topics of interest included data security and the best practices for

safekeeping banking account information, as well as the secure means of card use. These topics pose a vital importance, especially when banking and financial services are in constant, fast advancement, which comes with growing risks of fraud that many customers continue to face frequently.

Ashkanani also clarified that the Bank's employees provided AI Kout Mall visitors with all necessary information on KIB's banking and financing services, in addition to highlighting the best-suited products and services to their needs and modern lifestyles. The team also presented the mall's visitors with KIB's range of digital products and solutions, their special benefits, the Bank's promotional campaigns and offers, and of course, safe practices for using cards, applications, and digital channels.

It serves to note that KIB spares no effort to communicate directly with its customers on all occasions. For this reason, KIB strategically chose to be present at AI Kout Mall, which attracts a massive number of diverse visitors every day. This insightful choice aims to contribute more effectively to the campaign's success by spreading financial and banking awareness on a wide scale, while collecting and updating data on the market's changing needs and aspirations. In turn, this allows KIB to continuously develop and innovate new products and services in line with its customers' lifestyles while reinforcing its banking and financing services with the latest technologies.

individuals who are interested in transforming their creative ideas into functional businesses that can give back to the community in various ways. Our goal is to help these businesses rise, succeed, and in turn, stimulate economic growth and innovation."

AlJasem added, "At stc, we are deeply rooted in our commitment to support the community through our extensive CSR program, which goes beyond the boundaries of business and ventures into realms of making a real and sustainable difference in the communities we serve. We believe in the power of entrepreneurship, the creativity it brings, and its capacity to drive economies. This belief fuels our commitment to support entrepreneur-

al concepts, and it is one of the many causes that our CSR program champions. Moving forward, we will continue to explore and introduce platforms that can guide and empower SMEs to strengthen their business models and integrate sustainable practices into their operations for long-term success."

stc is a staunch advocate of Kuwaiti SMEs and startups, especially those who implement their digital transformation strategies to innovate and streamline their operations. The Company has supported the SME segment by providing easier access to a range of tools that can support the stimulation of organic growth in cost-efficient ways.



Danah AlJasem, General Manager of Corporate Communications at stc.

Endologix announces first patients treated with PTAB

Detour System offers a novel approach to treating complex PAD

IRVINE, Calif., July 19: Endologix LLC, a privately held, global medical device company dedicated to providing disruptive therapies for the interventional treatment of vascular disease, has announced that the first patients underwent Percutaneous Transluminal Arterial Bypass (PTAB) using the DETOUR System, since FDA approval of the system was granted. This marks the official start of its US targeted market release.

PTAB with the DETOUR System offers a disruptive, novel approach to treating complex Peripheral Arterial Disease (PAD), enabling physicians to bypass lesions in the superficial femoral artery, by using stents routed through the femoral vein to restore blood flow to the leg. This approach is effective for patients with long lesions (20cm-46cm in length), those that have already undergone failed endovascular procedures, or those that may be sub-optimal candidates for open surgical bypass.

For the rollout, Endologix collaborated with two healthcare systems known for clinical excellence. PTAB using the Detour System was first performed at Cleveland Clinic's Sydell and Arnold Miller Family Heart, Vascular & Thoracic Institute and at Salinas Valley Health Medical Center.

"We are delighted to be able to introduce PTAB using the Detour System into clinical use," said Matt Thompson, MD, President, and CEO of Endologix LLC. "The Detour System is a pivotal addition to our product portfolio, which now offers differentiated therapies for both abdominal aortic aneurysms and PAD. The successful introduction at these leading institutions underscores our commitment to continuing to innovate on behalf of patients. Broadening our therapeutic profile is a key achievement as we transform Endologix into a leading interventional vascular company."

Improving

Endologix LLC is a California-based, global medical device company dedicated to improving patients' lives by providing innovative therapies for the interventional treatment of vascular disease. Endologix's therapeutic portfolio includes a variety of products in various stages of development that are designed to treat diseases that currently have clinically relevant unmet needs. These products are designed to treat a wide spectrum of vascular disease from abdominal aortic aneurysms to lower limb peripheral vascular disease. Endologix's current commercial EVAR (Endovascular Aneurysm Repair) products include the AFX®2 Endovascular AAA (Abdominal Aortic Aneurysms) System and the ALTO® Abdominal Stent Graft System. Endologix is wholly owned by Deerfield Management, an investment management firm committed to advancing healthcare through investment, information, and philanthropy. In April 2021, Endologix completed the acquisition of PQ Bypass, Inc., a privately held medical technology company, adding the DETOUR System and TORUS Stent Graft to the Company's product pipeline.

The company has offices and manufacturing sites in Irvine, Milpitas and Santa Rosa, California.

The Detour System is indicated for use for percutaneous revascularization in patients with symptomatic femoropopliteal lesions from 200mm to 460mm in length with chronic total occlusions (100mm to 425mm) or diffuse stenosis >70% who may be considered suboptimal candidates for surgical or alternative endovascular treatments. The DETOUR™ System, or any of its components, is not for use in the coronary and cerebral vasculature.

The Detour™ System is contraindicated in patients with:

- A distal common femoral artery (CFA) 7 mm in diameter.
- Increased risk of deep vein thrombosis (DVT), such as patients with a recent history of DVT, thrombophilia, and disseminated malignancy.
- Untreated flow-limiting aortoiliac

occlusive disease.

- Lack of patent single vessel tibial runoff to ankle.
- Known coagulopathy, bleeding diathesis, or thrombocytopenia that cannot be medically managed.

- Known hypersensitivities, allergies or contraindications to: Nitinol; PTFE; aspirin; heparin; antiplatelet; anticoagulant or thrombolytic therapy; or contrast media that cannot otherwise be medically managed.

□ □ □

With the increasing drug development for novel therapeutics, a growing number of pharmaceutical and biotech companies are seeking clinical manufacturing partners to help meet the demand for complex fill and finish solutions. And, while the stages of early drug development are challenging, Vetter, a globally leading Contract Development and Manufacturing Organization (CDMO) is committed to addressing this challenge by offering comprehensive expert manufacturing services for clinical trials and supporting their customer products path to commercialization. A testament to this commitment is evidenced by the success of its Skokie facility which has already contributed to bring five new customer products to market since it began full operations in 2011, with another four expected to launch in the next months.

Since the opening of the site, more than 240 customer audits have been successfully completed and the facility has performed over 45 media fills without failure. Currently, Vetter Development Service runs more than 80 projects in phase I and II clinical development. In the past years, the facility executed over 30 transfers from its early clinical projects to Germany for further late-stage development. "Our clinical manufacturing sites are an essential part of Vetter's commercial business pipeline. And the Skokie site has demonstrated an impressive track record of success since its opening twelve years ago. In the last year alone, we have acquired more than 10 new customers and their promising molecules," says Dr. Claus Feussner, Senior Vice President Vetter Development Service. "Overall, our ongoing investments in clinical filling capabilities are proof of Vetter's consistent strategic approach to keeping abreast of the market and our focus on the important drug development needs of our customers," adds Carsten Press, Senior Vice President Key Account Management, Supply Chain Management and Marketing at Vetter.

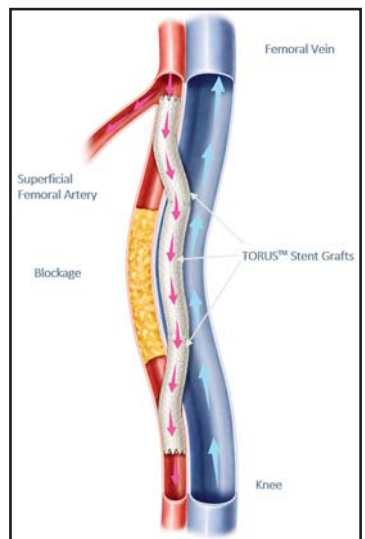
Process

Next to Vetter Development Services US, the CDMO's newest clinical manufacturing site in Rankweil, Austria has increased the company's capacity in the important field of process development as well as clinical manufacturing of Phase I and II injectables for customers. Purchased by Vetter in 2020, the facility has received its manufacturing authorization end of 2021 and successfully completed its first customer fills beginning of last year.

Symptoms

"There's good news for dry eye patients and for our colleagues," commented Laura M. Periman, M.D., Director of Dry Eye Services and Clinical Research, Periman Eye Institute, in Seattle, Washington. "Vevye, which is expected to be available soon, is a unique cyclosporine formulation indicated for treatment of the signs and symptoms of DED. The rapid onset and magnitude of improvements on ocular surface epithelial damage, combined with the tolerability of the non-aqueous vehicle, are key differentiators to existing cyclosporin formulations. These features represent an exciting advancement in addressing the medical needs of dry eye patients and clinicians."

"For patients with chronic and symptomatic dry eye disease, the tolerability profile of the medication can be critical for compliance and treatment success," said Paul Karpecki, O.D., director, Cornea and External Disease, Kentucky Eye Institute, and associate professor, University of Pikeville, Kentucky College of Optometry. "Most patients are not comfortable with drops in their eyes that cause burning or stinging. As a water-free drug product, Vevyedo does not require potentially irritating ingredients, such as preservatives, oils or surfactants, and has demonstrated in clinical trials a high patient satisfaction rate. Having a new treatment option with a favorable comfort and tolerability profile is a significant advancement for the dry eye patient, especially those who experience burning and stinging with topical eye medications."



Percutaneous Transluminal Arterial Bypass (PTAB) using the Detour System.

Harrow acquires US, Canadian rights to ophthalmic solution

Novaliq's Vevye safe & effective for treatment of dry eye disease

Orgs aligning behind innovative solutions to improve health

Twist and Cancer Research enter into collaboration to advance cancer study

SOUTH SAN FRANCISCO, Calif., July 19: Twist Bioscience Corporation (NASDAQ: TWST), a company enabling customers to succeed through its offering of high-quality synthetic DNA using its silicon platform, and Cancer Research Horizons, the innovation engine at the core of one of the world's largest private funders of cancer research, Cancer Research UK (CRUK), have announced an agreement under which Harrow will acquire the US and Canadian commercial rights for Vevye (cyclosporine ophthalmic solution) 0.1%, a patented, non-preserved, ophthalmic solution prescription drug based on Novaliq's proprietary Eye-Sol® water-free technology. Vevye, which is dispensed topically in a unique 10 microliter per one drop and is labeled for twice-daily (BID) dosing, is the first and only cyclosporine-based product indicated for the treatment of both signs and symptoms of dry eye disease (DED). Vevye was approved on May 30, 2023, by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

In commenting on the transaction, Mark L. Baum, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Harrow, said, "The acquisition of the US and Canadian commercial rights to Vevye demonstrates our commitment to the highly underserved dry eye and ocular surface inflammation markets. We are particularly excited about adding VEVEYE to our portfolio because of our strong belief that the US DED market is in need of a cyclosporine-based product that is generally well tolerated, improves both the signs and symptoms of DED and, critically, reduces the time it takes for patients to experience relief from this all-too-common and, in many cases, debilitating disease. Vevye not only feels better in the eye, but it performs differently, and we believe it addresses the numerous unmet needs in the large and growing US DED market. We look forward to making Vevye available in the US later this year."

"Teaming up with Cancer Research Horizons to support exploratory drug discovery efforts, validating and de-risking biological targets has the potential to be groundbreaking for patients," said Emily M. Leproust, Ph.D., CEO and co-founder of Twist Bioscience. "Cancer Research Horizons acts as a conduit between academia and industry, with our collaboration enabling early-stage antibody identification through access to our 'Library of Libraries.'" With two mission-driven organizations aligning behind innovative technology solutions to improve health to make the world a better place, the opportunity to identify new biotherapeutics offers tremendous hope to those who need it most."

"We're delighted to partner with Twist Bioscience, an exciting technology platform company who will enhance our antibody discovery capabilities with their highly diverse phage display libraries," said Hamish Ryder, CEO of Therapeutic Innovation at Cancer Research Horizons. "We look forward to using this technology to accelerate the delivery of high-quality therapeutics and diagnostics to cancer patients, in collaboration with our academic and industrial partners."

Under the terms of the agreement, Cancer Research Horizons will license Twist's Library of Libraries, an expansive collection of synthesized antibody libraries designed based on naturally occurring sequences that harness innovative structural and developability features to cover a wide range of antibody drug targets, for a period of five years. Twist will receive a library access fee and will be eligible to receive annual maintenance fees as well as a share of revenue from any assets sold or transferred.

Ideas

Cancer Research Horizons is the innovation arm of Cancer Research UK – one of the world's largest charitable funders of cancer research. We bring together world-leading minds, bold ideas and the right partners to bridge the gap between research and introducing new therapeutics into the market. We focus on the riskier, more profound ideas that can lead to true innovation.

