



olympics

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## Amir, Crown Prince host new KPA chief

KUWAIT CITY, July 31, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace on Wednesday Minister of Public Works and Minister of State for Municipal Affairs Dr. Noura Al-Mashaan, where she presented to His Highness the newly-appointed Director General of Kuwait Ports Authority (KPA) Sheikh Khaled Salem Abdulaziz Al-Sabah.

His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah also received at Bayan Palace on Wednesday, in the presence of Minister of Public Works and Minister of State for Municipal Affairs Dr. Noura Al-Mashaan, the newly-appointed Director General of Kuwait Ports Authority (KPA) Sheikh Khaled Salem Abdulaziz Al-Sabah.

## Kuwait stresses clean 'environs'

KUWAIT CITY, July 31, (KUNA): Environmental awakening can largely be dated back to the middle of the past century, when the Greek capital Athens hosted the fourth conference of the International Congress of Modern Architecture (CIAM), proclaiming the Athens Charter for cohabitation between cities and the nature.

The charter, published by the French architect Le Corbusier in the aftermath of the Industrial Revolution and the two great wars, set the fundamentals for harmony between basic human needs and urban planning -- the latest of which is based on greenery.

Since then, there has been a chain of initiatives to try coping with the unprecedented environmental challenges and salvage humanity from impact of the deteriorating nature.

States around the globe have been holding annual conferences, since 1995, to draw up plans for saving the environment from deterioration, soaring heat, and pollution. In this respect, the State of Kuwait is among the top advocates of sustainable urban development friendly to the environment, expanding greenery, stemming desertification, and tapering off repercussions of climatic change resulting from the planet overheating.

Kuwait has repeatedly affirmed its unwavering commitment to international, regional and Gulf resolutions and initiatives, cooperating with the United Nations and its agencies regarding diverse initiatives to protect the environment.

The "sustainable living environment;" in New Kuwait Vision 2035, is a priority to secure the sustainability of the Kuwaiti climate -- through which it also seeks to honor its international obligations at this level.

For sake of a sustainable "green future," Kuwait has executed several projects and plans to beautify plots of land, boost planting, and set up natural reserves. It believes "the carbon neutrality," to be attained during the middle of the current century, will be quite helpful in the efforts to preserve the environment and create opportunities to launch mega economic projects.

Kuwait declared, during the second edition of the Green Middle East Initiative Summit, held in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt, in November 2022, its full commitment to the initiative as a watershed for the region at the climatic level and a basis for regional cooperation in fighting ramifications of the climatic change.

Kuwaiti governments have put the environment file among their priorities, seeking to limit pollution on the land, in air and sea.

The 2024-2025 annual development plan on rationalizing natural resources and setting up harmony between urban regions and the nature aims at cutting contamination and improving citizens' quality of life and building green cities, equipped with smart technology. The strategy's fourth structural scheme (2040) also aims at constructing green buildings.

Kuwait Council of Green Buildings, launched in 2009, seeks to secure a sustainable environment. The wvon various tasks in this regard, importing new beautifying plants and expanding the public green patches. Its plans also aim to stem sand movement, and desertification and beautify the country with plants that can withstand severe weather conditions.

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### Day by Day

THE Government, the Public Institution for Social Security (PIFSS) has the potential to significantly impact various sectors of the economy, provided its senior officials strategically leverage its resources.

PIFSS can invest in infrastructure projects such as housing, roads, bridges, public transportation, and utilities can stimulate economic growth and improve the quality of life for residents. These projects can also create jobs and attract further investment into the country.

All PIFSS needs to do is take a look at the performance of social security institutions in many countries across the globe.

.... Yet tomorrow is another day.

Zahed Matar



Left: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah receives the Minister of Public Works and Director General of the Kuwait Ports Authority. Right: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah receives the Minister of Public Works and the Director General of the Kuwait Ports Authority.



Amiri/Crown Prince Diwan photos

# Kuwait raps Iran, Haniya hit

'World must act fast to avert escalation'



State ministers during the Cabinet meeting.

PM Diwan photo

## Kuwaiti sacrifices in invasion win praise

### Cabinet focus on infringement of state property

KUWAIT CITY, July 31, (KUNA): The Kuwaiti Cabinet has been apprised of the legal measures being adopted against a private company that fraudulently used a plot of land amounting in area to two million sq. m.

The Cabinet meeting, held at Bayan Palace on Tuesday under the chairmanship of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, recalled the bitter memory of the brutal Iraqi invasion of Kuwait on August 2, 1990. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Shereeda Abdullah Al-Mousherji said following the meeting.

Ahead of the 34th anniversary of that tragedy, which falls on Friday, the Cabinet members remembered the late Amir Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the late Father Amir Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, the late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and the late Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah for the valiant efforts to liberate Kuwait.

The Cabinet recalled, with great pride, the sacrifices made by the Kuwaiti people in their struggle against the brutal invasion and paid homage to the martyrs of Kuwait who sacrificed themselves for the dignity of the homeland, Al-Mousherji noted.

The Cabinet renewed gratitude to the friendly countries for their contributions to the liberation of Kuwait and prayed for Allah, the Almighty, to preserve the security and stability of the country under the wise leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.

## Project aims to activate codes of professional work culture

KUWAIT CITY, July 31: The Public Authority for Combating Corruption (Nazaha) organized an introductory workshop for institutions participating in the second phase of the "Ada'a" project, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The aim of the project is to activate codes of professional conduct.

Nazaha said the project seeks to establish a work environment characterized by professionalism, efficiency, and optimal productivity, underpinned by institutional values and a healthy work atmosphere.

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First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Acting Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Youssef Saud Al-Sabah offered a presentation to the Cabinet on the violation of the law by a private sector company that acquired a plot of land amounting in area to two million sq.m. and used it for a purposed other than the originally stated one.

Sheikh Fahad briefed the Cabinet on the legal measures being taken against the company and any civil officer who proved to be an accomplice in this violation.

Continued on Page 5

## Guardian must

### Clear fines at border posts

KUWAIT CITY, July 31: The general administration for judgments implementation, an affiliate of the Ministry of Interior, has announced the opening of the Judgments Implementation Office at the Salmi and Nuwaiseeb border ports, reports Al-Jarida daily.

This office is designed to assist citizens and residents traveling to and from Kuwait with the payment of financial fines resulting from court rulings.

The Ministry of Interior, through the General Department of Ports, has enacted a new policy concerning the travel of expatriate children, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

According to the new policy the expatriate children must now have written consent from their legal guardian to leave the country. This includes a statement prepared by the Passports Department.

The policy applies even if the child is accompanied by their mother or another

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## Newswatch

CAIRO: Kuwait's Assistant Foreign Minister for Human Rights Ambassador Sheikh Jawaher Ibrahim Duaij Al-Sabah on Wednesday



Sheikha Jawaher

lauded Cairo Center for settling disputes and maintaining peace, underscoring its role in habituating national and foreign cadres in these realms. In a statement to KUNA, Sheikha Jawaher, currently visiting Egypt, affirmed the center's role in empowering women particularly with respect of peace and security keeping, also indicating at its potentials for training on crises management and resisting extremism.

KUWAIT CITY, July 31, (Agencies): The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in strong terms on Wednesday, expressed condemnation of the State of Kuwait of the attack that targeted the Islamic Republic of Iran, assassinating the head of Hamas movement politburo Ismail Haniya.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in a statement, expressed deep concern at the criminal and irresponsible act by the Israeli entity, affirming that such hostile action is a dangerous development and flagrant breach of the international laws and norms, namely respect of independent states' sovereignty.

The ministry noted the State of Kuwait's call upon the United Nations and other entities of the international community to take an immediate and firm stance to avert military escalation that will embroil the region and the world in the mayhem of chaos, and violence, and undermine the peace prospects.

It renewed the call on the Israeli occupation government to stop the attacks and the genocide of the Palestinian people.

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Acting Assistant Undersecretary for Customer Service Affairs at the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy Eng. Falah Al-Mutairi and senior MEW officials at the inauguration of the water station.

Photo by Samer Shaqair

## MEW collected debts worth KD 200 million

By Mohammad Ghanem Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, July 31: The Acting Assistant Undersecretary for Customer Service Affairs at the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy Eng. Falah Al-Mutairi announced the collection of debts worth more than KD 200 million from consumers during the first quarter of the current fiscal year of 2024/2025.

In a press statement issued yesterday during the inauguration of the temporary water filling station in Mutlaa, Eng. Al-Mutairi disclosed that debt collection efforts are progressing rapidly.

He indicated that tanker owners are now authorized to obtain fresh water from the station, which began supplying water on July 15.

Eng. Al-Mutairi affirmed the government's strong interest in Mutlaa City and its keenness to provide all means of comfort and services to the residents.

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## Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait Group holds first half '24 analyst conference call

— Details Page 8 —



Abdulla Al Sumait — Acting Group Chief Executive Officer



Shiamak Soonawalla — Group Chief Finance Officer



Abdulaziz Jawad — Chief Strategy Officer



## Prayer Timings

Fajr .....	03:38	Asr .....	15:30
Sunrise ..	05:07	Maghrib ..	18:41
Zohr .....	11:54	Isha .....	20:07

# Local

## Expected weather for next 24 hrs:

**By Day:** Very hot and relatively humid over coastal areas with light to moderate freshening at times northwesterly wind to light variable wind, with speeds of 12-40 km/h.

## Weather

**By Night:** Hot to rather hot with light to moderate northwesterly wind to light variable wind, with speeds of 08-35 km/h and some high clouds will appear.

**Station**  
Kuwait City

**Max Exp**  
47

**Min Rec**  
37

Kuwait Airport	47	34
Abdaly	48	31
Jahra	48	35
Salmiyah	45	35
Jal Aliyah	47	33
Nuwaisib	48	32
Wafra	47	34

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



Kuwaiti FM Al-Yahya in a group photo during the inauguration ceremony of Iranian President Pezeshkian.

## Kuwait's FM participates in inauguration ceremony of Iranian president

The State of Kuwait Foreign Minister Abdullah Al-Yahya participated in the inauguration ceremony of the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Dr. Masoud Pezeshkian, held in the capital Tehran on Tuesday.

Minister Al-Yahya conveyed sincere congratulations

from His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, the government and people of the State of Kuwait to the President and the friendly Iranian

people.

He expressed the best wishes of the State of Kuwait, its leadership, government, and people, for the President to enjoy good health and wellness and for the Islamic Republic of Iran to witness further progress and prosperity. (KUNA)

KUNA photo

## PAHW infrastructure projects are ahead of timetable – statistics

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

KUWAIT CITY, July 31: The latest statistics revealed that the infrastructure projects of the Public Authority for Housing Welfare (PAHW) are ahead of the timetable.

The newspaper obtained a copy of the statistics, showing that the completion rate of the infrastructure project in South Sabah Al-Ahmad Housing City has reached 23 percent – around 11 percent ahead of the contractual completion rate.

In addition, the South Saad Al-Abdullah project reached about three percent, ahead of the contractual completion rate of 0.52 percent. This project is still under the preparatory stage.

On the building permits for the completed projects in Mutlaa City, South Abdullah Al-Mubarak and Khaitan; the statistics revealed that 950 citizens submitted 'To Whom It May Concern' certificates to obtain building permits by the end of last month.

Meanwhile, sources confirmed that the first contract for South Sabah Al-Ahmad project will be completed as scheduled in mid-2026.

Moreover, PAHW launched two tenders for consulting services related to management and supervision of construction and completion of main road works and infrastructure services for 13,812 housing units in seven suburbs in South Sabah Al-Ahmad City. The bidding for these two tenders will close on Aug 11.



KUNA photo

Palestinian ambassador to Kuwait delivers the written letter from Palestinian premier.

## FM receives letter from Palestinian PM

Kuwaiti Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya received a written letter from Palestinian Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Dr. Mohammad Mustafa on the current situation in Palestine and the Israeli occupation's continuous

violations.

Minister Al-Yahya received the letter during a meeting with Palestinian Ambassador to Kuwait Ramzi Tahboub on Wednesday, said a statement by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. (KUNA)

## Other Voices

### China and GCC: A growing partnership

**By Nasser Al-Hajeri**

Recently, the relationship between China and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries has developed into a strategic partnership marked by increasing economic, political, and cultural collaboration. The GCC, which includes Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates, has found a dependable ally in China, motivated by shared interests in energy security, infrastructure development, and geopolitical stability.

A core aspect of the China-GCC relationship is the trade of energy resources. The GCC countries, with their significant oil and gas reserves, are crucial suppliers to China, the world's largest energy consumer. This mutually beneficial relationship ensures energy security for China while providing substantial revenue for GCC economies. In 2021, Saudi Arabia alone accounted for nearly 17% of China's crude oil imports, highlighting the depth of their energy connections.

Beyond energy, China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has strengthened economic ties with the GCC. The BRI aims to improve global trade routes through infrastructure investments, and the GCC countries play a central role in this vision. Major projects, such as the expansion of ports in Oman and the UAE, and the development of industrial zones in Saudi Arabia, showcase the extensive Chinese investments in the region. These projects not only

enhance connectivity but also support economic diversification, a key goal for GCC states as they aim to reduce their reliance on hydrocarbons.

Politically, the China-GCC relationship is based on a shared principle of non-interference in domestic affairs, fostering mutual respect and stable diplomatic relations. This has been crucial in navigating the complex geopolitical landscape of the Middle East, where China has maintained a neutral stance while promoting dialogue and peaceful conflict resolution.

The GCC countries, in turn, see China as a balancing power in their relations with Western countries, particularly the United States. This balancing act allows the GCC to diversify its international partnerships, enhancing their geopolitical competitiveness.

Cultural exchanges have also flourished, with increasing numbers of students and tourists traveling between China and the GCC countries. Initiatives such as the opening of Confucius Institutes in the Gulf and Arabic language programs in China demonstrate the growing cultural affinity.

In technology, collaborations are emerging in fields such as 5G development, artificial intelligence, and renewable energy. Chinese tech giants like Huawei are establishing a significant presence in the Gulf, contributing to the region's digital transformation efforts.

The China-GCC relationship is multifaceted and dynamic, driven by mutual economic benefits, political stability, and cultural exchanges. As both sides continue to navigate global challenges and opportunities, their partnership is likely to deepen, shaping the future of their regions and the broader international landscape.



Al-Hajeri

## Ahmadi governor reviews contributions to oil sector

KUWAIT CITY, July 31: Ahmadi Governor Sheikh Hamoud Al-Jaber received the acting CEO of Kuwait Gulf Oil Company (KGOC), Abdul Wahab Al-Mazen, along with the Director of the Information Technology and Services Group, Abdullah Al-Hajri, and the Director of the Management Support Group, Falah Al-Enezi, at the governorate's general office yesterday morning, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

They congratulated him on gaining the

confidence of the political leadership and wished him success in his duties to serve the nation.

During the meeting, the governor was briefed on the work of Kuwait Gulf Oil Company and its tireless efforts and effective contributions to the Kuwaiti oil sector. They also discussed joint cooperation in organizing a number of community activities that would benefit the people of the governorate.

# Real estate investments vital for Kuwait's economic dev: experts

'Comprehensive screening vital'

**By Marwa Al-Bahrawi**

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, July 31: Despite optimism among some regarding the country's economic recovery and development amidst recent sovereign political changes in the country and the successive government reforms aimed at enhancing control and oversight, experts and observers familiar with the situation assert that economic development requires more than mere hopes, and that optimism needs tangible indicators to substantiate it, which are currently lacking on the ground.

In response to Al-Seyassah's question about the best investments in the country currently, some experts said the country, despite the changes in the current political situation, is still experiencing a state of uncertainty that hampers capital direction. Others stated that real estate investment remains the dark horse and the winning card in all times, making investment real estate a priority for economic development in the country.

In this regard, the economic expert Dr. Issam Al-Tawari said, "It is difficult to talk about economic development at present. Despite the successive political changes, we are still living in a state of uncertainty. There is not enough liquidity to trade on the stock exchange, and real estate prices are gradually declining. Hence, when we talk about economic movement, there must be projects that support it on the ground."

There is no magic wand that we can move to make the economy move. We are still in a transitional phase. The Tender Committee was appointed less than a month ago after being suspended for a long time. It is currently trying to complete the delayed contracts and projects. The road therefore is long and we are still at the beginning of the line.

### Optimism

There is a state of optimism among many during this period, but reality says something else. This is because development needs more than wishes; it needs implementation and action, and we are still at the beginning stage. This view is not pessimistic but realistic in the first place.

The current indicators reflect the decline in stock market trading and real estate trading. The price of oil is not in our hands but in the hands of the market. The leadership positions are in the process of being filled, as all positions are currently under the item of "assignment". We have not seen leaders in their original form yet.

There is pressure on the government to achieve, but I notice that the best team in the government currently is the first row represented by the ministers. The leaders and officials below them are not as efficient, because most of them were appointed to appease the sects and families. Their personal interest does not align with changing the previous situation."

Dr. Al-Tawari emphasized the necessity of thoroughly evaluating

KUWAIT CITY, July 31: Engineer Alia Al-Farsi confirmed during her intervention in the session on the development of the Jahra Corniche Waterfront Project that this project is multi-use and multi-purpose, facilitated through the allocation of land, reports Al-Anba daily.

She went on to say, "We all know that Kuwait is embarking on development projects, and the municipal council is the gateway to development. My goal in this intervention is not to justify keeping it on the schedule, but to confirm the observations we raised during the technical committee meeting. Most of the state agencies concerned with the project were invited."

"This project is considered a complex transaction of uses, activities, and the removal of existing chalets on state property, among other projects and squares. According to the Supreme Council for Planning, it is a development project for the country, which we criticized as previously being non-developmental."

She added: "The design concept cost about 880 thousand dinars, according to the Project Development Department in 2018. Implementing it will cost the state around half a billion Kuwaiti dinars and will take at least seven years to complete, according to information from the concerned authorities at the committee meeting."