By uniting our commercial partnerships and therapeutic innovation capabilities, Cancer Research Horizons is uniquely placed to support translational funding, licensing and collaboration, spin-out creation, and offer a full spectrum of drug discovery and clinical capabilities. With access to Cancer Research UK's network of 4,000 exceptional researchers, and £300+ million of annual research spend, we're a powerful partner in the fight to conquer cancer. Every penny we make goes back into funding the next bold steps, to help bring forward the day when all cancers are conquered. To date, we've played an instrumental role in forming over 60 spin-out companies and helped to bring 11 cancer drugs to market.

Twist Biopharma Solutions combines high-throughput DNA synthesis technology, deep expertise in antibody engineering and in vivo, in vitro and in silico discovery methods to provide end-to-end antibody discovery solutions across the preclinical continuum and tailored to our partner's specific needs. By leveraging our unique ability to manufacture DNA at scale, we can construct proprietary antibody li-

braries with discovery beginning with either in vivo or in vitro diversity. Our Library of Libraries gives our partners an integral and unbiased resource for antibody therapeutic discovery and optimization. This precise and rational approach to library fabrication combined with sophisticated bioinformatics and software expertise expedites antibody discovery by decreasing risk, increasing speed, and lowering the failure rate for antibody therapeutic development. Additionally, in vivo discovery approaches including single B cell screening and hybridoma discovery enable parallel paths where multiple technology methods can be leveraged to create a panel of highly diverse antibody leads. Our automated screening and panning processes enable us to identify high affinity leads that our partners can move forward into the clinic. We also offer supporting development capabilities, including IgG conversion, expression, purification, biophysical characterization, and functional characterization.

Twist Bioscience is a leading and rapidly growing synthetic biology and genomics company that has developed a disruptive DNA synthesis platform to industrialize the engineering of biology. The core of the platform is a proprietary technology that pioneers a new method of manufacturing synthetic DNA by "writing" DNA on a silicon chip. Twist is leveraging its unique technology to manufacture a broad range of synthetic DNA-based products, including synthetic genes, tools for next-generation sequencing (NGS) preparation, and antibody libraries for drug discovery and development. Twist is also pursuing longer-term opportunities in digital data storage in DNA and biologicals drug discovery. Twist makes products for use across many industries including healthcare, industrial chemicals, agriculture and academic research.

Christian Roesky, Ph.D., Chief Executive Officer of Novaliq, stated, "We are excited to partner with Harrow, one of the fastest growing and most dynamic ophthalmic pharmaceutical companies in the U.S., to commercialize Vevye in the US and Canadian markets. Harrow and its commercial team have a distinguished track record for successfully commercializing new and clinically important pharmaceutical products in the US market, and they specifically have many years of experience successfully marketing cyclosporine-based formulations to US eyecare professionals. The Novaliq team looks forward to supporting Harrow during the launch of Vevye a truly unique and powerful new treatment option for U.S. eyecare professionals and the more than 16 million Americans who have been diagnosed with DED."

The safety and efficacy of Vevye

(development name: CyclASol®) for the treatment of dry eye disease were assessed in a total of 1,369 patients with dry eye disease, of which 738 received Vevye.

Study CYS-001 (NCT02113293) was the first-in-human study and was conducted to investigate the safety, tolerability, and pharmacokinetics (PK) in healthy volunteers. In this study, Vevye was shown to be safe, and no systemic exposure of cyclosporin was observed after ocular administration.

Study CYS-002 (NCT02617667, Wirta et al 2019) demonstrated that Vevye-dosed patients showed a statistically significant early and clinically meaningful increase in Schirmer's tear test score at Day 29 compared to vehicle. Additionally, Vevye showed greater improvement in corneal and conjunctival staining compared to (i) vehicle and (ii)

Restasis® over the four-month treatment period. The favorable safety and tolerability profile of Vevye was confirmed.

Study CYS-003 (ESSENCE-1; NCT03292809, Sheppard et al 2021) confirmed the effects seen in CYS-002. Compared to vehicle at the end of treatment, there was a statistically significant higher percentage of patients with increases of ≥10 mm from baseline in Schirmer's tear test score at Day 85. Notably, the study demonstrated statistically significant reduction in total, central corneal fluorescein and conjunctival staining scores favoring Vevye at all time points, in addition to Vevye meeting the primary endpoint of the study. 52.9% of patients responded within four weeks with a clinically meaningful improvement of ≥3 grades in total corneal staining, which was significantly higher compared to vehicle.

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BBC Cairo staff rep accuses broadcaster of 'gross discrimination'

Media

CAIRO, July 19, (AP) — A representative of BBC staff in Cairo on a three-day strike for equal pay with colleagues across the Middle East accused the broadcaster of "gross discrimination" Tuesday. The North African country is in the midst of spiraling economic crises, with inflation running at a record high and the currency depreciating.

According to Khaled el-Balshy, the strikers' spokesperson and head of Egypt's journalism union, 75 staff members from the broadcaster's Cairo bureau are demanding to be paid in dollars or receive a significant pay rise in the local currency, like other BBC employees in the region, including Beirut and Istanbul.

The union leader said the disparity amounted to "gross discrimination against the Cairo staff." The walkout began Monday and was set to finish Wednesday.

The BBC's office in London said it had been planning on "increasing salaries by 27% between March and July" to mitigate inflation and was continuing "to engage with them (the staff) to find a resolution whilst acting within our market pay policy which is applied consistently across" the broadcaster.

El-Balshy said, the 27% pay rise was inadequate, given Egypt's economic situation.

Over the past year, the Egyptian pound has lost over 50% of its value against the dollar, with annual inflation reaching 36.8% in June, up from 33.7% recorded in May. The economy is reeling from years of

government austerity measures, the coronavirus pandemic and fallout from the Ukraine war. Egypt is a top wheat importer from Russia and Ukraine.

The Associated Press previously said the BBC's Istanbul staff were paid in dollars, based on information from the strikers' representative. He later clarified that they were paid in Turkish lira, something that was later confirmed by the BBC's press office.

El-Balshy posted on Facebook that the BBC staff in Egypt consider the disparity in pay as a form of "systematic discrimination." They had earlier asked for their salaries to be re-evaluated in light of the Egyptian pound's depreciation but this request was first ignored before "meagre increases" were eventually offered.

El-Balshy told The Associated Press the strikers may consider legal action and extending the walkout if their demands are not met. Last month, the BBC Cairo staff held a one-day strike over unequal pay.

Also:

NEW YORK: The BBC is more aggressively bringing "open source" reporting and efforts to expose disinformation to its day-to-day reporting, a move that signals a potential shift in journalism's embrace of new technology.

The just-announced creation of a new BBC Verify unit is also an at-

tempt by the news organization to be more transparent in its reporting, said **Deborah Turness**, BBC News chief executive officer.

Practitioners of open source reporting go beyond traditional methods of interviews and examining public records to tell stories by using tools such as satellite images, mobile phone recordings, advanced internet searches and the like.

They have produced some compelling investigative reporting, but Turness is looking for more immediacy. For example, when **Russia** claimed a Ukrainian drone tried to attack the **Kremlin**, the BBC gathered multiple videos of explosions in the night sky, and quickly found video footage to map the actions of police in recent unrest at a housing complex.

The BBC has been using satellite photos in an attempt to document planning and movement by both sides in the **Ukraine** war.

"We are taking a step out front to lead and experiment in this space," Turness said.

Many people active in open source reporting will be playing close attention to whether the BBC succeeds, said **Alexa Koenig**, executive director of the Human Rights Center at the University of California at Berkeley's law school.

"There's really a need for journalists to start embracing these new methods of fact-finding to deepen their day-to-day storytelling," said Koenig, who helps train students in their use.

Variety



This image released by Universal Pictures shows Cillian Murphy in a scene from 'Oppenheimer.' (AP)

Film

Film expected to be a blockbuster and full of suspense

'Oppenheimer' stirs up conflicted history

LOS ALAMOS, N.M., July 19, (AP) — The movie about a man who changed the course of the world's history by shepherding the development of the first atomic bomb is expected to be a blockbuster, dramatic and full of suspense.

On the sidelines will be a community downwind from the testing site in the southern New Mexico desert, the impacts of which the US government never has fully acknowledged. The movie on the life of scientist J. Robert Oppenheimer and the top-secret work of the Manhattan Project sheds no light on those residents' pain.

"They'll never reflect on the fact that New Mexicans gave their lives. They did the dirtiest of jobs. They invaded our lives and our lands and then they left," Tina Cordova, a cancer survivor and founder of a group of New Mexico downwinders, said of the scientists and military officials who established a secret city in Los Alamos during the 1940s and tested their work at the Trinity Site some 200 miles (322 kilometers) away.

Cordova's group, the Tularosa Basin Downwinders Consortium, has been working with the Union of Concerned Scientists and others for years to bring attention to what the Manhattan Project did to people in New Mexico.

While film critics celebrate "Oppenheimer" and officials in Los Alamos prepare for the spotlight to be on their town, downwinders remain frustrated with the US government - and now movie producers - for not recognizing their plight.

Advocates held vigils Saturday on the 78th anniversary of the Trinity Test in New Mexico and in New York City, where director Christopher Nolan and others participated in a panel discussion following a special screening of the film.

Nolan has called the Trinity Test an extraordinary moment in human history.

"I wanted to take the audience into that room and be there for when that button is pushed and really bring the audience to this moment in time," he said in a clip being used by Universal Studios to promote the film.

The movie is based on Kai Bird and Martin J. Sher-

win's Pulitzer Prize-winning "American Prometheus: The Triumph and Tragedy of J. Robert Oppenheimer." Nolan has said Oppenheimer's story is both a dream and a nightmare.

Lilly Adams, a senior outreach coordinator with the Union of Concerned Scientists, participated in the New York City vigil and said it was meant to show support for New Mexicans who have been affected.

"The human cost of Oppenheimer's Trinity Test, and all nuclear weapons activities, is a crucial part of the conversation around US nuclear legacy," she told The Associated Press in an email. "We have to reckon with this human cost to fully understand Oppenheimer's legacy and the harm caused by nuclear weapons."

In developing and testing nuclear weapons, Adams said the US government effectively "poisoned its own people, many of whom are still waiting for recognition and justice."

Awareness

Adams and others have said they hope that those involved in making "Oppenheimer" help raise awareness about the downwinders, who have not been added to the list of those covered by the federal government's compensation program for people exposed to radiation.

Government officials chose the Trinity Test Site because it was remote, flat and had predictable winds. Due to the secret nature of the project, residents in surrounding areas were not warned.

The Tularosa Basin was home to a rural population that lived off the land by raising livestock and tending to gardens and farms. They drew water from cisterns and holding ponds. They had no idea that the fine ash that settled on everything in the days following the explosion was from the world's first atomic blast.

The government initially tried to hide it, saying that an explosion at a munitions dump caused the rumble and bright light, which could be seen more than 160 miles (257 kilometers) away.

It wasn't until the US dropped bombs on Japan weeks later that New Mexico residents realized what they had witnessed.

According to the Manhattan Project National His-

torical Park, large amounts of radiation shot up into the atmosphere and fallout descended over an area about 250 miles (402 kilometers) long and 200 miles (322 kilometers) wide. Scientists tracked part of the fallout pattern as far as the Atlantic Ocean, but the greatest concentration settled about 30 miles (48 kilometers) from the test site.

For Cordova and younger generations who are dealing with cancer, the lack of acknowledgement by the government and those involved with the film is inexcusable.

"We were left here to live with the consequences," Cordova said. "And they'll over-glorify the science and the scientists and make no mention of us. And you know what? Shame on them."

In Los Alamos, more than 200 miles (321 kilometers) north of the Tularosa Basin, reaction to the film has been much different. The legacy of Oppenheimer and the Manhattan Project means Los Alamos is home to one of the nation's premier national laboratories and has the highest percentage of people with doctorate degrees in the U.S.

Oppenheimer Drive cuts through the heart of Los Alamos. Hopenheimer IPA is on tap at a local brewery and the physicist is the focus of an exhibit at the science museum, where some of his handwritten notes and ID card are displayed.

The city is hosting an Oppenheimer Festival that starts Thursday and runs through the end of July.

About 200 extras used in the film were locals, many of them Los Alamos National Laboratory employees.

During breaks, conversations among the extras centered on science and world problems, said Kelly Stewart, who works with Los Alamos County's economic development division and was the film liaison when Nolan and his crew were on location at historic sites around town.

There's a pride that's woven into the town's DNA, Stewart said, and it revolves around the lab's work to address national security and global concerns.

The goal is to position Los Alamos as a place where people can begin to learn "the true stories" behind the events depicted in the film, Stewart said.

Features

ARABIC TIMES

THURSDAY, JULY 20, 2023

LOS ANGELES: Lindsay Lohan has given birth to her first child.

The "Parent Trap" star and her husband, financier **Bader Shammass**, are the parents of a "beautiful, healthy son" named **Luai**, her rep told The Associated Press in a statement Monday.

"The family is over the moon in love," the statement said.

Lohan, 37, gave birth in **Dubai**, where the couple lives, according to Page Six. Her son's exact birth date was not released.

Luai is an Arabic name that means "shield" or "protector." Lohan announced her pregnancy in March in a photo posted to Instagram of a white onesie emblazoned with "coming soon."

She has lived overseas for several years and has been married to Shammass since last year.

Lohan was once a tabloid mainstay but now keeps a lower public profile. She has returned to acting, starring last year in Netflix's "Falling for Christmas," and on the streaming service's upcoming romantic comedy "Irish Wish."

In a June interview with Allure magazine, Lohan said she was thrilled about becoming a mother, and opened up about balancing work and home life.

"I can't wait to see what the feeling is and what it's like to just be a mom," she said. "It's overwhelming in a good way."

Lohan sought the guidance of her "Freaky Friday" co-star.

"I spoke to **Jamie Lee Curtis** recently, and she was like, 'You just bring the baby with you and everything will be fine,'" she said.

Lohan's mother, **Dina Lohan**, recently told People magazine that her daughter has wanted to be a mother.

"Lindsay has always loved kids because I love kids and my mother loves kids; I'm one of four," she said. "We have a big family, so she's always wanted children. And she's so maternal." (AP)

NEW YORK: Fox news ushered **Geraldo Rivera** off the air with cake and balloons, while he left with a timely reminder that his journalism career was a product of affirmative action.

Rivera said that Fox fired him from his regular perch on "The Five," and that he decided to leave the network as a result.

With his last two appearances on the afternoon political talk show apparently canceled, Rivera received a going-away party on the morning show "Fox & Friends," where he generally delivered commentary once a week.

"I feel very emotional and deeply moved," Rivera said following a tribute that included clips from



Shammass



Lohan

his career and goodbye messages from the likes of **Jesse Watters**, **Bret Baier**, **Sean Hannity** and **Jeanine Pirro**.

He also noted - a day after the US Supreme Court struck down affirmative action in higher education - that he got his start in television when the Ford Foundation and Columbia Journalism School teamed

to promote minorities in journalism. He had been working with Puerto Rican activist groups in New York.

Rivera had a celebrated stint in local New York television, exposing abuse in the state's mental health system, and parlayed that into a colorful career as a national talk show host. His tribute poked fun at one infamous stunt when he

opened **Al Capone's** vault on live TV to find it empty.

Rivera joined Fox following the 2001 terrorist attacks because he wanted to be a war correspondent.

His job as a part-time panelist on "The Five" required him to represent a liberal point of view in political combat with four conservatives. (AP)

People & Places

Television

'Most ingenious thief'

Hulu docu traces rise of Blanchard

NEW YORK, July 19, (AP): It's hard not to feel grudging respect for Gerald **Daniel Blanchard**'s long resume of crime - no matter what side of the law you're on.

He once stole half a million dollars from a bank before it officially opened by using a concealed pinhole camera inside the branch. He escaped from a police interrogation room by hiding in the ceiling tiles. Then there was the time he swapped a priceless jewel from an alarm-equipped museum display case with a gift shop replica, Indiana Jones-style.

"It's like a chess game. You need to know 10 moves ahead of what the police are doing," Blanchard said in a recent Zoom interview. "I was more into it for the thrill and the excitement."



Blanchard

Wired magazine called Blanchard the "world's most ingenious thief," and The Globe and Mail newspaper described him as "Canada's most sophisticated bank robber and fraud artist." Audiences can get into his head when Hulu airs the documentary feature "The Jewel Thief" on Thursday.

Director Landon Van Soest traces Blanchard's evolution into a criminal mastermind, going from shoplifting at an Iowa RadioShack as a teen to stealing hundreds of thousands of dollars while disguised in a burqa in Cairo. He often taunted police to try and catch him.

"For me, it's really a film about obsession and ambition and addiction that kept driving him to something bigger," said Van Soest. "He always had to outdo himself. He always had to outsmart someone."

A portrait emerges of a creative, calculating and patient man with a strong engineering bent despite a learning disability and borderline dyslexia. But Blanchard is not always a reliable narrator, with some of his embellishments knocked down in the documentary.

Versions

"There were a lot of different versions of many of these stories," said Van Soest. "We just kind of chose to lean into that. We were going to present many different versions of some of these stories and let the viewers walk away and make up their own minds."

The movie uses interviews with Blanchard and footage from his own extensive archives, as well as speaking with his mother, accomplices and the police who chased him. It's enlivened by a soundtrack that includes songs like Jane's Addiction's "Been Caught Stealing."

Blanchard was a thin, nerdy-looking kid who grew up poor in Omaha, Nebraska, with a single mom who worked two jobs, and he developed a grudge against banks.

"I like stealing from the banks and corporations," he tells the AP. "The reason why I don't like stealing from people is because they work hard for the money. I remember my mom crying on the phone when I was younger saying, 'We don't have the money to turn the lights on. Our food is going to go bad.'"

Early petty shoplifting emboldened him to disconnect a RadioShack's alarm system and take the entire inventory one Easter Sunday. He sold it all to friends and teachers. His home was soon visited by a SWAT team.

Blanchard later figured out how to scam stores by crafting fake receipts for shoplifted goods and returning them for a refund, a skill he used when he found himself penniless at the Canada border after serving 4 1/2 years behind bars.

A customs agent gave him \$10 to take the bus. He instead bought a \$9 disposable camera and stole another, photocopied the sales receipt at a Staples for 10 cents, and returned both. With the money, he did the same thing with more expensive items - a rechargeable battery and a computer program. By the end of the day, he had a couple hundred dollars.

"The Jewel Thief" would likely not have been made - or at least the tone would be vastly different - if Blanchard's crimes had caused bloodshed or death. His honor code, or his criminal calculations, didn't include anyone getting hurt.

"I would always scale my crimes," he explained. "If you use a gun, what's the consequences? If you don't use a gun, what's the consequence? Could somebody be hurt? And so I put a scale and I basically thought in my mind, what's the least amount of prison time I could get if I got caught?"

The crime that would put Blanchard in prison for a long time started when he walked into a Canadian bank under construction wearing a hardhat and safety vest bought at a Home Depot. He installed a \$50 Toys R Us baby monitor into a wall and messed with the motion detector so he could shut it off. Blanchard watched remotely as money was put into ATM machines, and struck that night.

Crime

As you might guess, Blanchard is not much of a fan of TV crime shows. "It frustrates me. And I can't watch it because it's so fake. I always analyze it saying, 'They should have did it this way or that way' or 'You can't do it this way.' I'm always analyzing and thinking things many steps ahead."

Blanchard's list of crimes - including, as a prisoner, breaking into the commissary of the Anamosa State Penitentiary in Iowa - includes the 1998 theft of one of Sisi's stars, a jewel once belonging to a 19th century Austrian empress. He had replaced it with a fake, a ruse which went unnoticed for several days.

The piece was only recovered when Blanchard - looking for a deal from prosecutors - took police to his grandmother's Winnipeg house, where the jewel had been carefully stashed. In fact, Blanchard still had much of the cash he stole. He wasn't a big spender.

"I had lots of money and I never just blew it away or threw it away like most people do. I would always save it. If I could steal something, that's what I would do," he says.

It's hard to watch "The Jewel Thief" without wondering if he could have used his skills for good, such as advising on bank security.

Van Soest calls him "clearly a very intelligent, very capable person that could have offered something much more positive to society." But Blanchard says that once he had a criminal record, law enforcement jobs became impossible.

He tells the AP he's happy with where his life is now. "I learned deep inside myself is the void that I have, which is money doesn't bring happiness," he said.



Kristin Gore, (left), and her husband Damian Kulash, co-directors of the film 'The Beanie Bubble,' pose for a portrait in Los Angeles on June 28. (AP)

Film

Lessons in the absurdity of Beanie Baby craze

Tale of America in 'Beanie Bubble'

LOS ANGELES, July 19, (AP): Economic bubbles come in all shapes, sizes and levels of insanity, but the Beanie Baby craze was easily one of the most absurd.

The cuddly \$5 toys, under-stuffed for maximum hug-ability, stamped with cute names on their Ty, Inc. tags, and given limited edition runs ignited a surreal frenzy in America in the mid-1990s as regular people collected, traded and sold the toys with the hopes that their value would just keep going up at the dawn of the e-commerce age. It made some people money, and the founder, Ty Warner, a billionaire in three years.

When it burst, it also left many in the red. But unlike most bubbles, this one ended with piles of under-stuffed animals in the attic.

Personal feelings about or even knowledge about the Beanie Baby moment have everything to do with your age between the years of 1996 and 2000. For screenwriter Kristin Gore and OK Go musician Damian Kulash, Jr., around college age at the time, it couldn't have been less exciting.

"We were perfectly situated to not care," Kulash said. "We were too old to be the target demo and too young to be in the investing class, but also snotty and contrarian enough to be like, this is crazy. It was exactly the kind of thing we were rolling out eyes at at the time."

But a few years ago Gore was given the book "The Great Beanie Baby Bubble: Mass Delusion and the Dark Side of Cute," by Zac Bissonnette, as a possible adaptation. In it, she found a riveting story of dreams, greed and corruption in the stories of three women around Ty Warner - one of his earliest business partners, a girlfriend whose two daughters help inspire some of the toys, and a young college student in a minimum wage position who literally put the company online. Not only did she want to write the screenplay, she wanted to direct it with Kulash as her debut.

"The only drawback was that it appeared to be from the outside about

a product," said Kulash, who is also married to and shares children with Gore, the daughter of former US Vice President Al Gore.

But within this wild, contained story, they both saw big, relevant themes about the culture, cycles of inequality and the female relationship to the American dream. In other words, "The Beanie Bubble" is not a story about a toy.

To play Ty Warner, the enigmatic founder of the company, they went to someone they knew: Zach Galifianakis.

"Everyone understands that he's a comedic genius, but we also knew that he has this capacity for pathos that's incredibly interesting and this real range that he doesn't get to display that often," Gore said. "This role necessitated someone who you fell for and also, even when you were horrified by them, you still sort of understand that it comes from a broken place."

Inspiration

Galifianakis was less confident, though. Kulash said he even tried to talk them out of casting him, claiming that he's "not really an actor." His filmmakers respectfully disagreed.

To ensure the film didn't feel like a Wikipedia page about Beanie Babies, Gore took some inspiration from "Casino," with three voiceovers and three timelines telling the stories of the women: The executive, Robbie, played by Elizabeth Banks, the single mother, Sheila, played by Sarah Snook, and the temp, Maya, played by Geraldine Viswanathan.

"All of these women see an opportunity and we want you to take that opportunity with them and want that with them. And all of these women get sort of betrayed or spat out by that situation," Kulash said. "We want you to feel that with them."

The big challenge was how to make sure that the viewer is on the emotional rollercoaster with the characters at the same moment. Kulash drew on his methods for the OK Go videos, taking the basic facts and stories from the

book, putting them on a spreadsheet, and moving them around to create what they lovingly call "a weird structure."

Surprises

"It was a lot of fun and very much like the videos to try to choreograph surprises and a sense of wonder as you move through that, like to make it something of a puzzle for the viewer to solve," he added. "You're untangling it as you go."

Gore drew on some of her own experiences as a young woman finding her way in a career and tossed some lines from her real life into the film, including one chilling dismissal where Maya asks Ty for a raise. He's a billionaire who has profited from her innovation and ideas in e-commerce and embracing scarcity and the secondary eBay market and she's still getting minimum wage. Ty denies her the raise and promotion yet tells her she's his "secret weapon."

"I'm not at all unique. The whole point of it was not to be my own emotional catharsis, but to try to represent what so many people go through," said Gore. "A lot of people, men and women, have responded to that line and those themes in the movie. We're trying to shed a light on how pervasive that is and how cyclical it is and how (messed) up it is. And hopefully we can reframe it all."

They both feel like they've been in their own bubble making this movie, which opens in theaters Friday and will be available on Apple TV+ on July 28. Both find it funny that there's been a slew of "product origin" movies lately, like "Flamin' Hot," "Tetris" and "BlackBerry," but hope that they've made something different and fresh.

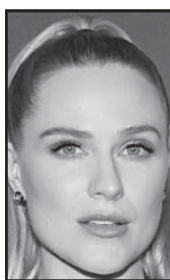
"It's surreal to have it be something that everyone will be able to see. We're excited and freaked out," Gore said. "Our whole mission in making anything was to try to spread some kind of joy and get at some kind of meaning. We hope that we've done that. That certainly was our North Star."



Robert Downey Jr. poses for photographers upon arrival at the premiere for the film 'Oppenheimer' on Thursday, July 13, in London. (AP)



Manson



Wood

Variety

LOS ANGELES: A first-generation iPhone has sold at auction for \$190,373, almost 380 times its original price of \$499 when the groundbreaking device went for sale in 2007.