Al-Farsi explained that the traffic study was approved in 2021 with a good level of service (LOC), based on data for the year 2035. According to the projects sector's report at the committee meeting, the project will take at least seven years to complete, meaning it will be finished by approximately 2031, without change orders or delays, which is, of course, rare.

She stated that the Supreme Council for the Environment approved the project, and according to the Environment Public Authority's statement, approvals will be granted for each stage at the time of implementation.

The Kuwait Direct Investment Authority's inability to market the project is a concern, so there will

current leaders and officials across all state ministries. He cited Saudi Arabia's example from seven years ago, where they replaced top officials and subsequent tiers, including recently appointed ones whose incompetence was proven, with competent individuals.

He said, "This kind of reform, unfortunately, is lacking in our current context."

Dr. Al-Tawari went on to say, "We need a comprehensive screening, otherwise the train will not move. There are some who deliberately obstruct change to achieve private interests at the expense of the general renaissance and development in society."

The real estate expert Abdulaziz Al-Dughhaishim, who holds a more optimistic view, said he believes the investment real estate sector is rising, and the demand for it is constant, due to which it is considered one of the best proposals for finan-

## 'Jahra Corniche Waterfront Project'

## Al-Farsi outlines details of multi-use project



KUNA photo

FM receiving the credentials of the new ambassador.

## FM receives credentials of new Somalia ambassador

KUWAIT CITY, July 31, (KUNA): Kuwait's Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya received Wednesday credentials of the new Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Somalia to the country Dr. Abdul-

lah Mohammad Sheikh Abdullah.

During a meeting, the Kuwaiti minister wished the new ambassador success in his tasks and hoped to see boost in ties between the two countries.

be a bidding process through the Kuwait Municipality. Before qualification, the marketing stages will begin with all alliances in accordance with Bidding Law 1/2023, meaning that the Kuwait Municipality will undertake this project.

Regarding the status of the 200 chalets, she said: "Once the municipal council's decision is issued, they will be vacated from state property immediately, according to a statement from the Ministry of Interior."

She inquired about sustainability standards and considering climate change, especially since it is a future coastal project. She added that through the committee discussion, the importance of having a Facilities Management (FM) contract was emphasized, particularly for this project and all state projects in general. She expressed hope that it would be included in the qualification documents due to its importance as discussed in the committee.

The General Manager of Al-Jun Real Estate Company Ahmed Bouabbas agreed with Al-Dughhaishim about the preference for real estate investment.

He said the investment sector ranked second in the number of deals and in the interest of traders in buying, after the residential sector, which is still ranked first in terms of the number and value of deals in July, adding that investment in the commercial sector came in third place.

Contrary to the belief that gold is



## 'Implementing effective reforms is essential for Kuwait's future'

"A YEAR ago, I wrote an article published in Al-Qabas titled 'What is happening in Kuwait?' The article discussed the tense situation between the government and the National Assembly at the time, the disruption of the reform process, and the targeting of several leading administrators in state institutions, resulting in their dismissal or forced resignation," columnist **Amer Diab Al-Tamimi**, wrote for **Al-Qabas daily**.

"Now, with the suspension of several constitutional articles related to parliamentary life, there is hope that the crises will dissipate and the government will expedite the reform process."

"It is crucial to address the structural issues within the political system through the anticipated amendments to these constitutional articles."

"However, the problem of the administrative apparatus remains. The Council of Ministers must fill the vacancies and appoint qualified individuals to leadership positions in various ministries and government agencies, including Kuwait University, which is experiencing operational disruptions."

"It is unacceptable for a large number of officials to hold significant positions in an acting capacity, as they are often unable to make decisive and fundamental decisions due to fear of accountability."

"Effective public administration requires leaders who are convincing in their educational and professional qualifications and have relevant experience. These leaders must also be assured of the necessary confidence and authority to manage their responsibilities."

"Another pressing issue is the reform of financial policies. Recently, the Minister of Finance, along with his team, highlighted that certain budget items require review and appropriate adjustments."

"The minister stated that public expenditures (current and capital) are estimated at 24.6 billion dinars for the fiscal year 2024-2025, while revenues are estimated at 18.9 billion dinars, resulting in a potential deficit of 5.7 billion dinars."

"Oil revenues remain dominant, estimated at 16.5 billion dinars or 87.3 percent of total revenues, whereas non-oil revenues are expected to reach 2.4 billion dinars or 12.7 percent of total revenues. Although the value of oil revenues may improve in the coming months, this is largely dependent on oil market variables rather than national efforts."

"The Minister of Finance explained the significant size of important items in current spending, such as salaries, wages, and subsidies, and emphasized the importance of addressing these imbalances. He also mentioned the possibility of withdrawing from the general reserve."

"While these proposals have been previously suggested by former ministers and government officials, the core issue lies in the absence of a coherent public finance philosophy and a project to achieve financial sustainability. Addressing the economic system, rationalizing many activities, and tackling issues such as government and public sector employment and reducing high rates of disguised unemployment are imperative."

"Regarding subsidies, it is essential to develop a clear strategy to rationalize subsidies, particularly for electricity, water, housing, and fuel. Pricing must align with costs, and tiered pricing systems should be established, as practiced in Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Bahrain. This may also necessitate privatizing related service facilities and establishments and encouraging free competition."

"Economic issues in Kuwait are often raised by specialists and officials but are quickly neglected without significant solutions. It is time to break free from dependency and decision-making paralysis and build a rational economic model that addresses all imbalances."

"This model should focus on reducing spending, increasing non-oil revenues, and adopting taxes and fees, which can be gradually implemented over a specific period, such as five years."

"Additionally, it is essential to learn from the experiences of Gulf countries that have successfully increased citizens' contributions to financing the public treasury and accepted financial reforms."

**Also:**

"Nauru, the third smallest country in the world, once thrived on phosphate production and export, allowing its people to live in luxury and comfort. They lived for today, leaving their future to fate," columnist **Hassan Al-Issa** wrote for **Al-Jarida daily**.

"However, when their sole source of income, phosphate, dried up, their prosperity turned to misery. This once 'rich' country became 'poor,' reliant on an economy dependent on Australia."

"In stark contrast, Germany, a pin-

nacle of industry and progress, was characterized by former State Chancellor Helmut Schmidt's saying: 'The profits and profits of today's institutions are tomorrow's investments, and tomorrow's investments are the labor of the day after tomorrow'."

"This highlights the difference in planning between successful countries like Germany and countries like Nauru. Similarly, Norway provides another example of effective long-term planning with the world's largest investment fund, managed with complete transparency. This fund remains untouched while the country's income is derived from diverse resources, emphasizing human investment as the country's true wealth."

"Such strategic planning avoids the 'resource curse,' where dependence on a single natural resource, like oil in Kuwait or phosphates in Nauru, can lead to economic downfall."

"Michael Herb's book, 'The Wages of Oil: Parliaments and Economic Development in Kuwait and the UAE', examines this phenomenon, describing Kuwait, the UAE, and Qatar as extreme rentier states, heavily reliant on natural resource revenues, with no taxes and work largely done by foreigners."

"However, the UAE and Qatar have recognized and addressed this issue. The UAE, for instance, has opened its doors to foreign investment, and Dubai boasts one of the world's largest re-export ports, sixteen times larger than Kuwaiti ports, a stark contrast to Kuwait's former leadership in the Gulf."

"Today, Kuwait's free zone is a symbol of decline, managed entirely by the government and reflecting its ruinous state."

"Meanwhile, in the UAE, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Oman, and Bahrain, there is no bureaucratic red tape like in Kuwait. These countries have streamlined processes, eliminating the excessive bureaucracy that plagues Kuwait. They have opened their doors to foreign investment and encouraged private enterprise, unlike Kuwait, where investors face endless administrative hurdles."

"If Kuwait truly wants to attract investment and develop its tourism industry, it must reform its bureaucratic processes. Investors should not have to navigate a maze of dilapidated institutions just to obtain permits."

"While nearby countries offer all the amenities and ease of business, Kuwait must wake up to the necessity of reforming its administrative and economic practices."

"The main goal of any economy is to provide a suitable standard of living for its citizens. The main indicators of that goal are the prices of goods and services (inflation), creating job opportunities, and enhancing individual income levels. Managing and controlling these indicators to maintain appropriate levels falls within the jurisdiction of the financial, monetary and economic policymakers, and constitutes a fundamental executive responsibility of the government", columnist **Eng. Adel Al-Jarallah Al-Kharafi** wrote for **Al-Seyassah daily**.

"I had hoped that the Minister of Finance, in his various meetings and statements, would thoroughly address these key indicators affecting citizens' livelihoods. This would clarify the implementation of effective policies that could shift citizens' expectations from anxiety to certainty, satisfaction, and confidence in their future and that of their families. Unfortunately, that did not happen, as he touched upon some important issues but some significant aspects were left unmentioned."

"In light of the lack of clarity, the citizens' negative expectations of these indicators have greater effects than they actually are. This undoubtedly affects the economic activity negatively, the results of which is what we see on the ground."

"A notable trend is the increasing migration of the small and medium investments of Kuwaiti youth to other Gulf countries, or them seeking job opportunities that align with their talents and specializations."

"It is evident that they have done well there, at a time when we are in dire need of young talents. Equally significant is the movement of highly skilled professionals, such as doctors, engineers, and technicians, to practice their professions abroad."

"Failure to expedite the improvement of the business environment, failure to motivate talented professionals, and slowness in reforming the economy to generate real job opportunities will lead to the exacerbation of these phenomena, leading to what is known as 'brain drain'. This will be a loss of our most important development asset - our human resources."

"It is imperative to reform the budget situation. The Minister of Finance has outlined measures to control spending, but addressing this matter should be within the framework of real economic reform, which is essential for dealing with challenges, improving the citizens' standard of living, and enhancing the competitiveness of our national economy."

— **Compiled by PFX Fernandes & Mahmoud Ateyeh**



Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef receives Dr Emad Yousef.

## Kuwait's security is top priority: Mol

First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Al-Sabah affirmed on Wednesday that no one is above law and the police's top priority is Kuwait's security.

The Interior Ministry General Directorate of Security Relations and Media said in a press release that Sheikh Fahad received Dr Emad Yousef, who was falsely accused of drugs possession.

He was acquitted after the General Administration for Drug control revealed that he was innocent, adding that six people were charged, including military personnel working at the ministry, which planted drugs on him with the aim of removing him from the country.

Dr Emad expressed his appreciation to the Minister of Interior for the good reception and the efforts of the security men in revealing the truth. (KUNA)

## Ex-MP gets 2 yrs jail in vote buying case

4 MEW employees jailed over meter hack

By Jaber Al-Hamoud

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, July 31: The Criminal Court sentenced a candidate for the Third Constituency and former MP Saadoun Hamad to two-year imprisonment with hard labor after being convicted of buying votes.**

During the trial session, Hamad was questioned about the allegation of mediating to purchase electoral votes in his favor. Additionally, two female and one male workers from his campaign were questioned about assisting him in vote buying. A woman accused of accepting KD 1,000 in exchange for selling her vote, and a man accused of facilitating the purchase by renting her house for this purpose were also questioned. However, all suspects denied the charges.

**Power meter hacking case:** The Court of Appeals sentenced four employees of the Ministry of Electricity and Water - two citizens and two expatriates - to four-year imprisonment with hard labor for hacking into the ministry's systems and changing the electricity meter bills of commercial complexes for which they received bribes. Another employee who was accused of the same allegations was acquitted by the court.

The Public Prosecution has charged the defendants with hacking electricity meters to reduce electricity bills for commercial complexes, resulting in substantial financial gains, as well as with breaching their job duties and misappropriating public funds.

Lawyer Ali Al-Asfour, representing the first defendant in the case, argued that his client should be acquitted, as he was the one who reported the incident and acted as a witness, as well as provided crucial information about the crime. As a result, the court decided to acquit him while the other defendants were convicted of the crime.

**2 sentenced to jail:** The Criminal Court

## Farwaniya Security Directorate

### Effective patrols, inspections

**KUWAIT CITY, July 31:** Director General of Farwaniya Security Directorate Brigadier Saleh Aqla Al-Azmi has confirmed that surprise inspection campaigns in markets are being conducted in coordination with the Ministry of Commerce and Kuwait Municipality, reports Al-Anba daily.

In an interview with the daily, Al-Azmi also affirmed that the implementation of the fingerprint attendance system for security and military personnel in the Public Security Sector has borne fruit as it significantly contributed to ascertaining their presence in their respective workplaces; while increasing the operational capacity of police stations. He revealed the Farwaniya Governorate is served by 14 police stations that receive complaints, reports and cases; in addition to mobile security patrols assigned in residential and commercial areas as part of the general plan of the sector.

He said the sector has started implementing the security plan for the summer by deploying security patrols and setting up night checkpoints at the entrances and exits of commercial and residential areas.

He explained the sector is closely monitoring the police stations through the surveillance cameras and it submits weekly reports on the general situation in these stations including violations committed by visitors or employees.

Devices have been activated to monitor the progress of the work of security patrols, as well as what is happening inside these patrols, through the surveillance cameras connected to the Operations Unit at the Farwaniya Security Directorate, he disclosed.

He added that Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh has been crowded with expatriates who violated the Residency and Labor laws for several years, stressing that the continuous security campaigns in the area have yielded the desired results.

**45 citations issued:** The Public Relations Department of Kuwait Municipality reported the issuance of 45 violations in Al-Ahmadi Governorate, reports Al-Jarida daily.

These violations include issues related to advertisements, health cards, and expired health licenses. The violations also include the employment of workers without valid health certificates and the presence of advertisements not specific to the activity.

Saad Al-Shaiba, Acting Director of the Ahmadi Governorate Municipality Branch, emphasized that the violations were identified during field tours aimed at ensuring compliance with health and advertising regulations for shops and markets.

## Court acquits cleric

# SJC okays filling of new positions

By Jaber Al-Hamoud  
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, July 31:** During a meeting held to discuss vacant positions in the judiciary, the Supreme Judicial Council (SJC) approved the filling of new judicial positions.

It approved the nominations for Judge Mohammed Al-Sayed Ahmed Al-Rifai to assume the position of President of the Court of Appeals, Judge Khaled Al-Othman to assume the position of Vice President of the Court of First Instance, and Judge Saleh Al-Rakdan to assume the position of Vice President of the Court of Cassation.

**Dr Al-Suwaidan acquitted:** The Criminal Court acquitted cleric Dr. Tariq Al-Suwaidan who was accused of posting insulting messages about Saudi Arabia and Egypt on social media. He was earlier released on bail on State Security charges.

The Public Prosecution had charged Dr. Al-Suwaidan of committing a hostile act against Saudi Arabia and Egypt that would harm relations between Kuwait and those countries, against the backdrop of publishing statements on social media.

The Public Prosecution is expected to appeal the ruling before the Court of Appeals and demand convicting Dr. Al-Suwaidan on the charges attributed to him in this incident.



Lieut-Gen Al-Muzain listens to a comprehensive explanation of the tasks and achievements of the center.

## Briefed on center's duties

### Chief of Staff visits studies center

**KUWAIT CITY, July 31:** The Chief of General Staff of the Army, Lieutenant General Pilot Bandar Al-Muzain, emphasized the importance of scientific research in providing insights and analyses that enhance strategic planning and contribute to making better decisions in the field, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

This statement was issued after Lieutenant General Al-Muzain visited the Studies and Research Center, where he received a comprehensive briefing on the center's duties, scientific research, and its members' achievements. He called for the qualification of more military researchers and the development of their capabilities in scientific research.

Al-Muzain highlighted that scientific research is crucial in developing training programs and providing the necessary knowledge to improve the individual and collective performance of Kuwaiti army members, ensuring the military institution's readiness to face future challenges.

He expressed his gratitude to the center's members for their efforts and praised their role in organizing, planning, implementing, and supervising military scientific research. Additionally, the Chief of Staff paid an inspection visit to the Air Defense Force to observe the progress of the field trials conducted by the anti-drone systems team.

## No cases of Oropouche fever in Kuwait: expert

**KUWAIT CITY, July 31:** According to Dr. Jenan Al-Harbi, an entomologist in the Department of Science at the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training (PAAET), the type of mites responsible for transmitting the Oropouche virus does not exist in Kuwait, despite Culex quinquefasciatus mosquitoes constituting 27 percent of the midge population in Kuwait, reports Al-Anba daily.

She highlighted public concerns following reports about the first death case, with fears that Oropouche fever could escalate into an epidemic like COVID-19.

Dr. Al Harbi explained that Oropouche fever is a tropical viral infection transmitted by biting midges and mosquitoes from the blood of sloths to humans. It is named after the region where it was first discovered, which was in 1955 at the Trinidad Regional Virus Laboratory near the Oropouche River in Trinidad and Tobago.



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# Shrimp fishing season kicks off amidst challenges

PAFN cracks down on food safety

## 490 kg of spoiled fish destroyed

By Marwa Al-Bahrawi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, July 31: Director of the Mubarakia Center at the Public Authority for Food and Nutrition (PAFN) Mohammad Al-Kandari says inspection tours conducted by the center in Kuwait City last week resulted in the seizure and destruction of 490 kilograms of spoiled fish and adulterated food items, issuance of 57 reports for various violations, and closure of 20 food establishments, including eight in Mubarakia.

In a press statement, Al-Kandari revealed that the acting Deputy Director of Administration and Inspection Affairs and Acting Head of PAFN Dr. Mishaal Al-Zaabi issued 20 closure reports for food establishments yesterday in Kuwait City, including a number of famous restaurants and food establishments, due to the expiry of their license and the repetition of same violation several times.

He stated, "Following the seizure of 377 kilograms of spoiled fish and food, which included 90 kilograms of spoiled fish in Mirqab, 262 kilograms in Mubarakia, and 25 kilograms of adulterated food, about 113 kilograms of spoiled fish were destroyed yesterday. Inspection teams have begun systematically closing down establishments one by one.

"Violations ranged from displaying fish unfit for human consumption, to altering its natural properties such as color, shape, and odor. Other violations included opening a food establishment without obtaining a health license issued by PAFN, not adhering to the rules and requirements of personal hygiene during work, handling of food by workers who did not have health certificate, operating a food establishment following the expiry of its health license, and not presenting an inspection record card to the authority's employees upon request."



Huge quantities of spoiled fish in Mubarakia.

## Capital Governor hosts key meet with co-op chairmen

KUWAIT CITY, July 31: The Capital Governor Sheikh Abdullah Al-Ali recently met with the chairmen of a number of cooperative societies such as Jaber Al-Ahmad, Gharnata, Sulaibikhat, Doha, and Northwest Sulaibikhat, reports Al-Jarida daily.

During the meeting, the governor highlighted the important role played by cooperative societies in providing essential social and economic services to citizens.

He affirmed Kuwait's keenness to enhance cooperative efforts due to its significant impact on community welfare.

Sheikh Abdullah explained that cooperative societies, beyond

supplying food and commodities, also fulfill a social and cultural mandate by establishing sports clubs, cultural centers, and social institutions. This fosters a cooperative spirit among residents and promotes sustainable societal development.

He commended the efforts exerted by the employees of cooperative societies in improving service delivery, and urged them to attentively address citizens' complaints.

The governor affirmed the importance of identifying all shortcomings and collaborating with relevant authorities to find effective solutions.

By Abdul Nasser Al-Aslami

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, July 31: The Kuwait Fishermen Union announced that the shrimp fishing season will commence on August 1 in the economic waters.

In a press statement, the union explained that the Kuwaiti fishing fleet is fully prepared to set sail. Currently, 297 boats have obtained permits to fish for shrimp in Kuwait's exclusive economic waters.

It affirmed that the shrimp season is an eagerly awaited annual event for everyone involved in the fishing profession.

The union expressed its hope that this season will be abundant, and will revitalize the fish market and help lower prices in order to make seafood more affordable for consumers.

The Kuwait Fishermen Union has reiterated its call to the Support Committee of the Ministry of Finance to address the fishing sector's requirements for subsidized diesel fuel, and to work on restoring the diesel allocation to previous levels in order to prevent a significant reduction in the shrimp market supply.

It revealed that there is currently a severe shortage of subsidized diesel, leading fishing vessels to halt operations around the middle of each month when their share runs out.

The union emphasized the need to revitalize and support the fishing sector to enable it to fulfill its role in enhancing food security through the development of fish and shrimp resources.

It also stressed the need for officials to pay attention to the legitimate demands of fishermen.

The union said, "If the diesel crisis persists this season, it could lead to the migration of fishing workers, rendering their efforts in fishing operations futile. This could potentially threaten the existence of the profession as fishermen are compelled to leave due to numerous challenges, high operational costs, and globally inflated equipment prices.

The fishing sector, which is crucial

Diesel shortage threatens operations

## Ahmadi Governor commends disabled team, offers support

KUWAIT CITY, July 31: Ahmadi Governor Sheikh Hamoud Jaber Al-Ahmad met with Head of the Friends of the Disabled Team Sheikh Suhaila Al-Sabah and the team members in his office at the Ahmadi Governorate headquarters recently, reports Al-Anba daily.

During the meeting, the entire team congratulated Sheikh Hamoud Jaber Al-Ahmad on gaining the trust of the political leadership. They wished him success in serving the country under the wise leadership of His Highness the

Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khalid Al-Sabah.

The governor was briefed on the team's activities and events, while he praised their efforts and role in integrating people with special needs into society. He affirmed his commitment to support and cooperate with the team by providing their needs in coordination with the concerned authorities. He wished the team continued success and prosperity.

for food security, has not received adequate financial support. Support for fish has remained minimal and stagnant for decades, failing to keep pace with rising prices and the operational costs of fishing vessels.

Many fishermen are still indebted to the Industrial Bank of Kuwait, brokerage offices, credit facilities companies and other banks due to borrowing and the high prices of ship maintenance and fishing equipment.

The union is constantly working to achieve the demands of all fishermen by addressing the authorities concerned with the fishing sector to overcome challenges and difficulties so that the returns are positive and serve the interests of food security in the desired manner."

It expressed appreciation and gratitude to the officials of the Public Authority for Agricultural Affairs and Fish Resources because they are trying to convey the union's demands to the concerned authorities and have submitted multiple studies to increase fish support, but unfortunately they were not accepted by the Support Committee.

The union also expressed hope that there will be a breakthrough that will please the fishermen who need support and assistance to advance their sector and solve all the challenges surround-

ing them, stressing that these are not impossible demands and will serve the sector in a way that will positively impact the food security system of Kuwait.

Regarding the absence of local "Mead" fish in the markets despite the opening of its fishing season from the beginning of July, the union said Mead fish survive in shallow waters, and the specific coordinates for fishing it in the sea are rare, but it is available in Kuwait Bay.

It stated that, "We have addressed the concerned authorities to allow us to fish for Mead in the Kuwait bay in line with the relevant controls and conditions. Unfortunately, this request has not been approved yet, which has deprived consumers of buying and eating it."

The union stressed that it is ready to discuss this important matter with the concerned authorities and participate in everything that would facilitate this request according to the regulatory controls set by the authorities concerned with the fishing sector.

It said, "The fishermen's suffering continues and they feel that their deserved demands are being crushed at the doors of some officials. That they need a real miracle to change this situation for the better. We hope that the fishermen's ambitions will be fulfilled soon."

15 shelters to benefit from project

## KRCS expands aid to displaced Sudanese with a 'new' initiative

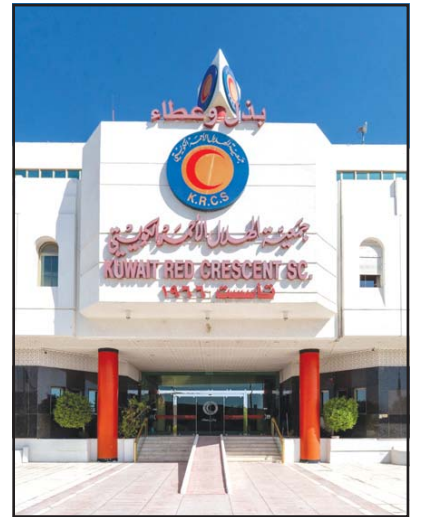
KUWAIT CITY, July 31: The Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) announced that it has signed a cooperation agreement with the Sudanese Red Crescent Society (SRCS) to implement a project supporting the water and sanitation sector in shelters for displaced people in Sudan.

KRCS Vice Chairman Anwar Al-Hasawi told the Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) that the society is working to enhance the quality of its response in line with the escalating crisis, particularly the crisis involving Sudanese displaced persons. This effort aims to address their various humanitarian needs by providing shelter and potable water.

Al-Hasawi added that this project reflects the society's commitment to achieving sustainable water security. The water, sanitation, irrigation, and artesian wells project will serve 15 shelters for displaced Sudanese.

He emphasized the importance of this project, which impacts the daily lives of Sudanese citizens and demonstrates Kuwait's dedication to supporting Sudan through various humanitarian projects implemented by the society.

He stated that providing water sources in areas facing challenges is one of the pioneering projects adopted by the society to alleviate the suffering of displaced persons, who face difficulties in obtaining clean water, a critical neces-



KUNA photo  
Kuwait Red Crescent Society HQ

sity.

Al-Hasawi highlighted the continuation of Kuwaiti humanitarian support for Sudan, noting that there are additional projects agreed upon between the Kuwaiti Red Crescent and its Sudanese counterpart. He also explained that the Kuwaiti Red Crescent has recently intensified its humanitarian and relief programs for the Sudanese people by delivering aid via Kuwaiti relief planes and ships.

New rules could resolve conflicts

## New proposal seeks to revise warehouse area regulations for business operations

By Inaas Awadh

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, July 31: Municipal Council member Abdullah Al-Enezi sub-

mitted a proposal yesterday to include certain commercial activities in designated warehouse areas. The proposal includes regulations for installing fire-fighting systems, fire alarms, emergency lighting, ventilation and smoke extraction systems, as well as contracting for the protection of iron structures and materials to fill gaps in buildings.

In the preamble to his proposal, Al-Enezi explained that some companies have been practicing certain commercial activities for a long time in areas that were later designated for use as warehouses only.



Abdullah Al-Enezi

Al-Enezi justified the submission of his proposal to address this issue and lift the injustice faced by companies currently operating commercial activities in areas originally designated for warehouse use only.

## CSC meets public every Tuesday

KUWAIT CITY, July 31: Assistant Undersecretary for Financial and Administrative Affairs at the Civil Service Commission (CSC) Salah Al-Saqabi received a number of visitors Tuesday morning, as part of ongoing efforts to better serve the public, reports Al-Rai daily.

An official statement from the CSC confirmed this move reflects the commission's commitment to communicate directly with the public, indicating this is done every Tuesday and those who wish to visit should book an appointment through the 'Sahel' application.



# AUGUST

## Room Promotion





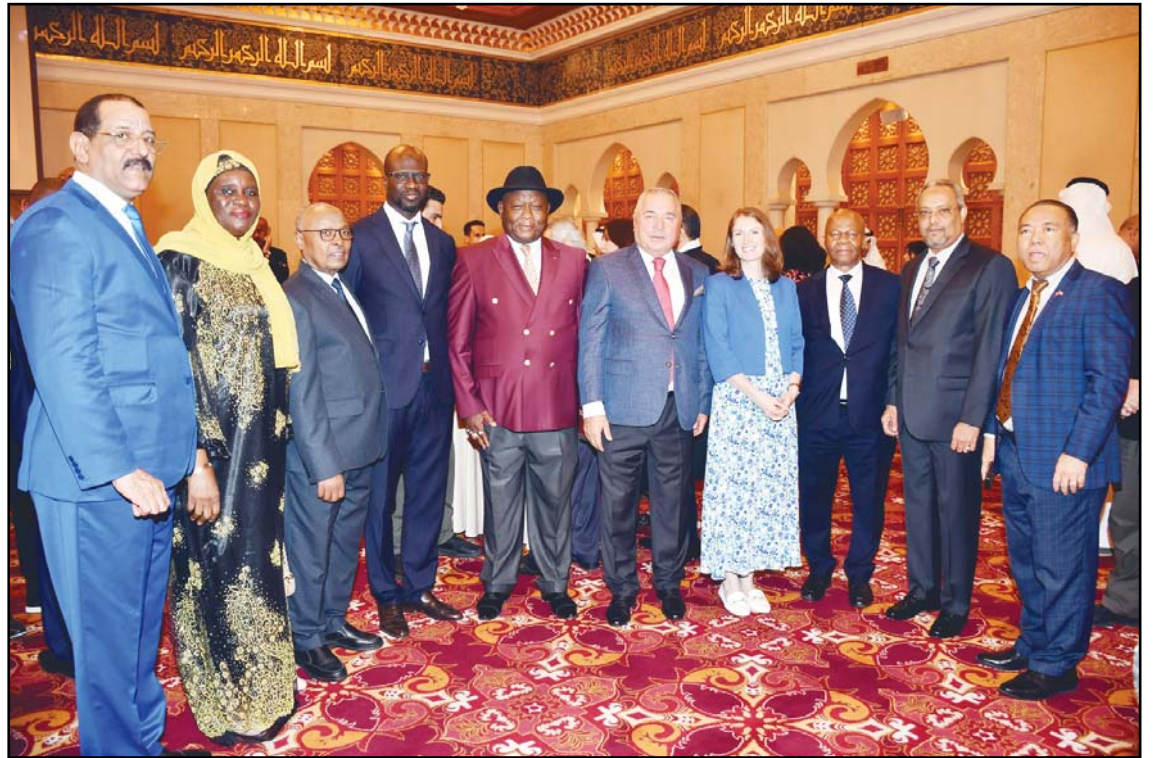

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## LOCAL



Dignitaries and well-known personalities graced the celebration of Moroccan Throne Day.

## Cabinet focus

Continued from Page 1

Meanwhile, the Cabinet saw a visual presentation from Minister of Finance, and Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investment Dr. Anwar Al-Mudhaf on the outcomes of surveying unused plots of land and building, and rented sites.

The presentation included the measures taken by the Ministry of Finance, in coordination with concerned bodies, to regulate measures of exploiting these plots of land and buildings from the private sector.

Out of the government's keenness on protecting the State's land legally and financially with the aim of using them optimally, the Cabinet decided to form a ministerial committee to offer required concepts regarding these plots of land to achieve the desired goals.

Following the latest developments of projects on the maintenance of roads and streets in the country, Minister of Public Works, and Minister of State for Municipal Affairs Nour Al-Mashaan told the Cabinet about the Central Agency for Public Tenders' report regarding 18 projects for of highways and roads in all governorates.

She said local, Gulf and international companies applied for these projects.

Moreover, the ministers were briefed on the recommendations of the ministerial affairs committee on the Kuwait International Air Cargo - KIAC project.

In this regard, the Cabinet tasked Directorate General of Civil Aviation, in coordination with Kuwait Authority for Partnership Projects and some bodies, with taking required measures to implement the project.

The Cabinet approved the meeting minutes of the Supreme Committee for Nationality Investigation, which includes some cases of loss and withdrawal of Kuwaiti nationality from some people who got it by fraud and forgery.

The move was taken, in line with the provisions of decree No. (15) of 1959.

## Kuwait stresses

Continued from Page 1

Public parks are a major component of the greening tasks. According to statistics, declared by EPA last year, the number of the gardens reached 179 with a space of 2,695,993 square meters and 462,142 trees.

EPA had planted 2,120,200 trees and patches covered with flowers are estimated at 285,109 sm. Number of the planted palm trees amounted to 125,942. Moreover, it has begun since 2018 to plant mangroves that can absorb large amounts of carbon dioxide. Authorities have allotted huge budgets for beautifying the country, and private associations have been taking part in these efforts too.

## Clear fines

Continued from Page 1

relative and the father is not present during the trip.

This measure aims to ensure proper authorization and safeguarding of expatriate children traveling from Kuwait.

## MEW collected

Continued from Page 1

He highlighted that the Mutlaa station will help reduce tanker prices and alleviate pressure on the Jahra and Amghara stations, adding that the ministry is expanding the establishment of water filling stations in various parts of the country, as well as customer service offices in various governorates, especially new areas.

Eng. Al-Mutairi revealed that there are two customer service offices in Mutlaa City, assuring that the ministry will ac-

tivate them to serve the residents upon receiving them from Public Authority for Housing Welfare

Regarding the expansion of 'smart meter' installation, he clarified that the ministry will broaden the deployment of smart meters after receiving the initial batch.

Eng. Al-Mutairi said the ministry is presently conducting field surveys across different regions to collect specific data, and it is anticipating completion of the second phase of smart meter installation by early 2028.

Regarding the expansion of the smart-meters installation, he clarified that the ministry will broaden the deployment of smart meters after receiving the initial batch.

The ministry is currently conducting field surveys across different areas to collect specific data, adding that it is anticipating the completion of the second phase of smart-meter installation by early 2028.

He explained that the ministry will first complete the installation of smart meters in the commercial and investment sectors, followed by the industrial, agricultural, and other sectors. Subsequently, the installation will proceed to the government sector and then to private housing.

## Project aims

Continued from Page 1

This year, the target group includes approximately 20,000 employees from newly joined entities, in addition to 5,000 employees from the project's first year.

Nazaha announced that nine new establishments have joined the first phase (bronze level) of the project, emphasizing its significance in achieving job excellence and maintaining the integrity of the work environment.

The session also reviewed the executive plan for the bronze phase and the training and awareness requirements.

Nazaha highlighted that adhering to the Code of Professional Conduct is a critical channel for preventing corruption, as stipulated by the United Nations Convention against Corruption, serving as a key preventive measure against corrupt practices.

## Kuwait raps

Continued from Page 1

The ministry offered condolences, on behalf of the State of Kuwait, to the Palestinian people and leadership.

Haniya was killed by a pre-dawn airstrike in the Iranian capital Wednesday, Iran and the militant group said, blaming Israel for a shock assassination that risks escalating the conflict even as the U.S. and other nations were scrambling to prevent an all-out regional war. Iran's supreme leader vowed revenge against Israel.

There was no immediate comment from Israel, which has pledged to kill Haniya and other Hamas leaders over the group's Oct. 7 attack on southern Israel. The strike came just after Haniya had attended the inauguration of Iran's new president in Tehran - and only hours after Israel targeted a top commander in Iran's ally Hezbollah in the Lebanese capital Beirut.

The assassination of Hamas' top political leader was potentially explosive amid the region's volatile, intertwined conflicts - because of its target, its timing and the decision to carry it out in Tehran. Most dangerous was the potential to push Iran and Israel into direct confrontation if Iran retaliates.

"We consider his revenge as our duty," Iranian supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said in a statement on his official website. He said Israel had "prepared a harsh punishment for itself" by killing "a dear guest in our home."

Bitter regional rivals, Israel and Iran risked plunging into war earlier this year when Israel hit Iran's embassy in Damascus in April. Iran retaliated and Israel countered in an unprecedented exchange of strikes on each other's soil, but international efforts succeeded in containing that cycle before it spun out of control.

# Kuwait, Morocco celebrate 'Throne Day' with stronger ties, investment prospects

Minister Al-Mudhaf praises Morocco's growth and resilience

By Fares Al-Abdan

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, July 31: "We have a strategic relationship with Morocco. We are one family. We are proud of Morocco, its progress, development, heritage, history and its response to shocks; which have been proven through the depth, strength and resilience of the country and its people," says Minister of Finance Dr. Anwar Al-Mudhaf.**

Al-Mudhaf made the statement on the sidelines of the Moroccan Embassy's celebration of the Moroccan Throne Day, which he attended, along with a large number of Arab and foreign ambassadors and diplomats.