LCG Auctions, which hosted Sunday's sale, said the 4GB iPhone model was 20 times rarer than the 8GB model released at the same time for \$599. That's largely because the 4GB model was discontinued two months after launch given customer preference for the larger memory size.

"A new bar was set Sunday night," said **Mark Montero**, the founder of LCG Auctions. "We are thrilled to be a part of this fantastic record breaking sale."

It is the third original iPhone to sell for record prices at auction in the past year. An 8GB model sold for \$63,356 in February and another 8GB model fetched \$39,340 in October 2022. All were factory sealed in their original packaging.

The iPhone is one of the world's most successful electronic products and helped make Apple the first publicly held company with a \$3 trillion market value. The Cupertino, California, company reached that milestone 16 years after the first iPhones were sold. (AP)

CONCORD, NH: Marilyn Manson will plead no contest to blowing his nose on a videographer at a 2019 concert in New Hampshire, according to a filing by his attorney.

The rocker, whose legal name is **Brian Warner**, was charged with two misdemeanor counts of simple assault stemming from the encounter at the Bank of New Hampshire Pavilion in Gilford on Aug. 19, 2019.

A notice of intent filed Monday says that Manson is expected to plead no contest to only one charge, and that prosecutors would dismiss the other in the fully negotiated plea. A no contest plea means Manson will not contest the charge and does not admit guilt.

Manson would face a sentence of a \$1,200 fine with part of it suspended and 20 hours of community service within six months. Manson also would need to remain arrest-free and notify local police of any New Hampshire performances for two years.

A judge would have to accept the plea,

which is expected to be entered Thursday in **Belknap County** Superior Court. That's in place of a final pretrial hearing that was scheduled in advance of his planned Aug. 7 trial.

It's not clear whether Manson would be required to be in court or be allowed

to participate via video. His lawyer, **Kent Barker**, said Tuesday it would be up to the judge. (AP)

In May, a California judge threw out key sections of Manson's lawsuit against his former fiancée, "Westworld" actor **Evan Rachel Wood**, claiming she

fabricated public allegations that he sexually and physically abused her during their relationship and encouraged other women to do the same. (AP)

RENO, Nev.: A revoked Nevada license plate that was meant to "drive away" Californians is getting one last chance to go back on the streets.

The plate - which reads "GOB-K2CA," short for "Go back to California" - was recalled by the state Department of Motor Vehicles in May after it received a complaint, KOLO-TV first reported. Now the vehicle owner is appealing the recall and will have a hearing on Wednesday, according to the Reno-area news station.

A section of the Nevada Administrative Code applied to the recall prohibits defamatory references to a person or group.

"In this case, the defamed group is Californians," DMV spokesperson **Eli Rohl** told the Las Vegas Review-Journal. He adding that the department "regularly" turns down license plates that share the same message.

A special license committee meets every Monday to review reported license plates, before determining which ones violate Nevada statute.

The DMV reviewed more than 700 license plates from July 2022 to early March. (AP)



Jesse Watters appears during his debut 8 p.m. EDT time slot on 'Jesse Watters Primetime' on Monday, July 17, in New York. (AP)

Philanthropy

'Not all approve'

'Fast Grants' aim to speed up research

NEW YORK, July 19, (AP): In March 2020, an experiment in science philanthropy was hatched in the span of a five-minute call.

Patrick Collison, the now 34-year-old billionaire CEO of the online payments company Stripe, and economist Tyler Cowen were chewing over a shared concern: Scientific progress seemed to be slowing down. As the first pandemic lockdowns went into effect, researchers were in a holding pattern, waiting to hear if they could redirect their federal grants to COVID-related work. Collison and Cowen worried that the National Institutes of Health wasn't moving quickly enough, so they launched Fast Grants to get emergency research dollars to virologists, coronavirus experts, and other scientists rapidly.

"We thought: Let's just do this," Cowen recalls. "It was a bit like put up or shut up."

Collison and his brother, John - a Stripe co-founder - contributed and along with Cowen raised more than \$50 million from some of the biggest names in tech: Jack Dorsey, **Elon Musk**, and Peter Thiel. Mark Zuckerberg and Priscilla Chan and former Google CEO Eric Schmidt and his wife, Wendy.



Musk

The first round of grants went out in 48 hours, and later rounds were distributed within two weeks, a drastic difference from the hundreds of days a scientist typically waits to hear from the NIH.

Grants of \$10,000 to \$500,000 backed early efforts to sequence new coronavirus variants, clinical trials for drugs that could potentially be repurposed, and a simple and reliable saliva-based COVID-19 test. By January 2022, all the money had gone out the door to more than 260 projects.

Fast Grants is one of many science improvement projects launched or backed by Silicon Valley billionaires since the pandemic began. Donors have channeled hundreds of millions of dollars into research labs and nonprofits to address what they view as problems with how government agencies and institutional philanthropies fund science. They argue that scientists spend too much time seeking funding for grants that are too restrictive and see a need to support high-potential young scientists and risky or speculative projects that are often overlooked or underfunded.

Focus

Collison, along with Vitalik Buterin, creator of the Ethereum blockchain platform, and other donors, pledged more than half a billion dollars to the Arc Institute, a new biomedical research nonprofit that wants scientists to focus on science, not chasing grants.

Eric and Wendy Schmidt spun off Convergent Research, a nonprofit helping to incubate independent organizations to develop research tools and niche or underfunded areas of science.

While these contributions are just a drop in the bucket compared with the nearly \$50 billion the NIH spends on research each year, they've been met with both applause and ambivalence from scientists and philanthropy observers. Many of the experiments are similar to approaches already backed by government, leading some to question whether small-scale funding experiments in science are money well spent. Others question the societal implications when more science research is driven by a handful of tech elites motivated by the "move fast and break things" ethos.

Private donors have long played a role in shaping science in the United States - from the creation of the modern research universities to the independent research institutions of the early 20th century and beyond.

"There is a sort of 'back to the future' element to what these guys are doing," says Eric John Abrahamson, a historian at work on a book about science philanthropy. He sees parallels between today's donors and Andrew Carnegie and John D. Rockefeller, who wanted to reimagine the institutions of science in the 1910s, '20s and '30s.

The federal government became the majority funder of basic science research at universities and nonprofit research institutes in the post-World War II era. Today federal funding for basic science, which provides a foundation for knowledge and discovery rather than solving a specific problem, still exceeds the combined contributions from corporations, universities, and philanthropy. That margin is narrowing, according to National Science Foundation surveys.

The impact of private donors has grown since the 1990s, says France Córdova, president of the Science Philanthropy Alliance, which works to increase giving to science research. Nonprofit and philanthropic contributions for basic research increased from \$1.5 billion in 1990 to \$9.8 billion in 2020, according to NSF surveys. Contributions from higher education funds, which include money donors gave to university endowments in the past, increased from \$1.9 billion to more than \$14 billion in that same period. That growth is largely thanks to new philanthropies built on wealth from technology, data, and finance, she says.

These donors "want to apply some of the same entrepreneurial spirit that they used to get their money to philanthropy," Córdova says.

Brian Nosek, executive director of the Center for Open Science, which works to increase transparency in the research process, applauds donors for helping to shake up how science is funded.

"There are many possible ways to decide what to fund, who to fund, how to fund them, how to track progress," Nosek says. "We haven't had a culture of experimentation."

Nosek is on the board of the Good Science Project, an advocacy group that's pushing government agencies to make their science grant making more innovative and efficient. Stuart Buck founded that nonprofit last year after a conversation with Collison. Collison and his brother, John, are its biggest benefactors, though they have not disclosed the size of their contributions.

Cancer

Collison is also involved in the Arc Institute, which he helped launch in 2021 with \$650 million pledged by more than a dozen other donors. The Palo Alto-based biomedical research organization provides scientists with no-strings-attached funding over eight-year terms to study the causes of complex diseases like cancer. The effort builds on lessons from Fast Grants. Funding isn't tied to a particular research project so if scientists want to change course, their hands aren't tied.

Funding approaches that shield scientists from bureaucracy or allow a wider range of ideas to get support may be useful in a circumscribed way, says David Peterson, an assistant professor of sociology at Purdue University who studies how scientific organizations are evolving. But he has doubts that these efforts will tilt the scale more broadly.

In Peterson's conversations with scientists, some said they view these donors' approaches as an extension of the tech world's fixation with disruption, he says. "There is a feeling that science is another institution like the music industry or taxicabs that are ripe for fundamental transformation to make it much more efficient."

But for a select group of scientists doing the kind of work these extremely wealthy donors care about, there's now more money and opportunity.

At E11 Bio, for example, an interdisciplinary team of nine scientists is developing a technology platform for scientists to map every circuit between the 100 billion or so neurons in the brain. Understanding the full architecture of the brain could eventually lead to new treatments for brain disorders.

E11 bio is funded by Schmidt Futures, founded by former Google CEO Eric Schmidt, which spun off the nonprofit Convergent Research in 2021 to help launch independent organizations focused on areas like synthetic biology or how drugs target human proteins. Each research organization receives a \$20 million to \$100 million budget for a five- to seven-year duration.



This image of a fossil provided by the Canadian Museum of Nature shows the left hand of a mammal wrapped around the lower jaw of a dinosaur. (AP)

Mammals may have hunted down dinosaurs for dinner

An unusual find in China suggests some early mammals may have hunted dinosaur for dinner.

The fossil shows a badgerlike creature chomping down on a small, beaked dinosaur, their skeletons intertwined. The find comes from a site known as "China's Pompeii," where mud and debris from long-ago volcanoes buried creatures in their tracks.

"It does seem like this is a prehistoric hunt, captured in stone, like a freeze frame," University of Edinburgh paleontologist Steve Brusatte, who was not involved with the study, said in an email.

The fossil, described Tuesday in the journal Sci-

entific Reports, shows two creatures from around 125 million years ago, during the Cretaceous period.

Even though the mammal is much smaller, researchers think it was attacking the dinosaur when they both got caught in the volcanic flow, said study author Jordan Mallon, a paleobiologist at the Canadian Museum of Nature. The mammal is perched on the dinosaur, its paws gripping the reptile's jaw and a hind limb while its teeth plunge into the ribcage.

The study authors acknowledged that there have been some fossil forgeries known from this part of

the world, which Mallon said was a concern when they started their research. But after doing their own preparations of the skeletons and analyzing the rock samples, he said they were confident that the fossil - which was found by a farmer in 2012 - was genuine, and would welcome other scientists to study the fossil as well.

The mammal in the fossil duo is the meat-eating *Repenomamus robustus*, about the size of a house cat, Mallon said. The dinosaur - *Psittacosaurus lujiatunensis* - was about as big as a medium-sized dog with a parrotlike beak. (AP)

Health

Climate change threatens to undo progress

Experts fear infectious diseases spike

NEW YORK, July 19, (AP): People around the world are living longer, healthier lives than they were just half a century ago.

Climate change threatens to undo that progress.

Across the planet, animals—and the diseases they carry—are shifting to accommodate a globe on the friz. And they're not alone: Ticks, mosquitoes, bacteria, algae, even fungi are on the move, shifting or expanding their historical ranges to adapt to climatic conditions that are evolving at an unprecedented pace.

These changes are not happening in a vacuum. Deforestation, mining, agriculture, and urban sprawl are taking bites out of the globe's remaining wild areas, contributing to biodiversity loss that's occurring at a rate unprecedented in human history. Populations of species that humans rely on for sustenance are dwindling and getting pushed into ever-smaller slices of habitat, creating new zoonotic-disease hotspots. Meanwhile, the number of people experiencing extreme repercussions of a warming planet continues to grow. Climate change displaces some 20 million people every year—people who need housing, medical care, food, and other essentials that put strain on already-fragile systems that are growing ever more stressed.

All of these factors create conditions ripe for human illness. Diseases old and new are becoming more prevalent and even cropping up in places they've never been found before. Researchers have begun piecing together a patchwork of evidence that illuminates the formidable threat climate-driven diseases currently pose to human health—and the scope of the dangers to come.

"This is not just something off in the future," Neil Vora, a physician with the nonprofit Conservation International, said. "Climate change is here. People are suffering and dying right now."

Research shows that climate change influences the spread of disease in a few major ways.

To escape rising temperatures in their native ranges, animals are beginning to move to higher, cooler elevations, bringing diseases with them. That poses a threat to people living in those areas, and it also leads to dangerous intermingling between animal newcomers and existing species. Bird flu, for example, has been spreading with greater ease among wild animals

as rising seas and other factors push nesting bird species inland, where they're more likely to run into other species. Diseases that jump between species tend to have an easier time eventually making the leap to humans.