## Economic

He revealed: "Through my observations of the Moroccan economic situation, the growth of its GDP, its distinguished position in its relations with the East or the West, and the moderation of its policy; I am certain that its growth will continue."

He pointed out that his last visit to Marrakech was after the earthquake which hit Morocco last year, during which he attended the International Monetary Fund (IMF) meetings. "We expected Morocco to be affected, but we found it with its head held high. We saw active people who were not affected by the earthquake. The meetings of the IMF continued as if nothing happened. This indicates the solidarity and mutual support of the people and their ability to bear shocks."

On the Kuwaiti investments in Morocco, he disclosed "we work and invest there. The Kuwait Fund for Development has numerous contributions like building dams and water treatment. This is not a favor, it is our duty."

He said the value of Kuwaiti invest-



Photos by Mohammad Morsi

Minister of Finance Dr. Anwar Al-Mudhaf and Moroccan Ambassador to Kuwait Ali bin Issa during a cake-cutting ceremony.

ments in Morocco is not less than one and a half billion dollars in several projects. "We look at Morocco in a very positive light due to the progress and economic growth we have been witnessing. It enjoys great diversity in terms of the economy, tourism, agriculture and trade."

He also congratulated Morocco on hosting the World Cup, indicating this is the first time that an Arab country joins European countries in hosting the World Cup. "It is not surprising if we invest in Morocco. Kuwait has a long history in terms of investments in Morocco -- since the 1960s and 1970s. We regard

Morocco as a country very close to our hearts and our commercial and investment interests," he added.

Meanwhile, Moroccan Ambassador to Kuwait Ali bin Issa asserted: This is a presence that we are proud of and cherish on this dear occasion in our hearts -- the anniversary of the accession of His Majesty King Mohammed VI to the throne of his ancestors.

He clarified "it is a presence that expresses the love of everyone who attended -- love for Morocco and the Moroccans. Many are following the political, economic and social news about Morocco that leaves a beautiful impression of what has been achieved

and accomplished, especially during the past 25 years of achievements in various fields."

He praised the good relations between Morocco and Kuwait, as they are deep-rooted and established by the visit of the late King Mohammed V in 1960. "These relations continue to be consolidated and strengthened over the years. Today, we are seeing the continuous growth of economic relations between Morocco and Kuwait. This is evident in the size of investments made by Kuwait in Morocco. The volume of trade exchange is increasing year after year," he disclosed.

He affirmed that the number of Kuwaiti tourists is increasing year after year, especially with the opening of Kuwait Airways in 2022. "Now, there are three weekly flights, which show the desire of Kuwaiti tourists to visit Morocco. In 2019, before Corona, their number was approximately 19,000. The number of tourists who visited Morocco last year reached 14,500,000. This year, the number will be higher and this is a manifestation of the good status that Morocco enjoys," he affirmed.

He said Morocco launched several major development projects in the automotive industry, aircraft industry, infrastructure, railways, ports and renewable energy many years ago. He added Morocco has achieved a major boom over the past 15 years.

"This year, we launched a project that allows the production of green hydrogen, for which the Moroccan government has allocated one million hectares; including 300,000 hectares for investors in this field. The doors are open and opportunities are available for investment in Morocco. The government has given several privileges and eased procedures to invest in Morocco; thereby, encouraging investors to come to the country.

There has been noticeable increase in commercial exports and the desire among Kuwaiti traders to benefit from Moroccan products like vegetables, fruits and other agricultural products," he concluded.

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## Manifestation

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## World News Roundup

## Europe

**UK PM accuses far right of hijacking town's grief:**

Residents swept up broken bricks, shattered glass and burnt plastic on Wednesday after far-right protesters clashed with police outside a mosque in a northwest England town where three girls were fatally stabbed.

A violent crowd of several hundred hurled bricks and bottles at riot police and set garbage bins and vehicles on fire in Southport, hours after a peaceful vigil for the girls, aged 6, 7 and 9, who were killed during a Taylor Swift-themed summer holiday dance and yoga class. The ambulance service said it treated 39 police officers for injuries, 27 of whom were taken to hospitals.

Prime Minister **Keir Starmer** condemned the "huggery" and said the protesters had "hijacked" the community's grief.

Norman Wallis, chief executive of the Southport Pleasureland amusement park, was one of dozens of people who turned up with brushes and shovels to clear the debris.

"It's horrendous what those hooligans have done last night," he said. "It was like a war scene. People from out of town just causing absolute mayhem."

"But none of those people were the people of Southport," he added. "The people of Southport are the ones here today cleaning the mess up."

The protesters, who police said were supporters of the far-right English Defence League, were fueled by anger and false online rumors about the 17-year-old suspect arrested on suspicion of murder and attempted murder. (AP)

**British preacher Choudary sentenced to life:** Radical British preacher Anjem Choudary was sentenced Tuesday to life in prison for directing a banned terrorist group that a judge said had put many lives at risk.

Choudary, 57, was convicted last week in Woolwich Crown Court for directing the radical Muslim group al-Muhajiroun, or ALM, being a member of the banned organization and for drumming up support for it.

Justice Mark Wall said Choudary was front and center in running a terrorist organization that "encouraged young men into radical activity."

ALM was outlawed by the British government in 2010 as a group involved in committing, preparing for or promoting terrorism.

"Your actions while directing Al-Muhajiroun ran the risk of causing or contributing to the deaths of very many people," Wall said. "In addition, by running an organization such as Al-Muhajiroun, you contributed in a significant way to the fear of terrorist attack by radical Islamic organizations which then existed in this country and abroad."

Choudary, who was previously convicted of supporting the Islamic State group and sent to prison for more than five years, denied at trial that he promoted ALM through his lectures, saying ALM no longer existed. (AP)

**Russia begins 3rd round of drills to train troops:** The Russian military on Wednesday began a third round of drills with tactical nuclear weapons, part of the Kremlin's messaging intended to force the West to limit its support for Ukraine.

The Russian Defense Ministry said the drills will feature units of the central and southern military districts armed with Iskander short-range missiles. They will practice receiving nuclear weapons from storage and deploying them to designated launch areas. The maneuvers will also include air force units that will arm their warplanes with nuclear weapons and perform patrol flights.

The ministry said the drills are intended to maintain troops' readiness for combat missions.

Tactical nuclear weapons include bombs, warheads for short-range missiles and artillery munitions and are meant for use on a battlefield. They are typically far less powerful than strategic weapons - massive warheads that arm intercontinental ballistic missiles and are intended to obliterate entire cities. (AP)

**Well-known Russian dissident moved from jail:** Ilya Yashin, a prominent Kremlin critic who is serving an 8 1/2-year sentence for criticizing Russia's war in Ukraine, has been moved from his prison to an unknown destination, his lawyer said Tuesday.

The statement on the Telegram messaging app by Tatyana Solomina gave no further details. However, it noted that several other figures imprisoned for criticizing the military or for alleged extremist activity because of their work with the organization of the late opposition leader Alexei Navalny also were moved.

Among them are Oleg Orlov, chairman of the Nobel Peace Prize-winning human rights group Memorial, sentenced to 2 1/2 years in February; musician Alexandra Skochilenko, serving 7 years for replacing price tags in a supermarket with messages decrying civilian deaths in Ukraine; and former Navalny regional coordinators Lillia Chanyshyeva and Ksenia Fadeyeva, sentenced to 9 1/2 and 9 years.

Also Tuesday, Memorial said Germany-born Russian citizen Kevin Liik, who was sentenced to four years for allegedly providing information to German special services, has been removed from his prison. (AP)

**Belarus' president pardons German man:** Belarus' authoritarian leader on Tuesday granted a pardon to a German citizen who had been sentenced to death on terrorism charges.

It wasn't immediately clear whether President Alexander Lukashenko's decision means that the capital punishment will be replaced with life in prison for Rico Krieger, as it's usually done in Belarus in such cases, or whether he will be released. A Telegram channel that reports Lukashenko's decisions didn't offer specifics.

The German Foreign Ministry confirmed that the man had been pardoned and said that "this news is a relief." It did not elaborate.

Earlier on Tuesday, Lukashenko called a meeting to discuss the appeal from Krieger, who was convicted and sentenced to capital punishment in June. Krieger's lawyer Vladimir Gorbach, who took part in the meeting, told the Belarusian state TV that Lukashenko said he would consider Krieger's request for pardon and announce his decision later. (AP)

**Greek gov agencies cleared in spyware scandal:**

A two-year investigation in Greece has cleared the country's security agencies of involvement in an international spyware scandal that triggered sanctions by the United States earlier this year, a senior prosecutor said Tuesday.

Supreme Court prosecutor Georgia Adilini said she found no evidence linking Greece's National Intelligence Service, the police force or its anti-terrorism division to the use of Predator spyware, which opposition groups alleged was used against some government critics.

The spyware targeted dozens of prominent individuals in Greece including Nikos Androulakis, the current leader of a Socialist party, the third largest in parliament.

The investigation's findings drew an angry reaction from left-wing and center-left opposition parties in Greece which accused the ruling conservatives of engineering a cover-up. (AP)

**NMacedonia seeks EU assistance to fight fires:**

North Macedonia said it was seeking further assistance from the European Union Tuesday to combat wildfires that continue to burn out of control in heatwave temperatures and have crossed the southern border into Greece.

"Unfortunately, new fires are constantly appearing due to the weather and strong winds that are causing us problems," Stojanche Angelov, head of the country's Center for Crisis Management, said.

Large wildfires in parts of North Macedonia this week destroyed and damaged homes, forced evacuations and claimed the life of an elderly resident in a village some 60 kilometers (37 miles) east of the capital Skopje. Authorities said the man is believed to have died Monday of smoke inhalation.

One blaze crossed into Greece where two air tankers and a helicopter helped the firefighters hold back a fire from reaching a forest on the Greek banks of Lake Doiran which is shared by the two countries, authorities said. (AP)



US Vice President Kamala Harris speaks during a campaign rally on July 30 in Atlanta. (AP)

## Politics

## Project 2025 shakes up leadership

## Harris dares Trump to 'say it to my face'

ATLANTA, July 31, (AP) — US Vice President Kamala Harris told a cheering, boisterous, packed Atlanta arena on Tuesday that the next 98 days would be a fight, but they'd win come November, as she taunted Donald Trump for wavering on whether he'd show up for their upcoming debate.

"The momentum in this race is shifting," the likely nominee said. "And there are signs Donald Trump is feeling it."

Little more than a week ago, Georgia appeared to be slipping out of the Democrats' reach: President Joe Biden's campaign pledged to concentrate more on holding the Midwestern "blue wall" states and indicated they might be willing to forsake "Sun Belt" battlegrounds. But now that Biden has bowed out of the race and Harris is the likely nominee, Democrats are expressing new hopes of an expanded electoral map.

Harris hasn't yet formally seized the Democrat nomination, though she is the only person who met the qualifications to vie for it, the Democratic National Committee announced Tuesday, and will all-but-certainly clinch it come Monday when the party concludes a virtual roll call vote. Her pick of a running mate is also expected by early next week when Harris plans to begin a seven-stop tour of battleground states to hold rallies alongside her vice presidential nominee.

## Rival

In the state that delivered Biden his narrowest victory margin in 2020, Harris pulled off what has been a signature Trump event: A big, loud rally full of supporters cheering her name, as she mocked her rival and his running mate JD Vance as "just plain weird," and derided their policies as backward, outdated and dangerous.

Harris mentioned Trump's efforts to stop the passage of an immigration bill that had bipartisan support and would have been among the strongest border security in decades. She said she'd work to push the bill across the finish line. "I will bring back the border security bill that Donald Trump killed and I will sign it and show Donald Trump what real leadership looks like."

Trump earlier said he'd debate Harris, but is now questioning the value of a meetup and saying he "probably" will debate her, but he "can also make

a case for not doing it."

Harris seized on it. "So he won't debate me, but he and his running mate have a lot to say about me," she said. "And by the way, don't you find some of their stuff to just be plain weird."

"Well Donald," she said, addressing him head-on. "I do hope you'll reconsider. Meet me on the debate stage ... because as the saying goes, if you've got something to say, say it to my face." Trump has suggested the Sept. 10 debate on ABC News should be moved to a different network, calling ABC "fake news."

## Signs

The roughly 8,000-capacity basketball arena at Georgia State University was filled to its rafters with voters waving signs, dancing to the Harris campaign soundtrack and a performance by Megan Thee Stallion. Such an atmosphere would not have been possible just 10 days ago, with the party reeling over whether the 81-year-old Biden would remain in the race after a dismal performance magnified concerns about his age and abilities and ultimately ended his campaign.

"This is like Barack Obama 2008 on steroids for me," said Mildred Hobson Doss, a 59-year-old who came downtown from suburban Lilburn. "I would have voted for President Biden again. But we are ready."

Harris' campaign argues her appeal to young people, working-age women and non-white voters has scrambled the dynamics in Georgia and other states that are demographically similar, from North Carolina to Nevada and Arizona.

In a strategy memo released after the president left the race, Harris campaign chair Jen O'Malley Dillon, who held the same role for Biden, reaffirmed the importance of winning Michigan, Wisconsin and Pennsylvania, a trio of industrial states that have formed the traditional Democratic blue wall.

But she also argued that the vice president's place atop the ticket "opens up additional persuadable voters" and described them as "disproportionately Black, Latino and under 30" in places like Georgia.

"The energy is infectious," said Georgia Democratic Chairwoman Nikema Williams, a congresswoman from Atlanta. "My phone has been blowing up. People want to be part of

this movement."

## Also:

**NEW YORK:** The director of the Heritage Foundation's Project 2025 vision for a complete overhaul of the federal government stepped down Tuesday after facing pressure from **Donald Trump's** campaign, which has tried to disavow a program created by many of the former president's allies and former aides.

Paul Dans' exit comes after the project "completed exactly what it set out to do: bringing together over 110 leading conservative organizations to create a unified conservative vision, motivated to devolve power from the unelected administrative state, and returning it to the people," Heritage Foundation President **Kevin Roberts** said in a statement.

Democrats for the past several months have made Project 2025 a key election-year cudgel, pointing to the ultraconservative policy blueprint as a glimpse into how extreme another Trump administration could be.

The nearly 1,000-page handbook lays out sweeping changes in the federal government, including altering personnel rules to ensure government workers are more loyal to the president.

Yet Trump has repeatedly disavowed the document, saying on social media he hasn't read it and doesn't know anything about it. At a rally in Michigan earlier this month, he said Project 2025 was written by people on the "severe right" and some of the things in it are "seriously extreme."

"President Trump's campaign has been very clear for over a year that Project 2025 had nothing to do with the campaign, did not speak for the campaign, and should not be associated with the campaign or the President in any way," Trump campaign advisers **Susie Wiles** and **Chris LaCivita** said in a statement. "Reports of Project 2025's demise would be greatly welcomed and should serve as notice to anyone or any group trying to misrepresent their influence with President Trump and his campaign - it will not end well for you."

Trump campaign representatives did not respond to messages inquiring about whether the campaign asked or pushed for Dans to step down from the project.



Raging flames of a wildfire are seen in Tucepi, Croatia on July 30. (Xinhua)



Campbell



Adams

## America

**More flooding hits Vermont:** Thunderstorms and torrential rain brought another wave of violent floods Tuesday that caved in roads, crushed vehicles, pushed homes off their foundations and led to dramatic boat rescues in northeastern Vermont, nearly three weeks after flooding from Hurricane Beryl.

Flash flood warnings remained in effect through Tuesday afternoon hours after some areas got 6 to more than 8 inches (15 to more than 20 centimeters) starting late the night before.

In Lyndonville, a village about 40 miles (64 kilometers) northeast of Montpelier, the state capital, Deryck Colburn said he awoke before daybreak to a neighbor pounding on his door. Colburn said he heard the same surge of rushing water from an overflowing brook that he'd heard earlier in July, along with the unnerving sound of tumbling boulders carried by the water.

"I went down the road to her house, and there was no road. There was just a river," he said. (AP)

**Adams defends top adviser:** New York City Mayor **Eric Adams** is standing by a top adviser and longtime friend who faces allegations that he sexually harassed female colleagues and retaliated against those who raised alarm over the alleged misconduct.

Timothy Pearson, a former high-ranking official in the New York Police Department who now advises the mayor on public safety, was named in a lawsuit filed Tuesday by a current deputy police chief, Miltiadis Marmara.

It is the fourth lawsuit in the last year against Pearson, who is currently being investigated by another city agency for his role in a brawl at a shelter for homeless migrants.

At a press briefing Tuesday, Adams described Pearson as a "good friend" and said his role in the administration had not changed as a result of the allegations.

"People have a tendency when accusations are made to say, 'You know what, the pressure is hot, you need to just get rid of a person.' I just don't operate that way," said Adams, a Democrat. "I believe in due process and let the process take its course." (AP)

**'I offer up no excuses':** The Illinois sheriff whose deputy shot Sonya Massey, the unarmed Black woman who called 911 for help in her Springfield home,

apologized to the community during a gathering Monday night, saying, "I offer up no excuses."

Sangamon County Sheriff **Jack Camp-**

**bell** faced a hostile crowd of more than 500 people at Union Baptist Church in a meeting facilitated by the Community Relations Service of the Justice Department,



An unruly crowd clash with police on July 30, 2024, in Southport, northwest England, near where three girls were stabbed to death in a dance class the day before. The violence erupted shortly after a peaceful vigil was attended by hundreds in the center of Southport to mourn the victims of the stabbings, including seven still in critical condition. (AP)

according to local media reports. (AP)

**'El Chapo' son pleads not guilty:**

Joaquín Guzmán López, a son of notorious drug kingpin "El Chapo," pleaded not guilty to drug trafficking and other charges Tuesday, days after an astonishing capture in the US.

Guzmán López, dressed in an orange jumpsuit, stood with feet shackled as federal prosecutors in Chicago detailed a five-count indictment that also includes money laundering, conspiracy and weapons charges. He declined a Spanish interpreter and answered most of US District Judge Sharon Coleman's questions designed to assess his health and determine whether he understood the proceedings with a simple, "Yes, your honor."

Guzmán López and Ismael "El Mayo" Zambada, a longtime of Mexico's Sinaloa cartel were arrested by US authorities in the El Paso, Texas-area last week, according to the Justice Department. Both men, who face multiple charges in the US, oversaw the trafficking of "tens of thousands of pounds of drugs into the United States, along with related violence," according to the FBI. (AP)



## Africa

## Boat capsizes, 40 dead

## UNSC 'ends' arms embargo for CAR

UNITED NATIONS, July 31, (Agencies): The UN Security Council (UNSC) on Tuesday formally ended an arms embargo on the Central African Republic, a largely symbolic move but one that was welcomed by the country's government as a sign of confidence as it seeks to end more than a decade of intercommunal conflict.

The unanimous vote essentially reaffirmed a resolution approved last year that permitted weapons to be supplied to government forces, but not to other fighters.

The new resolution was keenly sought by the African nation, which saw the enduring reference to the 11-year-old embargo as an unwarranted blemish on its government and its attempts to make progress toward peace.



Broadhurst

"This diplomatic victory is a first step that gives dignity back to the CAR and its people," Foreign Minister Sylvie Baïpo-Tomon told the council, saying it had "honored the effort made, and it is a source of national pride."

The mineral-rich but impoverished country has been in conflict since 2013, when predominantly Muslim rebels seized power and forced the president from office. Mostly Christian militias fought back. A 2019 peace deal lessened but didn't end the fighting. Six of the 14 armed groups that signed the agreement later left it.

Mercenaries from Russia's Wagner group, along with Russian military instructors, have been working in the Central African Republic at the government's request. A UN peacekeeping mission and Rwandan troops also are tasked with trying to stop the violence.

## Resolution

France's deputy UN ambassador, **Nathalie Broadhurst**, whose country spearheaded the resolution, said it "removes all ambiguity" by scrubbing a "territorial" embargo while targeting restrictions to fighters who "threaten the territorial integrity of the country."

The resolution continues to tell all UN member countries to prevent arms sales to "armed groups and associated individuals" operating in the Central African Republic, including those that commit or plan attacks which "undermine efforts for a return to peace and violate international humanitarian law."

Armed groups' activities have increased in the last year, amid a spillover of the conflict in neighboring Sudan, UN experts said in a report in June.

Russian Ambassador Vassily Nebenzia suggested Tuesday that the council should consider lifting the arms restriction even for illegal armed groups. He said the prohibition had "lost its relevance" because it's not keeping such outfits from getting fighters, weapons and money.

**Congo boat capsizes, 40 dead:** At least 40 people were killed when a boat capsized Sunday evening on the Congo River near Kindu, the capital of Maniema Province in the central-eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), local media reported Tuesday.

At least 40 bodies were recovered from the waters after a boat, named "ABC-BONOBO," carrying about 50 passengers, capsized in circumstances that have not yet been clarified, according to the reports.

Mussa Kabwankubi, the governor of the province, on Tuesday declared three days of provincial mourning and reaffirmed his determination to shed light on the tragedy.

In June 2024, at least 86 people, including 21 children, were killed after a boat sank on the Kwa River, one of the tributaries of the Congo River, in the province of Mai-Ndombe, in the western DRC.

**Cleanup ops in S.Africa:** Coastal cleanup operations are ramping up on South Africa's west coast after an oil spill caused by the breakup of a grounded cargo vessel on the weekend, said the South African Maritime Safety Authority (SAMSA) Tuesday.

"This immediately led to the deployment of the country's Oil Spill Contingency Plan to mop up the oil spill in the adjoining coastal area, and which entailed the massing of manpower that initially involved some 125 people sourced from the local communities," SAMSA said on its social media account.

The grounded Panama-flagged general cargo vessel, MV Ultra Galaxy, was en route to Dar es Salaam, Tanzania when it ran aground on July 9 off the coast of the Western Cape Province in South Africa.

The ship was abandoned by its crew of 18 Filipino seafarers, who are now safely back in the Philippines. According to SAMSA, the 125-meter-long vessel broke apart into four sections over the weekend in stormy conditions, leading to an oil spill.

"Cleanup operations continued throughout Monday following the oil spill from the grounded Panama-flagged cargo ship, MV Ultra Galaxy," said SAMSA in a statement Monday evening.

"Cleanup teams, comprising of salvors and 125 local community members, have been diligently working to remove the oil that washed up onto the beach, covering an area of approximately one km south of the wreck," it said, adding that the teams will be increased as the operations continue throughout the week.

**AUC condemns groups eviction:** The Congolese government violated the rights of the Indigenous Batwa community by evicting them about 50 years ago from their ancestral lands to expand one of the country's biggest national parks, according to the African Union's commission (AUC) on human rights. The decision, made public on Monday, is the first of its kind to recognize the central role that native populations play in protecting biodiversity.

Batwa people lived as hunters and gatherers in the forested areas of Uganda, Rwanda and Congo. In 1970, a Belgian photographer and conservationist founded the now-famous Kahuzi-Biega National Park near the western bank of Lake Kivu on a territory, traditionally used by the Batwa people.

Following the park's expansion in 1975, around 13,000 Batwa people were evicted from their homes in the name of protecting biodiversity. Most still live on its fringes in makeshift villages, struggling to access land and healthcare.

The African Commission on Human and Peoples Rights called on the Congolese government to allow for the safe return of Batwa people, to grant them ownership of their ancestral lands located within the national park, issue a public apology acknowledging their abuses and pay the Indigenous people compensation after recognizing them as citizens.



Rescuers on their second day of mission following Tuesday's landslides cross a river at Chooralmala, Wayanad district, Kerala state, India on July 31. Inset: Rescuers use machinery to sift through debris. (AP)

## Rescuers search through mud, debris as deaths rise to 151 in India landslides

Hundreds of rescue workers searched through mud and debris Wednesday from multiple landslides that have killed at least 151 people in southern India, police said.

The multiple landslides occurred after torrential rains triggered torrents of mud and water that swept through tea estates and villages.

Another 186 people were injured by the landslides that hit hilly areas in Kerala state's Wayanad district early Tuesday, flattening houses, uprooting trees and destroying bridges, said police officer Aijaz, who uses one name.

P.M Manoj, a spokesman for the state's top elected official, said that 187 people were unaccounted for. Seventy-seven bodies have been identified so far and mostly handed to their relatives, he added.

More than a dozen bodies were found overnight, Aijaz said, as over 300 rescuers worked to pull out people stuck under mud and debris, but blocked roads and unstable terrain hampered their efforts.

The first landslide occurred at 2 a.m. on Tuesday, followed by another two hours later. Several areas, including Meppadi, Mundakkai and Chooralmala, were isolated, and roads were washed away caus-

ing immense damage to homes, said Kerala's Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan.

"Efforts to locate missing persons continue with all available resources," their statement said.

Mundakka is in an area highly prone to disasters. However, the gushing soil, gravel, and rock reached the town of Chooralmala, 6 kilometers (3.7 miles) away.

Manoj said more than 8,300 people have been moved to 82 government-run relief camps. The government is ensuring food delivery and essential items to the relief camps. (AP)

## Asia

## Recent rains in NKorea flooded thousands of houses

## China accuses Japan of 'smear attacks'

BEIJING, July 31, (Agencies): China has expressed strong dissatisfaction to Japan about what it called "smear attacks" against China at recent high-level meetings with the United States, India and Australia, the Foreign Ministry said Wednesday.

A ministry statement said that Liu Jinsong, the director general of the Asian affairs department, conveyed solemn representations and serious concern at a meeting the previous day with Akira Yokochi, the deputy chief of mission at the Japanese Embassy.

"Liu pointed out that Japan's smear attacks on China are self-contradictory to its statement of promoting the strategic and reciprocal relationship between the two countries," the statement said.

Meeting in Tokyo on Sunday, Japan's foreign and defense ministers agreed to bolster military cooperation with the US at what are known as "2+2" talks with their American counterparts.

A joint statement said China's foreign policy "seeks to reshape the international order for its own benefit at the expense of others" and that such behavior represents "the greatest strategic challenge" in the Indo-Pacific region and beyond.

ing his four years in office.

The Foreign Ministry statement said China urges Japan to stop making irresponsible remarks on China's internal affairs - a likely reference to Taiwan - and called on Japan to stop colluding with "certain countries" to form small circles that lead to confrontation.

A Japanese Embassy statement said that Yokochi had expounded Japan's positions at the meeting and made representations on various China-related topics, but it did not provide any details.

**NKorea rains flooded houses:** The recent heavy rains in northwestern North Korea flooded thousands of houses and a vast extent of farmland and left many residents homeless and living in makeshift tents, North Korea's state media reported Wednesday.

North Korea earlier said more than 5,000 people stranded in Sinuiju city and Uiju town were rescued by airlift and other evacuation work after Saturday's rains caused a river on the Chinese border to swell. But it hadn't mentioned any specific damage, or said if there were any casualties.

## Prone

North Korea is prone to flooding from heavy summer rains because of poor drainage, deforestation and dilapidated infrastructure.

The official Korean Central News Agency said Wednesday that about 4,100 houses, 3,000 hectares (about 7,410 acres) of agricultural fields and numerous public buildings, roads and railways in Sinuiju and Uiju were flooded.

It said about 150 people in nearby Jagang province had also been isolated due to a separate river flooding there, but they were all evacuated to safety by military helicopters.

KCNA didn't say whether anyone died or was injured in those flood-ravaged areas.

**Myanmar floods displace 209K:** More than 209,000 people from over 50,000 households in Myanmar have been displaced as floods have hit the country since the end of June this year, the state-run Myanmar Radio and Television (MRTV) reported on Wednesday.

The report said that Myanmar has experienced flooding, primarily due to heavy rains and rising river levels, in its 10 regions and states.

A total of 656 relief centers have been opened for the flood victims across these regions and states, the report said, adding that food, drinking water and relief supplies have also been provided for them.

According to the country's Department of Meteorology and Hydrology, water levels of major rivers in some towns of Kayin state, Ayeyarwady and Bago regions were still above the warning mark on Wednesday.

**2 men killed in Philippines clash:** Philippine security forces killed two armed men during a clash in Sultan Kudarat province in southern Philippines, a military general said Wednesday.

Major General Antonio Nafarrete, commander of the army's 6th Infantry Division, said a gunfight broke out on Monday in Isulan town after an armed group fired at a law enforcement team deployed to defuse fighting between former members of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front and Moro National Liberation Front.

The government team said it recovered weapons and ammunition from the clash site.



Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro gestures to supporters during a speech from a balcony in the presidential palace in defense of his reelection, in Caracas, Venezuela, on July 30. (AP)



Biden



Lula

## Lat/Am

**'Unable to verify Venezuela results':** The Carter Center said it was unable to verify the results of Venezuela's presidential election, blaming authorities for a "complete lack of transparency" in declaring Nicolas Maduro the winner without providing any individual polling tallies.

The statement Tuesday night by the Atlanta-based group is perhaps the harshest rebuke yet of Venezuela's chaotic election process because it comes from one of just a handful of outside groups invited by the Maduro government to observe the vote.

"The electoral authority's failure to announce disaggregated results by polling station constitutes a serious breach of electoral principles," the Carter Center said. The group, which had a technical mission of 17 experts spread out in four cities across Venezuela, added that the election did not meet international standards and "cannot be considered democratic."

The Carter Center's harsh criticism capped a second long day of protests against the results by opponents of Maduro who said their candidate, Edmundo Gonzalez, trounced the incumbent by a more than two-to-one margin.

Maduro's government hasn't taken lightly to the criticism and ratcheted up their attacks on their opponents Tuesday, with some allies suggesting the opposition's most influential leader and a presidential candidate be arrested.

A day after Maduro was declared the winner by a National Electoral Council that is loyal to him and the ruling party, the attacks, which were aired on national television, followed the opposition's surprise release of detailed voting data that it said shows that Edmundo Gonzalez won by a landslide.

The electoral council has not released any results from the polling center level, which come from tally sheets that the more than 30,000 electronic voting machines print after polls close. It is not obligated to do so, but in previous elections it has posted the figures online within hours.

United States President Joe Biden and Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva spoke by phone and agreed that Ven-

ezuela must release the data, saying the election's outcome "represents a critical moment for democracy in the hemisphere," according to a White House summary of the call.

Biden and Lula "agreed on the need for immediate release of full, transparent, and detailed voting data at the polling station level by the Venezuelan electoral authori-



In this photo provided by the North Korean government, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un inspects a flood-hit area in Sinuiju city, North Phyongan province, North Korea on July 29. The recent heavy rains in northwestern North Korea flooded thousands of houses and a vast extent of farmland and left many residents homeless and living in makeshift tents, North Korea's state media reported on July 31. (AP)

ties," it said. Venezuela has the world's largest proven crude reserves and once boasted Latin America's most advanced economy, but it entered into free fall after Maduro took the helm in 2013. Plummeting oil prices, widespread shortages and hyperinflation that soared past 130,000% led to social unrest and mass emigration.

More than 7.7 million Venezuelans have left the country since 2014, the largest exodus in Latin America's recent history. (AP)

**Brazil boat accident kills 3:** At least three people died, including a one-year-old baby, 16 others were injured and nine were missing after a boat capsized in northern Brazil's Amazon River, police reported Tuesday.

The boat, "M. Monteiro," was carrying more than 200 passengers when it caught fire after an explosion on Monday near the municipality of Uarini in the Amazonas state.

According to a police spokesperson and a statement from the Navy, at least 183 people managed to survive.

The vessel left Manaus, capital of Amazonas, on Saturday, bound for Tabatinga, a Brazilian city on the border with Colombia and Peru.

It was the second fire on a passenger boat in Amazonas in three days.

On Saturday, the boat "Comandante Souza III" capsized following a fire, leaving four people dead and five missing. (Xinhua)



		Change	Closing pts			Change	Closing pts
SAUDI	- TASI	+44.87	12,109.52	DUBAI	- DFMGI	-15.96	4,268.05
JAPAN	- Nikkei 225	+575.87	39,101.82	PAKISTAN	- KSE 100	-820.99	77,872.53
PHILIPPINES	- PSEI	+12.73	6,619.09				
EGYPT	- EGX 30	+339.40	29,378.82				

# Business

## Bank to finance large infrastructure, oil and energy projects in Kuwait

# Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait Group holds H1 2024 analyst conference call

KUWAIT CITY, July 31: Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) recently hosted its H1 2024 analyst conference attended by Abdulla Al Sumait, Acting Group Chief Executive Officer; Shiamak Soonawalla, Group Chief Finance Officer; Abdulaziz Jawad, Chief Strategy Officer; and Yaqoub Almulla, Senior Manager of Investor Relations.

The conference entailed a review of the Group's H1 financial indicators, as well as the expectations and upcoming projects, with the aim of maintaining its leading position in the banking sector and improving customer service according to the highest standards in the industry.

### Growing opportunities

During the call, Al Sumait expressed his optimism, stating that ABK is prepared to capitalize on emerging growth opportunities and finance upcoming large infrastructure, oil, and energy projects in Kuwait. These initiatives aim to leverage its financial strength while continuing to adopt the highest standards of governance and transparency.

Al Sumait continued, "We are hopeful and confident in the ability to enhance the partnership between the public and private sectors in implementing Kuwait Vision 2035 plans to advance economic activity and contribute to transforming Kuwait into a regional and global commercial and financial hub."

Moving to key financial highlights and performance for this period, Al Sumait highlighted that the Group has achieved a 22% increase in Net Profit attributable to shareholders to KD 29.1 million during H1 2024, and a 20% increase in EPS to 12 fils, with a comfortable Capital Adequacy Ratio of 15.3%.

He expressed, "All financial indicators reflect our success in implementing strategic plans and keeping pace with economic changes. During H1, we maintained positive momentum, reflected in our improved profitability and asset quality ratios, including a NPL Ratio of 1.31%."

In an initiative to reinforce its trust among global companies, Al Sumait added that ABK has participated in several financing deals and has received numerous global awards, adding to its record of achievements. These were in recognition of the ABK's exceptional performance and its provision of the best services, products, and banking



ABK logo

solutions in all the markets it operates in.

In addition, Al Sumait disclosed that ABK continues to work on its digital transformation plan and adopts the highest security standards across all businesses. He elaborated, "We have signed agreements for artificial intelligence (AI) technologies and live data dashboards across most functions. This is in addition to our consistent efforts in improving performance and services, and innovating our banking solutions that add more customer value simply and safely."

### Moving forward

On his part, Soonawalla expressed that H1 2024 has been a period of significant enhancements in profitability, operational efficiency, asset quality, and a solid capital position. He disclosed that ABK remains positive about its performance for the remainder of the year.

He said, "Our Operating Income witnessed a 15% increase to KD 100.9 with the composition as follows: 46% was from commercial banking, 40% from retail banking, and 14% from treasury operations. In terms of asset allocation, commercial banking accounted for 59%, retail banking for 13%, and treasury operations for 28%."

Furthermore, Operating Profit grew by 21% to KD 53.6 million. Soonawalla was also pleased to report that the Non-Performing Loan Ratio stands at 1.31%, while the Loan Loss Coverage Ratio is at an impressive 447%, underscoring ABK's prudent provisioning policies and strong credit metrics.

Soonawalla proceeded to highlight that, as at the half year end, ABK has KD 221 million worth of provisions, exceeding IFRS requirements and acting as substantial buffers against downside risks. He emphasized that operational efficiency



Mr. Abdulla Al Sumait - Acting Group Chief Executive Officer

### Abdulla Al Sumait:

■ All financial indicators reflect our success in implementing strategic plans and keeping pace with economic changes.



Mr. Shiamak Soonawalla - Group Chief Finance Officer

### Shiamak Soonawalla:

■ H1 2024 has been a period of significant enhancements in profitability, operational efficiency, asset quality, and a solid capital position.