Warmer winters and milder autumns and springs allow carriers of pathogens—ticks, mosquitoes, and fleas, for example—to remain active for longer swaths of the year. Expanded active periods mean busier mating seasons and fewer casualties over the cold winter months. The Northeastern United States has seen a massive proliferation of Lyme disease-carrying black-legged ticks over the past decade, with warmer winters playing a decisive role in that trend.

Erratic weather patterns, such as periods of extreme drought and flooding, create conditions for diseases to spread. Cholera, a water-borne bacteria, thrives during the monsoon season in South Asian countries when flooding contaminates drinking water, especially in places that lack quality sanitation infrastructure. Valley fever, a fungal-borne pathogen that grows in the soil in the Western U.S., flourishes during periods of rain. The severe drought that tends to follow rain in that part of the world shrivels the fungal spores, which allows them to more easily disperse into the air at the slightest disturbance—a hiker's boot, say, or a garden rake—and find their way into the human respiratory system.

Pathogens

These climate-driven impacts are taking a serious toll on human health. Cases of disease linked to mosquitoes, ticks, and fleas tripled in the US between 2004 and 2016, according to the Centers for Disease Prevention and Control. The threat extends beyond commonly recognized vector-borne diseases. Research shows more than half of all the pathogens known to cause disease in humans can be made worse by climate change. The problem compounds as time goes on. The World Health Organization estimates that between 2030 and 2050, just a handful of climate-related threats, such as malaria and water insecurity, will claim a quarter of a million additional lives each year.

"I think we've drastically underestimated not only how much climate change is already changing disease risks, but just how many kinds of risks are changing," said Colin Carlson, a

global change biologist at Georgetown University.

He noted that while connecting the dots between tick-borne illnesses and climate change, for example, is a relatively straightforward scientific endeavor, the scientific community and the general public need to be aware that the impacts of global warming on disease can also manifest in many other, less obvious ways. The COVID-19 pandemic is an example of how quickly disease can move through global populations and how deeply complicated the public health response to such threats can get.

"I think there's a lot more to worry about in terms of epidemic and pandemic threats," he said.

The world has the tools it needs—wildlife-surveillance networks, vaccines, early-warning systems—to mitigate the impacts of climate-driven disease. Some of these tools have already been deployed on a local scale to great effect. What remains to be seen is how quickly governments, NGOs, medical providers, doctors, and the public can work across borders to develop and deploy a global plan of action.

Also:

SARASOTA, Fla.: A southwest Florida county has documented a seventh case of malaria, state authorities said.

The Florida Department of Health reported a new locally acquired case of malaria in Sarasota County during the week of July 9-15. That's in addition to five cases last month and one case in May.

Sarasota County and Manatee County directly to the north have been under a mosquito-borne illness alert for nearly a month. The area is located on the Gulf of Mexico, just south of Tampa Bay.

Sarasota County officials have been using aircraft, trucks and ground crews to apply insecticide to the area where the malaria cases were reported. Mosquito control workers are trapping the insects and sending them to the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for evaluation.

About 2,000 US cases of malaria are diagnosed each year - the vast majority in travelers coming from countries where malaria commonly spreads.

Since 1992, there have been 11 outbreaks involving malaria from mosquitoes in the US. The last one occurred in 2003 in Palm Beach County, Florida, where eight cases were reported.



An Emperor Tamarin licks frozen fruit on a hot day, in Rome's zoo, in Rome, Wednesday, July 19. Zookeepers at the Bioparco often give animals ice blocks with either fruit or meat inside on hot summer days. (AP)

Discovery

Project leads to more pelican: Restoration efforts on three heavily eroded coastal Louisiana islands are rebuilding habitat for Louisiana's state bird, the brown pelican, a needed boost as brown pelican colonies have been on the decline.

The Times-Picayune/The New Orleans Advocate reports that the coastal bird habitat has been reduced by coastal erosion, driven by subsidence, sea-level rise fueled by climate change, the 2010 BP Deepwater Horizon oil spill, and numerous hurricanes.

Louisiana brown pelican colonies have been in deep decline in recent years, Todd Baker, a biologist overseeing barrier island restoration projects for the state's Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority, told the newspaper.

"In 2002, we had 30 brown pelican colonies in Louisiana. By 2010, we were down to 22, and as we stand here today, there's only nine left in Louisiana," Baker told the CPRA board of directors. "And of those nine, three have been recently restored and three are under design (for restoration)." (AP)

Limit eating fish from river: North Carolina health officials formally recommended limits on eating certain fish caught from portions of the Cape Fear River due to health concerns from a substance within the family of "forever chemicals."

The state Department of Health and Human Services issued a consumption advisory for species of freshwater fish from the middle and lower Cape Fear River south of Fayetteville to north of Wilmington because of exposure to what's called perfluorooctane sulfonic acid, or PFOS.

PFOS belongs within a chemical group called PFAS, or perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances, which do not break down in the environment. Studies have linked long-term PFAS exposures to several health effects for children and adults, including increased risks for certain kinds of cancer, according to the department. Other states have issued similar advisories.

DHHS said the North Carolina advisories are more restrictive than those in many other states because it used a new PFOS reference dose - the amount below which no adverse health effects should occur from a lifetime of exposure - released recently by the US Environmental Protection Agency under its administrator **Michael S. Regan**. (AP)

Orcas disrupt boat race: A pod of killer whales bumped one of the boats in an endurance sailing race as it approached the Strait of Gibraltar, the latest encounter in what researchers say is a growing trend of sometimes-aggressive interactions with Iberian orcas.

The 15-minute run-in with at least three of the giant mammals forced the crew competing in The Ocean Race to drop its sails and raise a clatter in an attempt



Regan



Van Beek

to scare the approaching orcas off. No one was injured, but Team JAJO skipper **Jelmer van Beek** said in a video posted on The Ocean Race website that it was "a scary moment."

"Twenty minutes ago, we got hit by some orcas," he said in the video. "Three orcas came straight at us and started hitting the rudders. Impressive to see the orcas, beautiful animals, but also a dangerous moment for us as a team." (AP)

The Conversation

Not the only yardstick to measure growth of global game

WWC will highlight how far other countries have closed the gap with US

By Adam Beissel, Miami University; Andrew Grainger, Western Sydney University, Julie E. Brice, California State University, Fullerton, and Verity Postlethwaite, Loughborough University

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

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The 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup begins on July 20, 2023, in Australia and New Zealand, and the U.S. enters the soccer tournament in a familiar position: favorites.

The U.S. Women's National Team, or USWNT, is the reigning back-to-back champion, and many pundits are expecting it to make history by securing a third successive title.

Certainly, the team is built on solid foundations - it has a tournament history like no other, having reached the podium in all eight editions of the tournament stretching back to 1991 - and lifted the winner's trophy four times. And it still possesses some of the game's most recognizable and decorated players, Megan Rapinoe and Alex Morgan among them.

Yet the U.S. players are not certain to win the World Cup this time around. No USWNT has experienced more turnover between World Cups than the current squad - it will be sporting a new head coach, and the team will be missing several mainstay players because of retirement and a spate of injuries. And its form heading into the tournament has been patchy.

Moreover, there are external currents that are also pushing against U.S. dominance. A commitment by governing body FIFA to growing the women's game globally has contributed to nations around the world narrowing the gap with the U.S. on the pitch.

All of those factors should lead to a more competitive tournament in New Zealand and Australia. But having more teams challenging the U.S. is not the only

yardstick for success in the women's game.

As we argue in our forthcoming book, "The 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup: Management, Politics and Representation," much more needs to be done by world soccer's governing body to put in place institutional reforms prioritizing what is right over simply what is profitable in the women's game. We believe that only then can it play on a level playing field.

Some 22 years after the first official FIFA Women's World Cup, the sport is witnessing dramatic growth internationally. The number of women and girls participating in the sport at all levels is increasing. FIFA's plan is to double the number of women soccer players globally to 60 million by 2026 and pump US\$1 billion into the women's game over a four-year period.

Meanwhile, more and more countries are launching professional leagues, including recent additions such as Colombia and Mexico.

Accompanying this has been increased sponsorship of women's clubs and leagues and a growing number of lucrative sponsorship deals for top players.

Governing bodies and franchises are beginning to invest more in players, coaches and infrastructure, too. And it has yielded success. The past year alone has seen record-breaking player transfers, record attendance at games and television viewing figures hitting an all-time high at both domestic and international levels.

This growth is not restricted to playing fields in Europe and North America. Women's soccer in Africa, the Middle East and Asia has also benefited. For the first time, the World Cup will see 32 teams participate - up from 24 in the past two tournaments. Among the teams making their inaugural appearance will be Morocco, the Philippines, Vietnam and Zambia.

Noting the growth in such countries, U.S. coach Vlatko Andonovski commented: "The world that is catching up is Wales, is Vietnam, is Zambia, Portugal."

That isn't to say that a handful of countries led by the U.S. won't again dominate. But even if they do, that would not negate the strides made in the women's game since the last World Cup in 2019.

Meanwhile, FIFA has displayed a commitment to investing, celebrating and marketing its flagship women's tournament in ways not seen in previous editions. Prize money, team preparation cash and compensation to players' clubs has increased 300% over the last World Cup, with the overall prize money standing at \$152 million. Each player at the tournament will receive at least \$30,000.

Yet the overall prize pool remains a fraction of the men's equivalent - a gender disparity called out by Australia's national women's side in a recent video message.

And crediting FIFA for progress on gender pay issues ignores how women footballers had to overcome exploitation, under-marketing and structural and institutional barriers created in part by the game's governing body in the first place.

Unlike the men's game, dozens of players taking the pitch in Australia and New Zealand are amateur or semiprofessional footballers at best. Even some of those who are professional endure poor working conditions, insufficient facilities and unsafe playing conditions - something that likely plays a part in the recent spate of ACL injuries among top female players.

And this is to say nothing of the horrific and widespread cases of sexual misconduct, harassment and emotional abuse documented in the women's game. Women soccer players from Afghanistan to India to Argentina have been subjected to systemic abuse, misconduct and violence stemming in part from labor precarity and a lack of workplace protections.

Here, the U.S. - long the global leader in the women's game - is not immune, as a 2022 report into the sexual misconduct, and verbal and emotional abuse by coaches in the National Women's Soccer League has shown.

Going into the 2023 World Cup, the USWNT remains a yardstick by which other teams can be measured. The U.S. players are emblematic of the soaring popularity and commercial value of women's soccer. But as their labor activism, quest for equal pay and push for better protection reveals, even at the elite level of the women's game, battles remain both on and off the pitch. (AP)

World Cup spotlight shining on Australia

Co-hosts NZ seek own attention

AUCKLAND, New Zealand, July 19, (AP): In a country known more for its love of rugby than women's soccer, New Zealand is aiming to win fans as well as matches.

The Football Ferns kick off the Women's World Cup on Thursday night with a Group A match against Norway. The Ferns got the nod for the tournament opener and will be followed by co-host Australia's match against Ireland in Sydney.

"I hope there will be a lot of people here for not just our games, but all of the games. It's a world

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tournament and something we've been so excited to have here now. I've been looking forward to this for three years," defender Ali Riley said. "So I hope the excitement is there and I hope we do well, so that maybe the people who didn't know about it will hear about it and will want to come to see us make history."

New Zealand Football announced that the opener at Auckland's Eden Park will have the biggest crowd for a soccer match in the country's history, estimated to be at least 50,000.

"I was at the 1999 World Cup final in Los Angeles and I know what that did for me as a young girl. And so to have people here, that noise will give us energy," said Riley, who grew up in California and plays professionally for Angel City in the National Women's Soccer League.

"But also I know what that can do for any little girls seeing these players, these awesome, confident empowered, women and athletes just living their dreams."

While the Ferns are trying to capture hearts, the demand for tickets to Australia's opener was so high that the match was moved to Stadium Australia, which was built for the 2000 Olympics and can seat more than 82,000.

The Ferns have never won a World Cup match in five previous appearances in soccer's biggest tournament. And they have struggled this year, with losses in seven of the nine games they've played.

While it's hoped that New Zealand will rally as hosts, the team faces a significant challenge in Norway, which won the World Cup in 1995. Considered the favorites in Group A, the Norwegians are 5-1-1 all-time against New Zealand, with the only loss coming in a 2019 exhibition match.

"There will be a lot of pressure, both on the home team but also on us, for the opening game, but we feel like we know what to expect," Norway coach Hege Riise said. "Again, in opening game, everything can happen. But our preparation has been good on New Zealand, defensively and offensively, attacking, so we feel like we are prepared."

Ada Hegerberg returns to Norway's World Cup squad after the striker's self-imposed hiatus from 2017 to 2022 in protest of what she



In this file photo, Napoli's Kim Min-Jae (left), battles for a head ball with Lazio's Elseid Hysaj during the Serie A soccer match between Napoli and Lazio, at the Diego Armando Maradona stadium in Naples, Italy. Bayern Munich has signed South Korean defender Kim Min-jae from Italian champion Napoli for a reported fee of 50 million euros (\$55 million). The Bavarian powerhouse said Tuesday that the 26-year-old Kim signed a five-year deal through June 2028 and will wear the No. 3. (AP)

believed was lack of respect for the women's national team.

The first woman to win the prestigious Ballon d'Or award, Hegerberg scored 43 goals in 76 international appearances. Currently playing for Lyon, she has scored a record 59 goals in the Champions League.

Like Hegerberg, Australia star Sam Kerr is one of the game's top players.

Kerr is Australia's all-time leading international scorer - among men and women - with 63 goals. She recently helped Chelsea clinch a fourth consecutive Women's Super League title and third straight FA Cup.

"For me the expectation has kind of been growing over the four years so it's been something I've learned to deal with," she said. "Of course everyone in Australia has a lot of expectations, but it is something I take in my stride and I try to just enjoy it and I think back at Chelsea I've done that too. I've just enjoyed it and I think that's when I'm my best me."

Australia is well primed as co-hosts of the tournament. The team went undefeated in February's Cup of Nations, beating Jamaica, Spain and the Czech Republic. In April, the Matilda's ended England's 30-game unbeaten streak with a 2-0 win.

But, a note of caution for the Matildas: they dropped a 3-2 match against Ireland in Dublin in late 2021.

Ireland is playing in its first World Cup and it has been a bumpy road to get here. A warm-up match against Colombia in Brisbane was called after 20 minutes because of what the Irish said was rough play.

Denise O'Sullivan was taken to the hospital with a shin injury the midfielder sustained during the behind-closed-doors match. Two Colombia players received yellow cards in the opening 19 minutes.

The injury wasn't serious and O'Sullivan, who plays for the NWSL's North Carolina Courage, was expected to play in the opener.



Australia's captain Sam Kerr (left), gathers with teammates at Stadium Australia in Sydney, Australia, Wednesday, July 19, 2023, ahead of their opening Women's World Cup soccer match against Ireland, Thursday. (AP)

'Forget about the distractions'

Nigeria's 'focus' turns from finances to soccer for opener against Canada

BRISBANE, Australia, July 19, (AP): All the focus on Randy Waldrum's criticism of the Nigerian soccer federation and the rebuke he received in return will count for very little Friday when the Super Falcons open

their Women's World Cup campaign against Canada.

"I think the players have appreciated the fact that I will step up for them and speak out on their behalf," Waldrum said of his comments about the federa-

tion's financial support for his team. "As a coach, I need to be a voice for the girls and fight for the things that they deserve to be getting."

Ever since the Super Falcons touched down in Australia this month, though, the mindset of Waldrum and his team has shifted from pay and conditions to the task at hand.

"Forget about the distractions, and just focus on the game," star striker Asisat Oshoala, who plays for Barcelona, said after a training session in Brisbane this week.

It's a sentiment Waldrum, who coaches the University of Pittsburgh women's soccer team, fully supports.

"What we've said is out there. Now let's set it aside and focus on football," he said. "Everything has always been about football."

Nigeria is focusing on placing in the top two in Group B, which includes Olympic champion Canada, tournament co-host Australia and tournament newcomer Ireland.

Achieving that goal will ensure Nigeria advances to the round of 16 and at least matching its run at the 2019 Women's World Cup.

The Super Falcons traditionally have been the strongest team in Africa, with nine Women's Africa Cup of Nations titles and eight World Cup appearances. But this year Nigeria is entering the World Cup with disappointment after placing fourth in the continental championship a year ago.

The team staged sit-ins at its hotels at the 2019 World Cup and at last year's Africa Cup of Nations to protest a lack of payments the players said they were owed by the federation.

In the lead-up to this year's World Cup, the Super Falcons had fewer



Oshoala

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training days together than Waldrum would have liked after the federation canceled a training camp in Nigeria. The players and federation also are at odds over what they will be paid for playing in the World Cup.

Oshoala said the players appreciate Waldrum's support. He made his most pointed comments about the situation in a podcast earlier this month. An official from the national federation fired back with heavy criticism of Waldrum, fueling more headlines.

"He's been helpful as well to the players," Oshoala said. "He's encouraged everyone to just go out there to play." Rumors arose recently that the Nigerian players would boycott their opening match against Canada, but the players put that kind of speculation to rest.

"We're used to being in this situation now," Oshoala said. "At the end of the day the girls understand it's about their career, it's about the nation first, and we're going to go out there and play regardless."

Spain star Alexis Putellas quit training on Monday, raising doubts she will be fit to play against Costa Rica in their opening match at the Women's World Cup on Friday.

The two-time Ballon d'Or winner has played only six matches as a substitute for Barcelona since April when she returned after a 10-month layoff with a ruptured anterior cruciate ligament in her left knee.

Putellas started in two of Spain's World Cup warmup matches, against Panama and Denmark, but missed the match against Vietnam in New Zealand last week.

She left Spain's training run at Massey University near Palmerston North after only 30 minutes on Monday during which she took part in passing drills and seemed comfortable. A Spain team spokesperson said her early departure was planned.

Midfielder Irene Guerrero spoke to the media at the end of training and said she hoped Putellas would be fit to play Friday at Wellington's Sky Stadium.

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His return to form last season under United manager Erik ten Hag came after a year battling with his fitness, which saw him lose his England place before being recalled for the World Cup last November.

"As a United fan all my life, I know the responsibility that comes with representing this badge and feel the highs and lows as much as anyone," Rashford said.

"I can assure you that I will give everything to help the team reach the level we are capable of, and I can feel the same determination around the dressing room.

I couldn't be more excited for the future under this manager."

Rashford extends Man United contract

MANCHESTER, England, July 19, (AP): After the most prolific season of his career, Marcus Rashford committed himself to five more years at Manchester United.

The England forward ended speculation about his future by signing a new long-term deal that will keep him at Old Trafford through to 2028.

Rashford scored 30 goals in all competitions last season, with his form helping fill the void left by Cristiano Ronaldo's exit in November as he established himself as a key part of a

United team which qualified for the Champions League and won the English League Cup.

"I joined Manchester United as a 7-year-old boy with a dream. That same passion, pride, and determination to succeed still drives me every time I have the honor of wearing the shirt," Rashford said in a statement released by United. "I've already had some amazing experiences at this incredible club, but there is still a lot more to achieve and I remain relentlessly determined to win more trophies in the years ahead."

Rashford has made 359 appearances for United since rising through the club's youth academy. He has scored 123 goals.

SPORTS

Diamondbacks outlast Braves to end 4-game skid

Dodgers rout Orioles

ATLANTA, July 19, (AP): Geraldo Perdomo gave Arizona the lead with a two-run double in the ninth inning and the Diamondbacks took advantage of Atlanta's worst pitching effort of the season to beat the Braves 16-13 on Tuesday night.

It was Arizona's first game in which each team had at least 13 runs and the first in the majors since the Chicago White Sox beat the Cubs 17-13 on Aug. 27, 2021.

The NL East-leading Braves have lost three straight. Arizona snapped a four-game losing streak.

Christian Walker homered twice and had three hits and five RBIs for Arizona. Corbin Carroll had two hits, scored three runs and drove in two.

Miguel Castro (5-3) pitched a scoreless eighth and Kevin Ginkel struck out the side in the ninth for his first save.

BASEBALL

With the game tied at 13, Arizona pinch-hitter Jake McCarthy led off the ninth with a bloop single off Braves closer Raisel Iglesias (3-4).

Rangers 5, Rays 3

In Arlington, All-Star right-hander Nathan Eovaldi pitched two-hit ball over six scoreless innings and matched the major league lead with his 11th victory as the AL West-leading Texas beat Tampa Bay.

Marcus Semien and Corey Seager homered for the Rangers (57-39), whose fifth consecutive victory since the break matched their season-best winning streak.

Eovaldi (11-3) struck out two, walked three and hit a batter, though the Rays stranded six runners on base against him. Will Smith, the third Texas reliever, worked a perfect ninth for his 17th save in 19 chances.

Randy Arozarena and Brandon Lowe went deep for the Rays (60-38), who still have the AL's best record and a one-game lead over Baltimore in the AL East despite losing their last three games. They have lost 10 of 13 overall in July.

Tampa Bay starter Taj Bradley (5-6) struck out nine pitching into the sixth inning. The rookie right-hander gave up two runs and walked two.

Dodgers 10, Orioles 3

In Baltimore, Jason Heyward hit a three-run homer during a five-run second inning, and Los Angeles routed Baltimore.

Michael Grove won his second outing in a row for the NL West-leading Dodgers, who picked up their eighth victory in nine games.

Aaron Hicks drove in two runs for Baltimore, which has lost on back-to-back nights to Los Angeles after entering the series on an eight-game winning streak. The Orioles, who began the night trailing first-place Tampa Bay by one game in the AL East, need to win Wednesday to avoid being swept for the first time this season.

Wells (7-5) was pitching for the first time in 10 days and lasted two innings, his shortest outing of the season. He allowed five runs and struck out two.

Grove (2-2) gave up Hicks' RBI double in the second but didn't allow another runner past first until the first two batters reached in the sixth. That ended the night for the rookie right-hander, who struck out four and has lowered his ERA from 7.54 to 6.40 in three appearances this month.

Giants 4, Reds 2, 10 Innings, comp. of Susp. game

Giants 11, Reds 10

In Cincinnati, Casey Schmitt drew a bases-loaded walk that forced home the go-ahead run in a three-run seventh inning, and San Francisco beat Cincinnati twice for a seven-game winning streak.

The suspended game was 2-2 when interrupted with one out in the top of the eighth after a wait of 1:55. With automatic runner Brett Wisely on second, Joc Pederson drove a pitch from Ian Gibaut (8-2) that hit the left-field wall on a hop. Pederson advanced on Wilmer Flores' groundout and scored when Michael Conforto hit a sharp grounder.

Reds rookie Elly De La Cruz, in a 1-for-19 slide, had walked leading off the ninth against Tyler Rogers (3-4). De La Cruz stole his 17th base.

In the second game, delayed by rain for 1 hour, 11 minutes at the start, Luke Weaver allowed four runs and four hits in 2 2/3 innings. With the score 8-8, Mike Yastrzemski walked against Buck Farmer (2-4) with one out in the seventh and Blake Sabol singled

MLB Results/Standings

WASHINGTON, July 19, (AP): Results and standings from the MLB games on Tuesday.

Cleveland	10	Pittsburgh	1
San Diego	9	Toronto	1
LA Dodgers	10	Baltimore	3
Kansas City	11	Detroit	10
NY Mets	11	Chicago W. Sox	10
Texas	5	Tampa Bay	3
Colorado	4	Houston	3
LA Angels	5	NY Yankees	1
Oakland	3	Boston	0
Minnesota	10	Seattle	3
San Francisco	4	Cincinnati 10 inn 1st game	2
Philadelphia	4	Milwaukee	3
Arizona	16	Atlanta	13
St. Louis	5	Miami 10 inn	2
San Francisco	11	Cincinnati 2nd game	10
Chicago Cubs	17	Washington	3

American League				
East Division				
W	L	Pct	GB	
Tampa Bay	60	38	.612	
Baltimore	57	37	.606	1
Toronto	53	42	.558	5-1/2
Boston	51	45	.531	8
New York	50	46	.521	9

Central Division				
W	L	Pct	GB	
Minnesota	49	47	.510	
Cleveland	47	48	.495	1-1/2
Detroit	42	52	.447	6
Chicago	44	50	.417	9
Kansas City	28	68	.292	21

West Division				
W	L	Pct	GB	
Texas	57	39	.594	
Houston	52	43	.547	4-1/2
Los Angeles	48	48	.500	9
Seattle	47	47	.500	9
Oakland	26	71	.268	31-1/2

National League				
East Division				
W	L	Pct	GB	
Atlanta	61	32	.656	
Philadelphia	52	42	.553	9-1/2
Miami	53	44	.546	10
New York	44	50	.468	17-1/2
Washington	38	57	.400	24

Central Division				
W	L	Pct	GB	
Milwaukee	52	43	.547	
Cincinnati	50	46	.521	2-1/2
Chicago	44	50	.468	7-1/2
St. Louis	42	53	.442	10
Pittsburgh	41	54	.432	11

West Division				
W	L	Pct	GB	
Los Angeles	55	39	.585	
San Francisco	54	41	.568	1-1/2
Arizona	53	42	.558	2-1/2
San Diego	45	50	.474	10-1/2
Colorado	37	58	.389	18-1/2



Kansas City Royals' Maikel Garcia hits a two-run double during the sixth inning of a baseball game against the Detroit Tigers in Kansas City, Mo. (AP)

with two outs.

After Scott Alexander (6-0) struck out two in a one-hit sixth, Jakob Junis allowed Joey Votto's homer in the seventh. Camilo Doval earned his 30th save in 32 chances, his second of the day.