Mr. Abdulaziz Jawad - Chief Strategy Officer

### Abdulaziz Jawad:

■ As we navigate the remainder of 2024, our commitment to ABK's strategy execution will remain prudent and persistent to shaping a prosperous path forward.

remains a priority, which is evident in the Net Interest Margin standing at 2.3%, an 8% improvement over H1 2023, and the Operating Profit to average assets ratio of 1.67%.

He stated, "These figures reflect the Group's strong performance and continued focus on profitability. Additionally, our Return on Average Equity has reached 9.5%, marking a significant 15% increase compared to the same period last year."

The Group's Total Interest Income in H1 2024 reached KD 72.4 million, a notable increase of KD 7.1 million or 11% over the same period in 2023. Soonawalla elaborated, "This growth is largely due to higher asset levels and a more favorable interest rate environment; however, our interest expense also rose by 21% to KD 157 million, as deposits were repriced in line with the interest rate hikes last year."

The Group's Total Assets grew by 6% to reach KD 6.6 billion while its loan portfolio expanded by 5% to KD 4.5 billion. Additionally, Total Deposits stand at KD 4 billion, representing 65.9% of our Total Liabilities. ABK maintains a strong liquidity position with a Net Stable Funding Ratio of 113% and a Liquidity Coverage Ra-

tio of 279%, both comfortably above regulatory requirements.

Soonawalla continued, "Turning to the factors driving changes in income, margins, and costs, our total Operating Profit saw a notable 21% increase compared to the same period last year, arising from better margins and improved non-interest income streams."

Furthermore, fees and commissions made a significant contribution, growing by 31% compared to the same period last year and amounting to KD 21 million in H1 2024. Soonawalla explained that ABK's fees and commissions are diversified across various regions and business sectors, with the bulk stemming from core banking operations. As a final point, cost-to-income ratio for the current half improved to 46.9%, down from 49.5% in the same period last year.

### Strong performance

Moving on to discussing strategic updates, Jawad indicated ABK's financial stability and strength as a trusted banking and financial partner in the Kuwaiti and regional markets, it maintained high credit ratings of 'A' and 'A2' from Fitch and Moody's respectively. In addition, he expressed ABK's pride in winning two prestigious MEED awards, 'Best Retail

Bank - Egypt' and 'Excellence in Customer Protection/ Fraud Control - Kuwait'.

He highlighted that digitization efforts remain on track with a wave 1 mobile app launch by Q3 2024. This is in line with upgrading the Bank's online banking platform to a best-in-class transaction banking digital framework, which includes standard non-lending service offerings for different market segments through a digital medium.

Jawad proceeded to discuss the Bank's launch of new offerings, including the 'Al Tajar Plus' account that supports SMEs into growing their businesses and increasing their profitability. This comes alongside the introduction of the first-of-its-kind 'Family Package' in Kuwait's banking sector, offering integrated banking services to all family members.

Across borders, Jawad disclosed that ABK-Egypt kicked off the Core Banking System Upgrade project as a significant step forward for the Bank in providing customers with an elevated banking experience. ABK-Egypt also launched the 'ABK NEXT' segment for youth to enjoy a wide range of products and services with tailored benefits that match their lifestyle.

Shifting to ABK Capital, the Bank's investment arm, Jawad highlighted the introduction of two investment products, namely Ijara Fund (Equipment Leasing Fund) and International Private Credit Fund.

Commenting on ABK's sustainability and ESG efforts, Jawad said, "We are currently gathering internal data to evaluate our progress for the year. This comprehensive data collection will allow us to measure the effectiveness of our initiatives and identify areas for improvement."

### Kuwait and beyond

Jawad continued, "The July 2024 World Economic Outlook forecasted global growth to be at 3.2% in line with its previous outlook in April. The global economy also faces upside risks of inflation and raising the possibility of higher interest rates for an extended period, in the context of escalating trade tensions and increased policy uncertainty according to the IMF."

Shifting to the outlook in the GCC, economic growth is expected to rebound to 2.8%, according to the 2024 Gulf Economic Update. The positive outlook for the region's economy is due to expected increases in oil production as OPEC+ eases production quotas in the second half of 2024 and the results of strong performance in the non-oil sector and capital expenditures.

Specifically in Kuwait, economic growth is expected to recover to 2.8% in 2024, supported by a higher oil production of 3.6% with increased output this year and highlighting the inauguration of Kuwait's first offshore drilling platform 'Nokhetha,' which now rests at its location in the northeast waters.

Jawad added that the non-oil sector is projected to grow by 2.1% due to a stable political scene planning new reforms and the initiation of significant development projects. He claimed, "The aforementioned leads to Kuwait's construction sector expanding by 6.6% this year according to MEED."

Jawad concluded by reaffirming ABK's successful first half of 2024. He highlighted that it is progressing at a faster pace compared to ABK2X strategic targets which continues to drive noticeable outcomes. He said, "As we navigate the remainder of 2024, our commitment to ABK's strategy execution will remain prudent and persistent to shaping a prosperous path forward."

# KUFPEC reports \$564 mln annual net profit for 2023

Plans for major projects in Asia, Europe and Arab countries

By Najeh Bilal

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, July 31: Kuwait Foreign Petroleum Exploration Company (KUFPEC) announced that it has achieved annual net profits of \$564 million (172.8 million dinars) during the fiscal year ending in December 2023, down from the company's record profits during the past year 2022, which amounted to 308 million dinars (about one billion dollars).

The company's operating profits also decreased to 157 million dinars, compared to about 304 million dinars in 2022, while exploration costs decreased from 15.5 million dinars the year before last to 11.8 million dinars last year.

Informed oil sources said that KUFPEC has an ambitious plan to produce 140 thousand barrels per day in 2026, through its expected expansions and entering into major projects in a number of Asian, European and Arab countries.

The same sources added that the company's board of directors is now planning with the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation to acquire some oil projects in the aforementioned countries.

The sources explained KUFPEC is also planning to liquidate projects that do not achieve satisfactory returns, similar to its exit from projects in Norway and China.

## Dip in KOC profits linked to external factors on its financial performance

By Najeh Bilal

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, July 31: The decline in Kuwait Oil Company's profits for the fiscal year 2023/2024 highlights the significant impact of external factors on its financial performance.

This is due to Kuwait's commitment to reducing its oil production by 135,000 barrels per day as part of the OPEC+ agreement has directly affected the company's revenue.

Moreover, the average price of Kuwaiti oil fell to \$85 per barrel during 2023/2024, down from over \$130 per barrel in the previous fiscal year.

This decrease in oil prices, which was influenced by various global economic factors including the aftermath of the Ukrainian war and the return to economic activity post-COVID-19, has also contributed to the decline in revenues.

The Al-Seyassah daily quoting oil sources said, despite the profit decline, Kuwait Oil Company plans to invest over 13 billion dinars by 2028. This investment is aimed at expanding its oil projects to boost future revenues and enhance profitability.

The company's efforts to increase its revenue through significant investments in oil projects reflect a

proactive approach to managing the impacts of lower oil prices and production cuts.

Hajjaj Bukhadour, a Kuwaiti economist who had worked as a consultant in several companies, emphasizes that Kuwait's reduction in oil production as part of the OPEC+ agreement is a primary reason for the profit decline. The policy aims to stabilize oil prices and manage inflation, as high oil prices contribute to increased inflation rates globally.

OPEC+ is focused on controlling inflation by managing oil prices. A significant rise in oil prices, such as exceeding \$90 per barrel, could exacerbate inflationary pressures. This, in turn, would lead to higher interest rates set by global central banks, affecting economic stability.

Bukhadour anticipates that Kuwait Oil Company's revenues could improve if Kuwait's production share within OPEC+ increases to 3.5 million barrels per day by 2025. This potential increase in production could boost the company's revenue, counterbalancing the effects of previous production cuts and lower oil prices.

Overall, Bukhadour's comments highlight the balancing act between managing oil production levels to stabilize prices and addressing the economic impacts of those decisions on the company's profitability.

## 54% of employees would recommend their company to others

# Bayt.com and YouGov survey reveals key factors driving employee loyalty in MENA

DUBAI, July 31: The latest Employee Loyalty in the MENA survey by Bayt.com, the Middle East's leading jobsite, and YouGov investigates the driving factors that contribute employees' loyalty to their organizations, identifying actions that could enhance loyalty and recognizing the elements that could potentially undermine it.

Illustrating a considerable measure of stability within the workforce, a majority of the survey participants, amounting to 55%, report having been with their current companies for a tenure extending beyond four years. This stability is paralleled by workplace satisfaction, as nearly three out of five employees indicate satisfaction with their current employers. Results depict that 33% of current employees categorize themselves as 'very loyal' to their organizations, with an additional 23% feeling 'somewhat loyal'.

However, the sense of loyalty is not without its challenges. The survey highlights that a prominent reason for employees not feeling entirely loyal is attributed to a lack of trust in their organization's management, noted by 48% of respondents. Following closely, 39% point to lack of job security as a concern impacting their allegiance.

Despite some areas of concern, the survey finds that a vast majority of employees – 81% – are highly engaged with their work, indicating a deep immersion in day-to-day activities. Noteworthy is the fact that 38% of employees show a commendable level of loyalty to their current organizations by choosing to stay for the long term, even in the face of potentially more lucrative offers elsewhere.

Ola Haddad, General Manager at Bayt.com said: "Understanding and nurturing employee loyalty is critical in navigating the dynamic landscapes of the MENA workforce. Our survey reveals a powerful correlation between trust in leadership and employee allegiance. As workplaces strive for excellence, it becomes increasingly clear that management's transparency and recognition of their workforce's contributions serve as the cornerstone of building a loyal and engaged team. At Bayt.com, matching job seekers with the right opportunities is our top priority. With the Middle East's largest database of over 50 million job seekers and more than 40,000 job postings, we guarantee that job seekers find their ideal roles and employers discover the perfect candidates for their teams, ensuring mutual satisfaction."

In terms of factors contributing to employee loyalty, the survey reports that basic salary stands out as a critical aspect for 54% of respondents, closely followed by employee-job fit at 36%, and additional benefits from the company at 32%. To boost loyalty among their staff, employers have been advised by respondents to focus on increased recognition and rewards, cited by 60%, the creation of growth opportunities, pointed out by 52%, and the facilitation of regular discussion forums to understand and address employee grievances, emphasized by 50%.

The perceived benefits of fostering a high degree of em-



Ola Haddad

ployee loyalty are diverse, including the enhancement of work quality (74%), the willingness of employees to go the extra mile (67%), and a spread of positive word-of-mouth about the company (65%).

In contrast, several factors are identified as potential loyalty detractors. Neglecting employee suggestions could significantly damage employee dedication, as indicated by 56%. Heavy workloads or unequal distribution of responsibilities (54%), lack of open communication between employees and their direct managers (51%), and assigning work for which employees are not prepared for (48%) represent other major sources of dissatisfaction that could lead to deteriorated employee loyalty.

From the perspective of advocacy, a significant 54% of employees view their company positively enough to recommend it as a respectable place to work to others. Furthermore, 68% of employees express pride in discussing their company's products and services, which can have a positive impact on the organization's reputation.

Zafar Shah, Account Director at YouGov said: "This year's findings underscore the complex interplay between job security, satisfaction, and loyalty within the MENA region. As the data suggests, employees who feel valued through fair compensation, job fit, and career opportunities are more inclined to feel more engaged in their workplace and speak about their companies' products and services passionately. It is this sense of belonging and purpose that distinguishes highly loyal employees from the rest."

Data for the 2024 Bayt.com Employee Loyalty in the MENA Survey was collected online from June 6 to 14, 2024. Results are based on a sample of 862 respondents from countries including the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Bahrain, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Palestine, Syria, Yemen, Egypt, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya and Sudan among others.

## UAE remains top crude supplier to Japan

# Kuwait's crude oil exports to Japan down 24.5%

TOKYO, July 31, (KUNA): Kuwait's crude oil exports to Japan in June fell 24.5 percent from a year earlier to 5.21 million barrels, or 174,000 barrels per day (bpd), down for the ninth consecutive month, government data showed Wednesday.

As Japan's third-biggest oil provider, Kuwait supplied 8.3 percent of the Asian nation's total crude imports, compared with 10.1 percent in the same month of last year, the Japanese Natural Resources and Energy Agency said in a preliminary report.

Japan's overall imports of crude oil in June declined 8.7

percent year-on-year to 2.08 million bpd, down for the seventh month in a row. Shipments from the Middle East accounted for 96.4 percent of the total, down 0.9 percentage points from the year before.

The United Arab Emirates remained in the top spot, with imports from the country edging up 0.8 percent from a year earlier to 860,000 bpd, followed by Saudi Arabia with 859,000 bpd; down 9.0 percent. Qatar ranked fourth with 81,000 bpd and Ecuador fifth with 33,000 bpd, respectively. Japan is the world's-third biggest oil consumer after China and the US.

# Kuwait gold purchases fall 14.58% in H1-24

KUWAIT CITY, July 31: The decline in Kuwaiti gold purchases reflects broader trends in both local and global markets, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

In the first half of 2024, Kuwait's gold purchases decreased by 14.58% compared to the same period in 2023, totaling 8.2 tons. This decline is notable given that Kuwaiti gold purchases reached their highest level in 13 years in 2023, at 19.6 tons.

The purchases were evenly split between the first and second quarters of 2024, with 4.1 tons each. However, in the second quarter alone, purchases fell by about 25.45% com-

pared to the same quarter in 2023, which saw 5.5 tons.

Meanwhile, at the global level, gold purchases dropped by 13.48% in the second quarter of 2024 to 651.6 tons, compared to 753.1 tons in the same quarter of 2023. This decline in global demand is also reflected in the jewelry sector, which saw a decrease of 18.52% in the second quarter of 2024.

However, on a quarterly basis, demand for gold in Kuwait stabilized in the second quarter at 3.1 tons, consistent with the first quarter of 2024. However, this represents a 26.19% decrease from the 4.2 tons purchased in the second quarter of 2023.



## BUSINESS

## entrepreneur faces fraud charges

A California entrepreneur who sought to merge the bitcoin culture with social media by letting people bet on the future reputation of celebrities and influencers has been arrested on a fraud charge.

Nader Al-Naji, 32, was arrested in Los Angeles on Saturday on a wire fraud charge filed against him in New York, and civil claims were brought against him by federal regulatory author-

ities on Tuesday.

He appeared in federal court on Monday in Los Angeles and was released on bail.

Authorities said Al-Naji lied to investors who poured hundreds of millions of dollars into his BitClout venture. They say he promised the money would only be spent on the business but instead steered millions of dollars to himself, his family and some of his company's

workers.

A lawyer for Al-Naji did not immediately comment.

The Securities and Exchange Commission said in a civil complaint filed in Manhattan federal court that Al-Naji began designing BitClout in 2019 as a social media platform with an interface that promised to be a "new type of social network that mixes speculation and social media." (AP)

## Japan's cbank raises interest rate to 0.25%

Japan's central bank on Wednesday raised its policy interest rate to around 0.25 percent from the previous range of around zero to 0.1 percent, and outlined a plan to taper its bond-buying program.

At a two-day policy meeting, Bank of Japan's (BOJ) Governor Kazuo Ueda and his eight board colleagues decided the first rate hike since March, when it scrapped the negative interest

rate policy for the first time in 17 years. It also marked the highest short-term interest rate since 2008.

Japan's economic activity and prices have been developing generally in line with the BOJ's outlook, and the bank "judged it appropriate to adjust the degree of monetary accommodation from the perspective of sustainable and stable achievement of the

price stability target of 2 percent," the central bank said in a statement released after the policy meeting.

As for the future conduct of monetary policy, the BOJ said that if the current BOJ's outlook for economic activity and prices are realized, it will "accordingly continue to raise the policy interest rate and adjust the degree of monetary accommodation." (KUNA)

## UK oil giant accused of not doing enough in battle against climate change

## BP to hand shareholders \$7 bln this year by buying back stock even as profit falls

LONDON, July 31, (AP) U.K.-based oil giant BP PLC said Tuesday it will reward shareholders to the tune of \$7 billion this year through the purchase of its own stock, even as it reported a near 30% decline in profits in the first half of 2024.

BP said in a statement its underlying replacement cost profit - the industry standard that strips out one-off items - fell to \$5.5 billion against last year's \$7.6

billion, largely on the back of lower earnings from its refining business.

Despite the first half decline, BP's second quarter profit of \$2.8 billion was modestly higher than expectations, which helped the stock rally 1.3% in morning trading in London to 4.60 pounds. Also boosting the share price was the news that BP was planning to continue with its share buyback program during the sec-

ond half of the year and a 10% increase in its dividend.

Murray Auchincloss, chief executive of BP, said the company remains committed to creating a "simpler, more focused and higher value company."

Critics say BP is not doing enough in the battle against climate change, prioritizing high-carbon activities, while relegating its green investments, noting the company's recent decision to go-ahead with

the development of the Kaskida project in the Gulf of Mexico and scaling back its commitments in biofuels and offshore wind.

"As the world faces record-breaking heat, most of us are desperate to see urgent action on the climate crisis," said Alice Harrison, head of fossil fuel campaigns at Global Witness. "Unfortunately, it's clear that BP couldn't care less."

## IMF-backed reforms take effect

## Ethiopia's currency dives by 30%

ADDIS ABABA, Ethiopia, July 31, (AP) Ethiopia's currency lost 30% of its value Tuesday, the day after the central bank began implementing a flexible exchange rate policy backed by the International Monetary Fund as part of new measures to stabilize the eastern African nation's economy.

Mamo Mihretu, governor of the National Bank of Ethiopia, said in a televised address Monday that the reforms "will introduce a competitive, market-based determination of the exchange rate and address a long-standing distortion within the Ethiopian economy."

Commercial banks can set the price of foreign exchange and non-bank entities are permitted to operate forex bureaux for the first time, a historic change in a country where the government for decades fixed those prices, allowing a black market to flourish.

The International Monetary Fund approved a four-year credit facility worth \$3.4 billion to coincide with Ethiopia's reforms. It pledged to disburse \$1 billion immediately to address pressing needs, with Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva describing the reforms as a "landmark moment for Ethiopia."

Ethiopia expects a total of around \$13.5 billion in new funding, including from the World Bank and currency swap agreements with foreign governments.

Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed said in a statement that the new exchange rate regime is "critical to relieving (forex) shortages, removing constraints to private sector investment and growth, and aligning the prices of imported and exported goods and services with market realities."

The Ethiopian currency, known as the birr, was one of the weakest in the region in recent months. Still, one of the immediate consequences of the exchange rate policy change was a sharp rise in inflation, and some businesspeople in Addis Ababa, the capital, were complaining Tuesday. Following

## Microsoft's cloud business powers 10 pct 'growth' in quarterly profits

REDMOND, Wash., July 31, (AP) Microsoft reported a 10% increase in quarterly profits Tuesday as it tries to maintain its position as a leader in artificial intelligence technology.

The software giant said its fiscal fourth-quarter profit was \$22 billion, or \$2.95 per share, slightly beating analyst expectations for \$2.94 per share.

It posted revenue of \$64.7 billion in the April-June period, up 15% from last year. Analysts polled by FactSet Research had been looking for revenue of \$64.4 billion.

Microsoft's growth was led by its cloud computing business, where quarterly revenue rose 19% to \$28.5 billion. That was still lower than what some analysts expected, leading to the stock shedding about 5% in after-hours trad-

ing Tuesday.

The Redmond, Washington-based company doesn't report revenue specifically from AI products but says it has infused the technology into all of its business segments, particularly its Azure cloud computing contracts, but increasingly its workplace software and other products. Much of its generative AI technology has been built as part of its multibillion-dollar investments in OpenAI, maker of ChatGPT.

Revenue from Microsoft's productivity services - such as its Office line of products - rose 11% to \$20.3 billion.

Microsoft's personal computing business, centered on licensing its Windows operating system, made \$15.9 billion for the quarter, up 14% from last year.

tioners will suffer the most."

Most of Addis Ababa's real-estate companies, which import many raw materials and make transactions based on an exchange rate fixed by authorities, were among the first to adjust their prices, increasing them by roughly 30%.

Ethiopia has long faced a critical shortage of foreign currency. For over a year, the gap between the official exchange rate and the parallel market rate soared, a disparity the government expects to narrow after the reforms.

"The floating was overdue as the parallel black market had reached its ceiling due to cash shortages in the economy," said Samson Berhane, an economist based in Addis Ababa. "Local banks have some room to maneuver the rate until it reaches equilibrium, but the disadvantage is that it comes with the risk of inflation that is likely to increase."

## Google's partnership with Anthropic faces 'scrutiny' from UK Competition watchdog

LONDON, July 31, (AP) Britain's competition watchdog said Tuesday it's looking into Google's partnership with artificial intelligence startup Anthropic, adding fresh regulatory scrutiny to investment money flooding into the AI industry.

The Competition and Markets Authority said it's seeking comments as it considers whether the deal between the two companies has resulted in a "substantial lessening of competition" in the United Kingdom for AI services. The watchdog said it will accept feedback from "any interested party" until Aug. 13 before deciding whether to open a formal investigation.

San Francisco-based Anthropic was founded in 2021 by siblings Dario and Daniela Amodei, who previously worked at ChatGPT maker OpenAI. The company focused heavily on increasing the safety and reliability of AI models. Google reportedly agreed last year to make a multibillion-dollar investment in Anthropic.

The U.K. regulator has already been scrutinizing Amazon for investing \$4 billion in Anthropic. It has also been probing Microsoft's multibillion-dollar partnership with OpenAI and Microsoft's hiring of startup Intellection AI's key staff over concerns it could thwart competition.

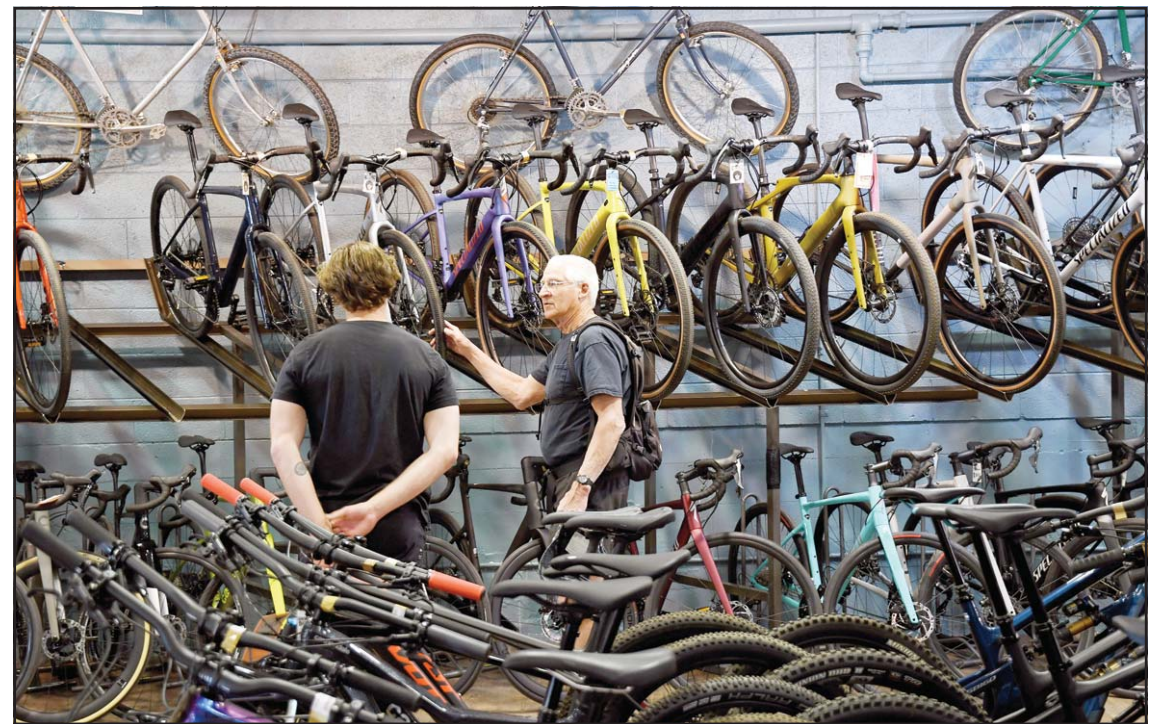
"We intend to cooperate with the

CMA and provide them with the complete picture about Google's investment and our commercial collaboration," Anthropic said in a statement. "We are an independent company and none of our strategic partnerships or investor relationships diminish the independence of our corporate governance or our freedom to partner with others."

Google said it "is committed to building the most open and innovative AI ecosystem in the world."

The company said Anthropic, which is using Google's cloud computing services, "is free to use multiple cloud providers and does, and we don't demand exclusive tech rights."

## US consumers feeling more confident in July



Customer Dan Inks, (right), shops at University Bicycles in Boulder, Colo., on April 30, 2024. On Tuesday, July 30, 2024, the Conference Board reports on U.S. consumer confidence for July. (AP)

## Expectations of future improve

American consumers felt more confident in July as expectations over the near-term future rebounded. However, in a reversal of recent trends, feelings about current conditions weakened.

The Conference Board, a business research group, said Tuesday that its consumer confidence index rose to 100.3 in July from a downwardly revised 97.8 in June.

The index measures both Americans' assessment of current economic conditions and their outlook for the next six months.

The measure of Americans' short-term expectations for income, business and the job market rose in July to 78.2 from 72.8 in June. A reading under 80 can signal a potential recession in the near future.

Consumers' view of current conditions dipped in July to 133.6, from 135.3 in June.

Elevated prices for food and gro-

ceries remain the main driver of consumers' view of the U.S. economy. Though inflation has come down considerably since the Federal Reserve started boosting interest rates in March of 2022, price increases remain well above pre-pandemic levels.

"Even though consumers remain relatively positive about the labor market, they still appear to be concerned about elevated prices and interest rates, and uncertainty about the future; things that may not improve until next year," said Dana Peterson, the Conference Board's chief economist.

The number of respondents who said they planned to purchase a home fell to a 12-year low as elevated interest rates, sky-high home prices and a lack of supply continue to discourage home shoppers.

The number of consumers predicting a recession inched up this month but is still well of its 2023 peak, the board said.

Consumer spending accounts for nearly 70% of U.S. economic activity and is closely watched by economists for signs how the American consumer is feeling.

While the U.S. economy and labor

market remain broadly healthy, some weakness has surfaced, spurred by higher interest rates.

The unemployment rate ticked up to 4.1% in June - the highest rate since November 2021 - even as America's employers added another 206,000 jobs last month.

Also Tuesday, the government reported that postings for U.S. job openings fell slightly in June. There were 8.18 million job vacancies in June, still a strong number, but down from 8.23 million in May.

The nation's economy accelerated in the second quarter at a strong 2.8% annual pace, but that comes after growth of just 1.4% in the January-March quarter.

This year's economic slowdown reflects the much higher borrowing rates for home and auto loans, credit cards and many business loans resulting from the Fed's aggressive series of interest rate hikes.

The Fed wraps up its current two-day meeting on Wednesday, but most analysts expect no change to interest rates. Most are forecasting the first rate cut in more than four years to come at its next meeting in September.

## China's economic output continues expansion

BEIJING, July 31, (Xinhua) China's economic output continued to grow in July as the business outlook remained optimistic, but seasonal factors including heat waves and floods somewhat dragged down the expansion.

According to the purchasing managers' index (PMI) released Wednesday by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), the composite PMI output index stood at 50.2 this month, mildly down from 50.5 in June. The manufacturing PMI inched down to 49.4, and the PMI for the service and construction sectors combined retreated

to 50.2.

A PMI reading above 50 indicates expansion, while a reading below 50 reflects contraction.

Commenting on the data, NBS senior statistician Zhao Qinghe said business activities saw a slowdown in expansion.

The manufacturing sector registered a slightly lower business climate due to unfavorable factors including the traditional slack season, insufficient market demand, and extreme weather conditions, he said, adding that high temperatures and

floods also dampened the construction sector.

Despite the headwinds, most enterprises still held a positive outlook on the market trend, the data showed.

The sub-index on business expectations came in at 53.1, 56.6 and 52.9 for manufacturers, service providers and construction companies, respectively. In particular, the pharmaceuticals, the railway, ship and aerospace equipment, and the electrical machinery saw their expectation indexes at 57 or above, indicating strong optimism.

## Meta agrees to \$1.4 billion settlement with Texas in privacy suit over facial recognition

AUSTIN, Texas, July 31, (AP) Meta has agreed to a \$1.4 billion settlement with Texas in a privacy lawsuit over allegations that the tech giant used biometric data of users without their permission, officials said Tuesday.

Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton said the settlement is the largest secured by a single state. In 2021, a judge approved a \$650 million settlement with the company, formerly known as Facebook, over similar allegations of users in Illinois.

"This historic settlement demonstrates our commitment to standing

up to the world's biggest technology companies and holding them accountable for breaking the law and violating Texans' privacy rights," Paxton, a Republican, said in a statement.

Meta said in a statement: "We are pleased to resolve this matter, and look forward to exploring future opportunities to deepen our business investments in Texas, including potentially developing data centers."

Filed in 2022, the Texas lawsuit said that Meta was in violation of a state law that prohibits capturing or selling a resident's biometric

information, such as their face or fingerprint, without their consent.

"This is by far the biggest state governmental privacy settlement in history," Chicago-based class action attorney Jay Edelson said in an email. Edelson's firm filed the lawsuit that settled for \$650 million with Meta. The only other larger claim is the Federal Trade Commission's \$5 billion settlement with the company in 2019.

To date, Meta has now paid over \$2 billion in settlements for biometric privacy claims, according to Edelson. "That is a huge signal to other companies that they should

be extremely careful if they want to trade in individuals' biometric information," he said.

The company announced in 2021 that it was shutting down its face-recognition system and delete the faceprints of more than 1 billion people amid growing concerns about the technology and its misuse by governments, police and others.

At the time, more than a third of Facebook's daily active users had opted in to have their faces recognized by the social network's system. Facebook introduced facial recognition more than a decade

earlier but gradually made it easier to opt out of the feature as it faced scrutiny from courts and regulators.

Facebook in 2019 stopped automatically recognizing people in photos and suggesting people "tag" them, and instead of making that the default, asked users to choose if they wanted to use its facial recognition feature.

Texas filed a similar lawsuit against Google in 2022. Paxton's lawsuit says the search giant collected millions of biometric identifiers, including voiceprints and records of face geometry, through its

products and services like Google Photos, Google Assistant, and Nest Hub Max. That lawsuit is still pending.

The \$1.4 billion is unlikely to make a dent in Meta's business. The Menlo Park, California-based tech made a profit of \$12.37 billion in the first three months of this year. Its revenue was \$36.46 billion, an increase of 27% from a year earlier. Meta is scheduled to report its second-quarter earnings results on Wednesday.

Meta's stock slipped \$4.06 to \$461.65 Tuesday, a decline of less than 1%.





Photos during the event.

## Alkreebani commits to encouraging student success

## Kuwait Airways honors outstanding students for 2023/2024 academic year

KUWAIT CITY, July 31: As part of Kuwait Airways' endeavors to support and encourage the educational sector in the country, the company held a ceremony to honor outstanding students for the 2023/2024 academic year, in the presence of Kuwait Airways' Chief Executive Officer, Captain Ahmad M. Alkreebani, and the Assistant Undersecretary for Educational Development and Activities at the Ministry of Edu-

cation, Ms. Maryam Al-Anezi, with the attendance of numerous officials of the company.

While addressing the ceremony, Kuwait Airways' Chief Executive Officer, Captain Ahmad M. Alkreebani stated, "Kuwait Airways is pleased to honor our outstanding students and strives to be an integral component of the government system in encouraging youth, develop-

ment and education, in addition to recognizing the achievements which they have accomplished."

Alkreebani added that honoring these outstanding students is a fundamental duty, and to support and encourage their potentials as they are the upcoming generation, entrusted with building and developing the future of the State of Kuwait.

In addition, the company takes

great interest in the educational sector, through continuous participation in events and occasions that specifically pertain to this aspect, being one of the basic elements, within its social responsibility programs where the national carrier focuses and promotes aspects that raise the prominence of the beloved country to extensive horizons.

Alkreebani continued by saying,

"The family has an effective and prominent role in the achievements of these distinguished students, rendering every support to their academics over the past years to reach the highest acclaim.

This distinction which has been achieved is a deserved victory for all, accomplished only by the grace of God and thanks to their efforts, along with their tireless role in providing all

the resources making it conducive for these students in carrying out their academic mission."

Alkreebani concluded his statement by saying that, "Kuwait Airways is proud of the achievements of this elite group, and we ask the Almighty to grant everyone success and instill goodness in every aspect that benefits our beloved country, Kuwait."

## 'Grab and Go' project wins first place, receives praise from GIG

## Gulf Insurance Group sponsors winning engineering projects at Kuwait University

KUWAIT CITY, July 31: Gulf Insurance Group, one of the leading insurance groups in the Middle East and North Africa, reaffirmed its ongoing commitment to academic excellence in engineering and technology as it sponsors two research projects of graduating engineers at Kuwait University, with both groups demonstrating exceptional critical and technical proficiency

as well as innovative forward thinking.

The first project, "Grab and Go", was awarded first place during the annual Engineering Exhibition at the College of Engineering & Petroleum, underscoring the quality and relevance of projects supported by GIG, as well as the dedication and hard work of the students involved.

The sponsorship comes as part of GIG's sustainability strategy which in-

cludes programs that align with its vision for a world capable of addressing today and tomorrow's challenges, actively nurturing the skills of students to help build a generation of future leaders, and making a meaningful ethical difference in the world.

"We are thrilled to support once again the next generation of engineers and innovators at Kuwait University and congratulate the winning group on its achievement," said Khaled Al Sanousi, Group Executive Manager at Gulf Insurance Group. "The students have presented unique solutions to everyday challenges in Kuwait and the world. They've made use of existing resources and technical knowledge to increase efficiency. The future is bright for them, and we look forward to seeing them shine in their field of work."

The first-place winning project, 'Grab and Go', identifies the challenges of travelers and airport operators at the baggage belt where overcrowding often occurs. The solution presented was a barcode system by which each traveler scans their unique barcode, and the registered baggage is systematically located by a machine to be delivered to the traveler. This reduces waiting time and overcrowding.

"Our team is proud to have won the first place in the United Steel Industrial Company Award for Infrastructure and Transportation. The team extends their sincere gratitude to GIG for their continuous support; without them, this achievement wouldn't have been possible," said Athbah Tifouni, member of the Grab and Go team.

The second project was 'Design of CO2 Storage' which aims to bring solutions to climate change through Carbon Capture, Utilization, and Storage (CCUS) technology. Gas emissions from Kuwait's refineries are captured and stored in a depleted local reservoir.

For over 20 years, GIG has supported promising student projects that align with its values of innovation, sustainability, and community impact.

## 'Comprehensive banking and loyalty benefits'

## KIB enhances mobile banking with new features for improved user experience

KUWAIT CITY, July 31: Kuwait International Bank (KIB) has fortified its retail banking digital platform, KIB Mobile, with new features, confirming the Bank's commitment to its comprehensive digital strategy and unwavering efforts to elevate its customers' banking experience. On its mission to achieve its digital strategy's goals, KIB continues to introduce new innovative benefits that guarantee comfort, ease, and safety at every step of its digital banking experience, enabling customers to gain easy access to a wide range of banking products and services that fulfill their everyday needs, respond to their aspirations, and suite their modern lifestyles.