Padres 9, Blue Jays 1

In Toronto, Juan Soto hit a two-run homer and Joe Musgrove pitched six sharp innings to win his eighth straight decision.

Manny Machado, Gary Sánchez and Trent Grisham each hit solo homers for the Padres, who ended a three-game skid.

Musgrove (9-2) allowed one run and five hits. He walked one and struck out seven.

Soto finished 2 for 4 with a walk and three RBIs and scored three runs. His homer off Alek Manoah (2-8) in the first was his third since June 23 and 17th this season. Soto added an RBI double in the third.

Phillies 4, Brewers 3

In Philadelphia, Aaron Nola struck out six in 7 1/3 innings, Kyle Schwarber homered and Philadelphia moved a season-best 10 games over .500.

Bryson Stott, Trea Turner and Alec Bohm each had two hits to help the defending NL champion Phillies improve to 52-42 with their fourth consecutive victory. Philadelphia began play a half-game out of a playoff spot. All nine Phillies starters had at least one hit.

Andrew Monasterio had two hits and drove in a run for the NL Central-leading Brewers. Milwaukee had won four in a row.

Nola (9-6) retired the first 14 batters, getting the second out in the fifth inning on Schwarber's leaping catch against the left-field wall to rob Owen Miller of extra bases. Nola gave up five hits and walked none. Craig Kimbrel pitched around a pair of errors in the ninth for his 16th save.

The Phillies gave Nola an early cushion with single runs off Julio Teheran (2-4) in each of the first three innings. Schwarber led off by driving the first pitch over the wall in left for his career-best fourth straight game with a homer. It was the 26th dinger of the season for Schwarber, who has 26 career leadoff homers and six this year.

Rockies 4, Astros 3

In Denver, Ezequiel Tovar lined a go-ahead triple in the fourth and Colorado won a bullpen game using seven pitchers.

This had all the hallmarks of a high-scoring Coors Field affair when it was 3-3 after the first inning. But the pitching took over and the only run allowed after the early fireworks was courtesy of Tovar, who lined a shot off the fence in right-center to score C.J. Cron.

Reliever Jake Bird was roughed up for three runs as he opened the game on the mound for the Rockies. From there, the bullpen surrendered just five hits. Fernando Abad (1-0) earned the win by recording four outs. Justin Lawrence picked up save No. 6 with a perfect ninth.

Kris Bryant and Ryan McMahon provided the offensive pop in the first with back-to-back homers off Hunter Brown (6-7). Brown settled down after a rocky start and lasted 5 1/3 solid innings.

Cardinals 5, Marlins 2, 10 Innings

In St. Louis, Nolan Arenado's three-run homer in the 10th inning lifted St. Louis over a slumping Miami.

Arenado's homer off A.J. Puk (4-4) was his first game-ending homer since August 14, 2019, and the fourth of his career.

JoJo Romero (2-0) pitched a perfect 10th for the Cardinals, who have won four straight games.

The Marlins have lost five straight, matching a season high from May 2-6.

Cardinals starter Jordan Montgomery threw 92 pitches in his return after leaving his last start on July 7 with right hamstring tightness. He allowed one run and six hits, struck out five and walked two.

Marlins starter Edward Cabrera was dominant in his return from the 15-day injured list as he recovered from a right shoulder impingement suffered in his start at Seattle on June 13. Cabrera, who was on a pitch count, went 5-plus innings, allowed just one run on two hits. He struck out five and walked three.

Athletics 3, Red Sox 0

In Oakland, Ryan Noda and JJ Bleday homered in the second inning and Oakland ended an eight-game losing streak.

Noda, who was 14-for-86 over his previous 25 games, homered off Boston starter Joe Jacques (1-1) leading off the second. After Aledmys Diaz reached on an infield single and advanced to second on a throwing error by shortstop Yu Chang, Bleday hit his sixth homer and first off a left-hander this season.

Luis Medina (3-7) allowed three hits in 5 2/3 innings for his first win since June 10. Medina made a nice play on a comebacker in the second, pitched out of a jam with a runner on second in the fourth, then struck out the side swinging in the fifth.

Trevor May, the A's fourth reliever, got the final three outs for his seventh save.

Red Sox manager Alex Cora had hoped to avoid reaching deep into his bullpen, but was forced to go to his relievers after Jacques retired only four batters in his first major league start. He allowed four hits and three runs with one strikeout and one walk.

Angels 5, Yankees 1

In Anaheim, Shohei Ohtani had an RBI triple, Mickey Moniak hit a two-run homer and Patrick San-

doval pitched two-hit ball into the eighth inning of Los Angeles' victory over New York.

Moniak had three hits and drove in three runs for the Angels, who have won three of four after a six-game skid. With its first series victory since June 16-18 against Kansas City, Los Angeles is back at .500 while attempting to make enough progress this month in the AL post-season race to justify keeping Ohtani.

Gleyber Torres' third-inning homer was New York's only hit until Anthony Volpe's one-out single finally chased Sandoval (5-7). The Yankees are 1-4 on their trip out of the break, losing both series in Denver and Anaheim.

Domingo Germán (5-6) struck out nine for the third time in his last four starts for New York, but also yielded five runs on four hits and three walks.

Twins 10, Mariners 3

In Seattle, Alex Kirilloff was a double shy of the cycle. Bailey Ober was sharp after a difficult first inning, and Minnesota defeated Seattle.

Ober (6-4) allowed three runs on six hits in the first inning alone, including a two-run homer, but was efficient for the final five innings, allowing just one more hit. Ober struck out five while walking none and now has six consecutive quality starts.

Relievers Jordan Balazovic, Emilio Pagán and Cole Sands limited Seattle to two hits after Ober's exit.



Naylor

Bryan Woo (1-2) had his short-est outing since his debut on June 3, lasting only 3 1/3 innings on 87 pitches. The rookie was on an impressive streak, allowing no more than two runs in his last six starts before Minnesota tacked on seven runs on eight hits.

On his 32nd birthday, Eugenio Suárez hit his 13th homer of the season, a two-run blast in the first.

Guardians 10, Pirates 1

In Pittsburgh, Josh Naylor homered twice, including a three-run shot that keyed a five-run first inning against All-Star Mitch Keller, and drove in six runs and Cleveland rolled over Pittsburgh.

Rookie left-hander Logan Allen (4-2) pitched five scoreless innings of one-hit ball after being recalled from Triple-A Columbus prior to the game. The lone hit was a one-out single in the fifth inning by Jared Triolo, who extended his hitting streak to 11 games. Allen struck out eight and walked one.

Keller (9-5) was tagged for eight runs and 10 hits in six innings.

Josh Bell hit a two-run homer in the third, his 10th of the year.

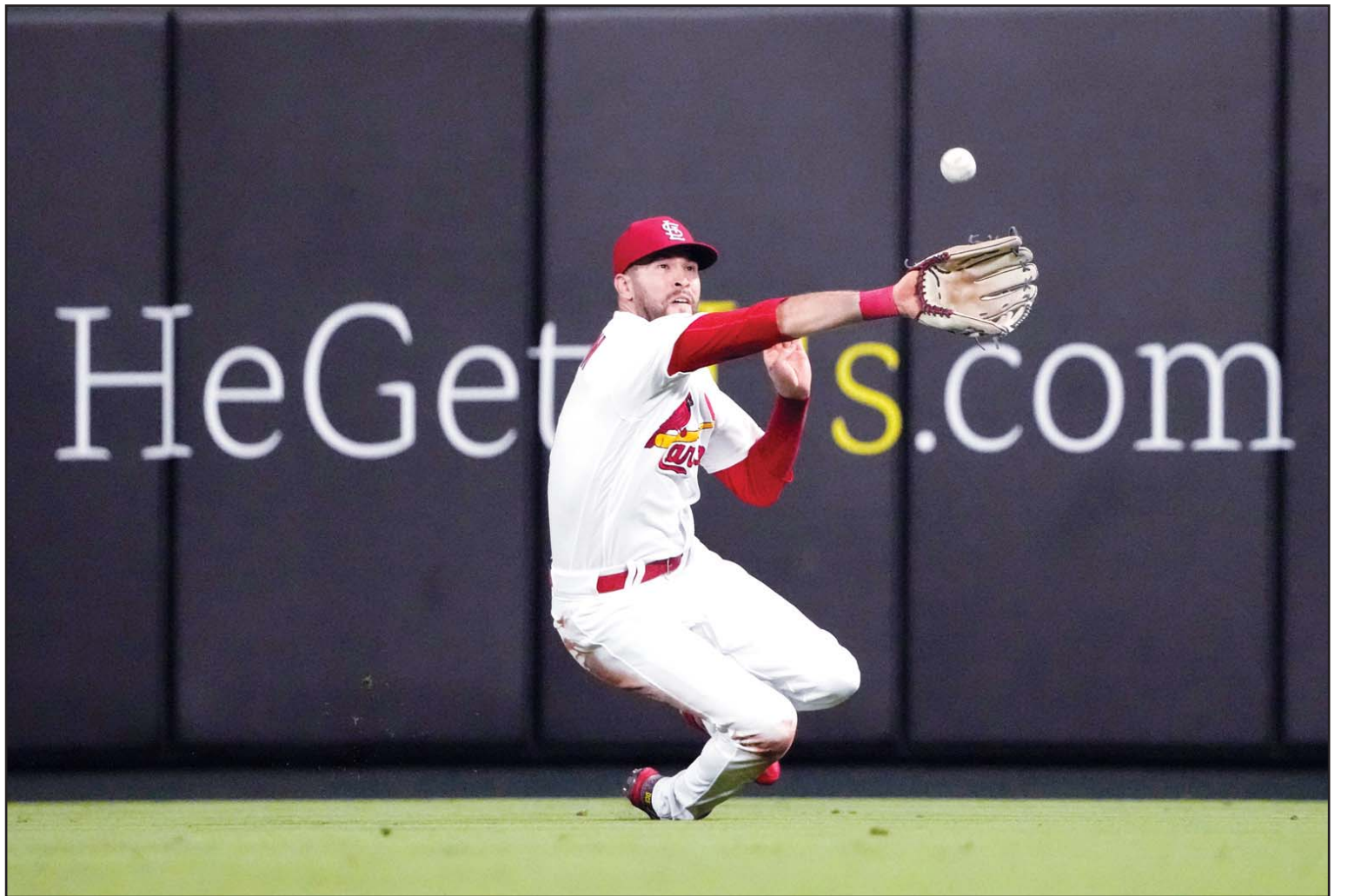
Connor Joe's solo homer in the sixth inning off Eli Morgan accounted for the Pirates' lone run.

Cubs 17, Nationals 3

In Chicago, Seiya Suzuki homered and drove in three runs on a four-hit night, and Chicago poured it on late to beat Washington.

Patrick Wisdom hit his team-leading 17th homer in the seventh inning to put the Cubs ahead 4-3, and Chicago went on to score five more runs in the seventh and eighth in the eighth.

Amaya had a two-run single to cap Chicago's seventh-inning outburst against relievers Anso Willingham (0-2) and Jose Ferrer.



St. Louis Cardinals center fielder Dylan Carlson catches a fly ball by Miami Marlins' Yuli Gurriel for an out during the eighth inning of a baseball game in St. Louis. (AP)

The Cubs sent 13 men to the plate in the eighth. Nico Hoerner had two RBI singles in the frame.

Michael Fulmer (1-5), the first Chicago reliever, got four outs - three via strikeout.

Mets 11, White Sox 10

In New York, David Robertson retired Tim Anderson on a game-ending flyout that stranded runners on second and third, and New York beat Chicago after building a seven-run lead behind a pair of Francisco Alvarez home runs.

Alvarez and fellow rookie Brett Baty hit consecutive home runs off Lucas Giolito (6-6) as the Mets took a 5-0 lead in their highest-scoring first inning this season. Alvarez added another two-run homer in the sixth off Tanner Banks for his third multihomer game. Giolito gave up a season-high eight runs, one shy of his career high.

Grant Hartwig (2-1) gave up two runs in 1 2/3 innings. New York won for the eighth time in 12 games.

Royals 11, Tigers 10

In Kansas City, Dairon Blanco tripled, doubled twice, singled and drove in three runs and Kansas City overcame Spencer Torkelson's two-homer night to beat Detroit.

Daniel Lynch (3-4) completed five innings, allowing five runs on six hits and two walks. He struck out three.

Detroit left two runners on base after scoring four in the ninth against Scott Barlow.

Detroit's Tarik Skubal (0-1) made his third start of the season after missing almost a year after surgery on his left elbow. He allowed seven runs on eight hits, striking out three over four innings.

Dream continue good run

Mercury snap losing streak in series with Sun

PHOENIX, July 19, (AP): Sophie Cunningham scored 17 points, hitting five 3-pointers, Diana Taurasi added 15 and the Phoenix Mercury beat the Connecticut Sun 72-66 on Tuesday night to snap a six-game losing streak in the series.

Phoenix (5-15) beat a team with a winning record for the first time this season. It was the Mercury's first home win against the Sun since the 2018 season.

Cunningham made her fourth 3-pointer to extend the lead to 53-43 with 2:45 left in the third quarter. Her fifth gave Phoenix a 58-48 lead heading into the fourth.

Brittney Griner finished with

12 points.

DeWanna Bonner had 19 points and 10 rebounds for Connecticut (15-6). Alyssa Thomas had 11 points and seven assists.

Thomas became Connecticut's all-time leader in assists, passing Jasmine Thomas (994).

Rhyné Howard had 21 points and seven assists, Nia Coffey added 13 points and 10 rebounds and the Atlanta Dream beat the Minnesota Lynx 82-73 to extend their winning streak to seven games.

Atlanta (12-8) led by 22 points in the first half before Minnesota rallied behind Napheesa Collier, who scored 35 points, to get within 70-68. Howard made

Atlanta's first field goal in over seven minutes to extend the advantage to 72-68 with 2:44 left. That started a 10-0 run that also included Howard's three-point play that made it 78-68 with 1:37 left.

Minnesota (9-12) couldn't recover.

Howard also set a WNBA record with her 18th consecutive game of making two or more 3-pointers.

AD Durr, who had a combined 14 points over her last five games, scored all 13 of her points in the first half for Atlanta (12-8), which has its longest winning streak since the 2018 season. Alisha Gray added 12 points and six assists. Cheyenne Parker did not play in the first quarter before finishing with three points in 13 minutes.

BASKETBALL



Minnesota Lynx forward Dorka Juhasz (14) reaches for a rebound while fending off Atlanta Dream center Iliana Rupert (21) during a WNBA basketball game in College Park, Ga. (AP)

Atlanta was 12 of 19 from distance (63%) in the first half. Durr made Atlanta's 10th 3-pointer and added a free throw for a four-point play to make it 48-27. Coffey's 3-pointer a few minutes later gave the Dream their biggest lead of the game at 51-29.

Collier helped Minnesota chip away at the lead.

Kayla McBride added 12 points and Dorka Juhasz grabbed 12 rebounds for the Lynx.



(From left to right), silver medalist Kate Shortman, of Great Britain, gold medalist Yukiko Inui, of Japan, and bronze medalist Vasiliki Alexandri, of Austria, pose with their medals after the women's solo free final of artistic swimming at the World Swimming Championships in Fukuoka, Japan. (AP)

Sports

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Vingegaard takes huge lead at Tour de France

Pogacar dropped in last big stage

COURCHEVEL, France, July 19, (AP): Jonas Vingegaard is on course to bring the yellow jersey to Paris for a second straight year after the Danish rider took a huge lead over his main rival in cycling's biggest race.

The defending champion dropped Tadej Pogacar on Wednesday in the last big stage in the Alps to increase his overall lead to seven minutes and 35 seconds. Barring any big crash, he looks set to win his second Tour title.

CYCLING

Vingegaard finished the 17th stage in fourth place, almost six minutes before an exhausted Pogacar crossed the finish line.

The race ends in the French capital with a largely ceremonial stage on Sunday. There is just one tough stage remaining before then - on Saturday in the Alsace region, with the peloton facing a total of 3,600 meters of climbing.

But with such a big gap between the Tour's main contenders, it's unlikely to have an impact in the fight for the yellow jersey.

Pogacar, a two-time champion who was dethroned by Vingegaard last year, lost contact about 16 kilometers (10 miles) from the finish at the ski resort of Courchevel.

The punishing trek had been dubbed the Queen Stage of this year's Tour because of its daunting profile. The last of four climbs was a 28.4-kilometer (17.6-mile) slog up Col de la Loze, close to the uphill finish.

A day after Vingegaard destroyed the field in the race's time trial, Pogacar did not find the strength to attack and got dropped in the monster climb. His teammate Marc Soler stayed with him to try and pace him back, in vain.

The day had started on a sour note for Pogacar, who crashed just a few kilometers into the 166-kilometer (103-mile) ride. The Slovenian leader of the UAE Team Emirates fell off at a moderate speed on an uphill section near the foot of the Col des Saisses after apparently touching the wheel of a rider in front of him.

Pogacar was quickly back on his bike and continued racing to rejoin the main contenders before a group of breakaway riders moved away from the pack.

On paper, the punishing Col de La Loze culminating at 2,304 meters above sea level - with some slopes with a gradient more than 24% - looked like the perfect playground for a final showdown in thin air between Pogacar and Vingegaard.

But Pogacar did not have good legs, and the duel never took place.

Once Pogacar cracked, Vingegaard dropped all the riders that still accompanied him, chasing behind the remaining breakaway riders. He first joined his Jumbo-Visma teammate Wilco Kelderman and the pair soldiered on together on brutal slopes.

Vingegaard's ferocious ride was briefly put to a halt by a race motorbike that was stopped in the middle of the narrow and winding road up to the summit.

At the front of the stage, Felix Gall resisted the chase to post the biggest win of his career. Simon Yates was second, with Pello Bilbao completing the stage podium.

Adam Yates kept his third place overall, 10:45 off the pace.

Vingegaard took control of the Tour during Tuesday's time trial. He had started Stage 16 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 head-to-head battle in the race against the clock, Vingegaard was in a class of his own.

He finished the 22.4-kilometer (14-mile) hilly route from Passy to Combloux 1:38 ahead of Pogacar.



Ruan Oliveira of Brazil's Corinthians (left), and Matias Di Benedetto of Peru's Universitario battle for the ball during a Copa Sudamericana second leg play-off soccer match at Monumental stadium in Lima, Peru. Corinthians won 3-1 on aggregate. (AP)

Tourists need 83 runs with seven wickets in hand

Pakistan on verge of taking series lead against Sri Lanka

GALLE, Sri Lanka, July 19, (AP): Pakistan finished the fourth day of the first test 48-3 while chasing a target of 131 on Wednesday, putting the team on the verge of taking a 1-0 lead in the two-match series against Sri Lanka.

Pakistan needs 83 runs to win the game and has seven wickets in hand.

Prabath Jayasuriya dismissed Abdullah Shafique and Shan Masood early and then Noman Ali was run out to reduce Pakistan to 38-3. But captain Babar Azam (6) and Imam-ul-Haq (25) took Pakistan to safety without further trouble.

Imam faced 45 balls and hit

CRICKET

four fours.

Spinners Abrar Ahmed and Ali claimed three wickets apiece while all-rounder Agha Salman and quick Shaheen Afridi shared four wickets between them to bowl out Sri Lanka for 279 in their second innings.

Sri Lanka, which had conceded a first innings lead of 149 runs, resumed its second innings with the overnight score of 14 and lost three wickets.

Nishan Madushka went on to post a half-century but was dismissed soon after lunch. Dhananjaya de Silva hit two straight sixes off Ali to help Sri Lanka take the lead but there was little support from rest of the batters.

Sri Lanka's batting had also collapsed in the first innings, where they lost four wickets for 54 runs before de Silva rescued them with his 10th century.

De Silva found an able partner in off-spinner Ramesh Mendis as they added 76 runs for the seventh wicket. Abrar Ahmed broke the stand when he had Mendis ruled out leg before wicket.

Soon, Pakistan took the new ball and Afridi claimed two wickets in successive overs, including de Silva, to ensure Sri Lanka didn't stage a late recovery.

De Silva led the scoring with 82 runs off 118 deliveries with 10 fours and two sixes.

Since January 2022, Pakistan have played in 11 test matches and have won only one. That victory came in Galle.

It's too soon to draw final conclusions: Bach

'Key to Russian decision for Oly is athletes' respectful conduct'

GENEVA, July 19, (AP): The key factor in weighing the IOC's ultimate decision on letting Russians participate at the 2024 Paris Games is how well athletes behave in international competitions, the Olympic body's president Thomas Bach said.

"It's too soon to draw final conclusions," Bach said, adding "we have the responsibility not to punish athletes for the acts of their government."

The International Olympic Committee has pushed sports governing bodies this year to approve some athletes from Russia and its military ally Belarus competing as neutrals for international competitions including Paris qualifying events.

Bach has previously said the IOC can take its own final decision "at the appropriate time, at its full discretion" which could include barring Russians and Belarusians as their countries' war on Ukraine continues.

On Tuesday, Bach clarified the IOC's interest is mainly in ensuring athletes behave well in competitions, not how the war progresses.

"Right now it is more to monitor the situation on the field of play, whether the rules are respected, the conditions are respected, by everybody," Bach told reporters in an online briefing ahead of next week's one-year countdown to the Paris opening ceremony.

Soccer and track and field have taken the toughest positions against Russia, excluding teams and athletes within days of the invasion of Ukraine starting in February 2022. Russia was removed from trying to qualify for the men's and women's World Cup in soccer.

The IOC shared that view when war started days after the closing ceremony of the Beijing Winter Games, citing Russia's breach of the traditional Olympic Truce pledge agreed at the United Nations and security concerns for athletes.

Tennis and cycling continued to let Russians and Be-

larusians compete as neutrals - but not in team events without their national identity, and the IOC and Bach have pointed to their success.

Ukrainian tennis players, including Wimbledon semi-finalist Elina Svitolina, have refused to shake hands with opponents from Russia and Belarus leading to crowds at Roland Garros and Wimbledon booing what they saw - not seemingly always accurately - as a breach of protocol. "We can see that this is working pretty well," Bach said Tuesday. "They are respectful and they make it clear they want to compete against the best athletes of the world."

Governing bodies of individual Olympic sports have the final say which athletes compete and their umbrella

OLYMPICS

group, known as ASOIF, said in May that finding a common position has been difficult in trying to define neutrality and what exactly is a team sport.

The Court of Arbitration for Sport was involved in helping to define neutrality, which the IOC has advised should include no active support for the war and no contacts since February 2022 with military or state security agencies.

In Ukraine, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and past Olympic champions have urged the IOC to exclude Russia entirely. Zelenskyy invited Bach in January to visit the destroyed city Bakhmut "to see with his own eyes that neutrality does not exist."

Another Olympic Truce text - the ancient tradition in Greece that paused wars and ensured safe passage to the games - is being prepared ahead of Paris. It should apply for several days ahead of the July 26-Aug. 11 Summer Games and for a few days beyond the Aug. 28-Sept. 8 Paralympic Games.



Austria's Felix Gall celebrates as he crosses the finish line to win the seventeenth stage of the Tour de France cycling race over 166 kilometers (103 miles) with start in Saint-Gervais Mont-Blanc and finish in Courchevel, France. (AP)

FIFA can't guarantee federations will pay promised WC \$30,000 per player

MELBOURNE, Australia, July 19, (AP): FIFA President Gianni Infantino could make no guarantee Wednesday that the member federations will distribute the \$30,000 payments promised to every player at the Women's World Cup.

He said at a news conference ahead of the tournament opener that he's engaging with member federations on the issue. The payments are made the national federations, which are expected to pay the players.

But there is no mechanism to directly pay the players the money, which could be life-changing for some.

"We are moving of course in the right direction, we have been consulting with associations, with players, to try to go in the right path," Infantino said. "We have issued these recommendations, but we have an association of associations. So whatever payments we do, we will go through the associations and then the associations will, of course, make the relevant payments to their own players. We are in touch with all the associations."

FIFA had previously confirmed that the 732 players participating in the World Cup will be paid at least \$30,000 each. The paycheck rises if teams do well, with each player for the winning team earning \$270,000.

Infantino said there are complications including residency and taxation

that are best handled by federations.

The payment is significant for many players: the average annual salary worldwide for women who play professionally is \$14,000.

FIFA's agreement means that half of the total World Cup prize money fund of \$110 million will be paid to the players in the 32 teams. The prize pool is more than three times the \$30 million prize fund FIFA paid out at the 2019 Women's World Cup in France.

The global players' union, known

SOCCER

as FIFPRO, helped push FIFA to dedicate a percentage of the prize money to the players themselves. The union sent a letter to FIFA in October on behalf of players from 25 national teams calling for more equitable conditions and prize money.

However, the prize money fund is still far below the \$440 million paid to the men who played in the World Cup last year in Qatar. Infantino said the goal is to equalize the prize money by the 2026 men's World Cup and the 2027 women's edition.

Infantino said the Women's World Cup is expected to generate a half-billion dollars in revenue and the organization will break even. For the first time, the commercial rights for the Women's World Cup were sold separately from the men's tournament.

The tournament opens Thursday with both co-hosts involved. New Zealand will play Norway in Auckland, and Australia will take on Ireland in Sydney.



Infantino



Pakistan's Imam-ul-Haq plays a shot during the fourth day of the first cricket test match between Sri Lanka and Pakistan in Galle, Sri Lanka. (AP)