In light of the new features' release, Ammar Maqameess, E-Banking Manager – Retail Banking Department at KIB, said: "We are delighted to announce the latest upgrade to our retail banking platform, which includes new features and benefits that add unprecedented ease to registration as well as convenience to our app-based services." Adding: "We are committed to our overarching innovation and development plans, which entail keeping pace with the latest technologies in the digital banking industry that save the customers' time, guarantee their satisfaction, and fulfill their needs more safely."

Maqameess clarified that the new mobile app features include a new, more convenient method for new user registration that requires authentication through the Kuwait Mobile ID app (Hawiyati), which serves to increase mobile app adoption, simplify the onboarding experience for new users, and improve the overall user experience. Furthermore, the application features a new design for the KIB loyalty program, allowing customers to explore the rewards catalog easily, discover the partnering brands, add their favorite products to a wishlist, and finally redeem their points with unprecedented ease.

Among the other features introduced as part of the application's latest update is the option to withdraw an existing official complaint, which enables KIB to streamline the complaint management and resolution process with greater flexibility, improve customer service responsiveness, and boost customer satisfaction metrics. The last among the newly introduced features is the standing orders list, which enables customers to review their existing standing orders, such as bill payments and other regular payments, with much more ease – as well as create new standing orders. This new feature is designed to save customers' time and energy while reducing their



KIB's new mobile app services.

reliance on online banking platforms. The KIB Mobile app, which was completely improved in 2023, guarantees an exceptionally advanced banking experience, which gives customers a comprehensive bird's-eye view of their finances, including accounts, cards, investments, funds, and payment installments. The one-stop-shop platform also enables customers to manage their e-wallets, transfer cash, fulfill payments, and manage the beneficiaries' list. Other benefits include KIBPay, which allows customers to request payments, top up their accounts, or split bills with utmost ease. Upon signing up for KIB Mobile, customers can instantly benefit from one of Kuwait's most robust digital loyalty programs, turning everyday transactions and shopping into points that can be redeemed for electronics, discount coupons, ticket reservations, and much more.

It serves to note that KIB spares no effort to create an innovative and flexible banking environment that contributes to the constant development of digital financial solutions, in line with customers' evolving needs and lifestyles. As a "Bank for Life", KIB remains committed to offering its customers a forward-looking experience that centers on privacy and excellence, guaranteeing added value and luxury with every transaction and banking operation.



CEO of Gulf Insurance Group, Khaled Saoud Al Hasan, honors winning students at Kuwait University.



Group photo with winning engineering students at College of Engineering and Petroleum exhibition.

## The Conversation

J. David Velleman and Erich Fromm on practicing love

## What is love? A blend of feeling and choice, experts say

By Edith Gwendolyn Nally, University of Missouri-Kansas City

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

Curious Kids is a series for children of all ages. If you have a question you'd like an expert to answer, send it to curiouskidsus@theconversation.com. How do you define love? Is it a choice or a feeling? - Izzy, age 11, Golden, Colorado

Love is confusing. People in the U.S. Google the word "love" about 1.2 million times a month. Roughly a quarter of those searches ask "what is love" or request a "definition of love."

What is all this confusion about? Neuroscience tells us that love is caused by certain chemicals in the brain. For example, when you meet someone special, the hormones dopamine and norepinephrine can trigger a reward response that makes you want to see this person again. Like tasting chocolate, you want more.

Your feelings are the result of these chemical reactions. Around a crush or best friend, you probably feel something like excitement, attraction, joy and affection. You light up when they walk into the room. Over time, you might feel comfort and trust. Love between a parent and child feels different, often some combination of affection and care.

But are these feelings, caused by chemical reactions in your brain, all that love is? If so, then love seems to be something that largely happens to you. You'd have as much control over falling in love as you'd have over accidentally falling in a hole - not much.

As a philosopher who studies love, I'm interested in the different ways people have understood love throughout history. Many thinkers have believed that love is more than a feeling.

The ancient Greek philosopher Plato thought that love might cause feelings like attraction and pleasure, which are out of your control. But these feelings are less important than the loving relationships you

choose to form as a result: lifelong bonds between people who help one another change and grow into their best selves.

Similarly, Plato's student Aristotle claimed that, while relationships built on feelings like pleasure are common, they're less good for humankind than relationships built on goodwill and shared virtues. This is because Aristotle thought relationships built on feelings last only as long as the feelings last.

Imagine you start a relationship with someone you have little in common with other than you both enjoy playing video games. Should either of you no longer enjoy gaming, nothing would hold the relationship together. Because the relationship is built on pleasure, it will fade once the pleasure is gone.

Compare this with a relationship where you want to be together not because of a shared pleasure but because you admire one another for who you are. You want what is best for one another. This kind of friendship built on shared virtue and goodwill will be much longer lasting. These kinds of friends will support each other as they change and grow.

Plato and Aristotle both thought that love is more than a feeling. It's a bond between people who admire one another and therefore choose to support one another over time.

Maybe, then, love isn't totally out of your control. Contemporary philosopher J. David Velleman also thinks that love can be disentangled from "the likings and longings" that come with it - those butterflies in your stomach. This is because love isn't just a feeling. It's a special kind of paying attention, which celebrates a person's individuality.

Velleman says Dr. Seuss did a good job describing what it means to celebrate a person's individuality when he wrote: "Come on! Open your mouth and sound off at the sky! Shout loud at the top of your voice, 'I AM I! ME! I am I!'" When you love someone, you celebrate them because you value the "I AM I" that they are.

You can also get better at love. Social psychologist Erich Fromm thinks that loving is a skill that takes practice: what he calls "standing in love." When you stand in

love, you act in certain ways toward a person.

Just like learning to play an instrument, you can also get better at loving with patience, concentration and discipline. This is because standing in love is made up of other skills such as listening carefully and being present. If you get better at these skills, you can get better at loving.

If this is the case, then love and friendship are distinct from the feelings that accompany them. Love and friendship are bonds formed by skills you choose to practice and improve.

Does this mean you could stand in love with someone you hate, or force yourself to stand in love with someone you have no feelings for whatsoever?

Probably not. Philosopher Virginia Held explains the difference between doing an activity and participating in a practice as simply doing some labor versus doing some labor while also enacting values and standards.

Compare a math teacher who mechanically solves a problem at the board versus a teacher who provides students a detailed explanation of the solution. The mechanical teacher is doing the activity - presenting the solution - whereas the engaged teacher is participating in the practice of teaching. The engaged teacher is enacting good teaching values and standards, such as creating a fun learning environment.

Standing in love is a practice in the same sense. It's not just a bunch of activities you perform. To really stand in love is to do these activities while enacting loving values and standards, such as empathy, respect, vulnerability, honesty and, if Velleman is right, celebrating a person for who they truly are.

Is it best to understand love as a feeling or a choice? Think about what happens when you break up with someone or lose a friend. If you understand love purely in terms of the feelings it stirs up, the love is over once these feelings disappear, change or get put on hold by something like a move or a new school.

On the other hand, if love is a bond you choose and practice, it will take much more than the disappearance of feelings or life changes to end it. You or your friend might not hang out for a few days, or you might move to a new city, but the love can persist. (AP)

## The Conversation

Mothers experience higher stress

## Research finds 'women' shoulder 73% of cognitive household labor

By Lizzie Aviv, University of Southern California

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

When you think about housework, you likely think of actions: scrubbing the dishes, running errands, chopping vegetables for dinner. And it's not news to say that mothers often shoulder the burden for most of those activities.

But there's an invisible dimension of household labor that unfolds behind the scenes: the cognitive effort that goes into anticipating needs, planning, organizing and delegating household tasks. In other words, someone has to remember to replace the dish soap and select which vegetables to chop.

Our new research found that this cognitive dimension of housework, often called the "mental load," is divided even more unevenly within couples than the physical dimension - and it seems to take a particular mental health toll on women. According to the study we published in the Archives of Women's Mental Health, mothers who take on a more disproportionate share of cognitive household labor report higher levels of depression, stress, relationship dissatisfaction and burnout.

We asked 322 mothers of young children about who in their family is responsible for 30 common household tasks. We collaborated with the creators of the Fair Play system - a

book and card game designed to better quantify the division of labor within households - to divide each task into two dimensions: cognitive (anticipating, planning, delegating and thinking about household tasks) and physical (the hands-on execution of household tasks). We then examined how these tasks are shared between partners.

We found a striking gender disparity: Mothers not only performed more physical housework but also carried a significantly greater share of cognitive labor compared with their partners.

On average, mothers reported being responsible for about 73% of all cognitive household labor compared with their partners' 27%, and 64% of all physical household labor compared with their partners' 36%. Indeed, for every single task we examined, the gender difference was larger for the cognitive dimension than the physical execution dimension.

There was only one task in which fathers did more planning and execution: taking out the garbage. Fathers also carried out more home maintenance tasks, but mothers did more of the related planning.

Interestingly, while an unequal division of physical tasks was linked to worse couple relationship quality, it was the cognitive labor that had a more profound impact on women's psychological well-being. (AP)

An unequal division of household labor is a key driver of global gender inequity, suppressing women's full participation in the paid workforce and significantly affecting women's health and well-being. (AP)



Erica Ash, comedian and 'Mad TV' star, dies at 46

# Francine Pascal, 'Sweet Valley High' creator, dies at 92

NEW YORK, July 31, (AP) — Francine Pascal, a onetime soap opera writer whose "Sweet Valley High" novels and the ongoing adventures of twins Elizabeth and Jessica Wakefield and other teens captivated millions of young readers, has died at age 92.

Pascal died Sunday, her publisher, Penguin Random House, said. It did not immediately have additional information Tuesday.

Starting in 1983, Francine Pascal oversaw the completion of more than 150 "Sweet Valley High" stories with the help of others. They were set in an imaginary Los Angeles suburb, one of "gently rolling hills" and a "fantastic white sand beach" nearby. In best sellers such as "Double Love," "Power Play" and "All Night Long," the Wakefield girls and their schoolmates navigate dating, family conflicts, sibling rivalries, more troubling themes such as race, divorce and mortality and even vampires and werewolves.

"Sweet Valley is the essence of high school," Pascal told People magazine in 1988. "It's that moment before reality hits, when you really do believe in the romantic values - sacrifice, love, loyalty, friendship - before you get jaded and slip off into adulthood."

Her books sold more than 200 million copies, and included "Sweet Valley" spinoffs and sequels. After the initial novels took off, Pascal brought in outside writers, providing them general outlines and a "bible" of the books' characters.

"It was mostly very young, new writers," she told Entertainment



Erica Ash



Pascal

Weekly in 2019. "The story outlines weren't chapter by chapter, more like acts: You get from here to here in the first quarter, then you have to get from here to here. Don't forget, they already had the bible, where I had written deeply into the lives of the twins and their backgrounds. With the characters, you knew what they liked, you knew what the walls in their room (looked like), every single thing about them."

Born Francine Paula Rubin, Pascal was a New York City native who studied journalism at New York University, wrote for such magazines as Cosmopolitan and Ladies' Home Journal and, with second husband John

Pascal, found work with the soap opera "The Young Marrieds." When Francine Pascal began thinking of creating her own series, she took a friend's advice and developed what became the Sweet Valley books.

The concept: "Dallas" for young people. The main characters: twin sisters, one mischievous (Jessica), the other more sensible (Elizabeth). "There are a lot of twins in my life," she told Entertainment Weekly. "My sister-in-law was a twin. People are always fascinated by twins. You'll never be alone." Pascal and her first husband, Jerome Offenber, divorced in 1963. They had three daughters, one of whom, Jamie, died in 2008. John Pascal died in 1981.

Erica Ash, an actor and comedian skilled in sketch comedy who starred in the parody series "Mad TV" and "Real Husbands of Hollywood," has died. She was 46.

Ash died Sunday in Los Angeles because of cancer, according to her publicist and a statement by her mother, Diann. "Erica was an amazing woman and talented entertainer who touched countless lives with her sharp wit, humor, and genuine zest for life. Her memory will live eternally in our hearts," the statement said.

Ash impersonated Michelle Obama and Condoleezza Rice on "Mad TV," a Fox sketch series, and was a key performer on the Rosie O'Donnell-created series "The Big Gay Sketch Show."

## Variety



This image released by Disney Theatricals shows Adi Roy as Aladdin, (left), and Sonya Balsara as Princess Jasmine during a performance of the musical 'Aladdin.' (AP)

## Stage

Balsara and Roy's journey to Broadway

# 'Aladdin' stars trace roles to school

NEW YORK, July 31, (AP) — Some years ago, when Sonya Balsara and Adi Roy were in middle school, they were cast in kiddie versions of the musical "Aladdin." Little did they know it would be very good preparation - for the same roles on Broadway.

More than a decade after hitting their marks in the show as pre-teens, Balsara is playing plucky Princess Jasmine and Roy is the show's urchin-turned-titular hero now on Broadway as the Disney hit musical celebrates its 10th anniversary.

"I think about that little girl who had a little speck of a dream to do all of this," says Balsara. "If she could see what we did now, I think that she would be just beyond elated."

Both actors are of Indian heritage and in their 20s. They both grew up in music-filled homes, attended New York University and put in long hours to prepare for this big moment. How big? Their faces are on billboards in Times Square.

"That's every immigrant parent's dream - their son or daughter or children are doing something like that," says Roy. "I can only hope to keep making them proud."

Balsara grew up in the Bay Area, with classical music playing even while she was in the womb.

Her mother is a professional classical singer who sang Baroque arias, Bach and Mozart while pregnant. Her dad is a professor of chemical engineering at the University of California who plays in a rock band and sings Pink Floyd, the Beatles and Steely Dan.

At her house, rock, classical and Bollywood were all played. So, it was no surprise that she was directing, producing, casting - and starring, naturally - in her own production of "Oklahoma!" in the fourth grade.

"It was always very encouraged to explore, and I was very encouraged, luckily, to explore what my personal passions were and dive deeper into them," she says.

At age 11 at a local children's theater program, she was cast as a braces-wearing Jasmine in "Aladdin Jr." She provided part of her own costume, and the

set's flying carpet for "A Whole New World" was someone holding a cloth on sticks. No matter.

"That is what theater is made of - it's the creativity."

A fateful moment came when she was a sophomore in high school and was being driven by her dad to A.P. Bio lab at 6:30 a.m. He suggested she had to make a choice - acting or a more conventional route.

"I was like, 'If I don't give acting in theater a shot, I'll regret it for the rest of my life.' That was sort of like a turning page for me," she says.

Balsara took acting classes in San Francisco on Saturday mornings, then graduated NYU, went on auditions and worked at a law firm during the day and finally booked her first professional theater gig: Maria in "West Side Story" in Tokyo.

### Auditions

She auditioned multiple times for Jasmine on Broadway and finally got the gig on her third or fourth attempt. She's been Broadway's fourth full-time princess since January 2023.

Now, when she flies, she uses a harness and really flies.

Roy's path to Broadway was more circuitous. He landed the role of Ali on tour after about six auditions and hit the road in the fall of 2022 for 20 months, visiting more than 60 different cities, like Toronto, Los Angeles, Chicago, San Francisco, Seattle and Washington, D.C.

"I love to key into the joy that Aladdin brings," he says. "Even in his saddest of times, there is a twinge of joy. He's always trying to be that person that brings everyone up."

Roy grew up in New Jersey, and it was his older sister who was always playing show tunes. She introduced him to one of his favorite shows, "Hadestown," when it popped up in London.

Their home was also filled with music, so he got Bollywood movies at dinner, pop tunes with friends and show tunes at school. "I got a little bit of everything," he says. He attended theater camps, like one

at the Paper Mill Playhouse.

He would take the bus to Broadway to see shows like "Kinky Boots" with Brendon Urie, Jake Gyllenhaal in "Sea Wall/A Life" and "Hadestown" for his 17th birthday. He landed an agent, attended NYU until switching to an online school while he toured and made his Broadway debut in "Jagged Little Pill."

After learning he'd been picked to be the fifth full-time Aladdin on Broadway, Roy began shadowing the outgoing Prince Ali - Michael Maliakel - and adjusting to the New Amsterdam Theatre.

His first night was a blur: "I was just so excited to be there and happy to do it, that I just kind of let the adrenaline take me. And, thankfully, the show happened - I think it happened."

While on tour, Roy, was mindful that "Aladdin" was likely the first live stage show for any number of children in the audience.

"This could be the moment that a kid falls in love with theater, and, in 10 years, they might join us on stage in another show or this show," he says. "Who knows?"

Balsara says she looks out into the audience and tries to connect with any kids in the first five or six rows, knowing the show might be extra special for them. She also meets fans at the stage door.

"People tell you, 'You changed my life today.' I've had that happen more often than you could imagine," she says. "Indian families come to the stage door and say, 'To see you on stage means that my kid can do anything.'"

Balsara has become friends with other "Aladdin" princesses, like Courtney Reed, the original Broadway Jasmine, who gave her tips she still remembers.

"There's a sisterhood. It's a unique experience," she says. She can't wait to increase that sisterhood when it's time to welcome a new princess. "I'll give the tiara to the next, and it'll be beautiful when that moment gets to happen."

It might even be to someone with experience from middle school.

the team final.

Williams has been in Paris for a few days and carried the Olympic torch during the opening ceremony last week. She sat next to Paris Games chief Tony Estanguet.

Kidman and her husband, Keith Urban, were there with their two daughters. When asked if she was looking forward to the competition,



O'Donnell



Kidman

Kidman said: "So excited! So excited!" Biles' husband was also in the stands after he reached the French capital city in time for the women's team final. Jonathan Owens, an NFL player with the Chicago Bears, was granted leave from training camp to be here. Owens sat alongside Biles' mother and father, Nellie and Ron Biles.

Lady Gaga, Tom Cruise and Jessica Chastain attended Biles' return to the Olympics when she competed in qualifying Sunday. (AP)

BEIJING: Chinese comedy "Successor" remained on top of the daily box office chart on the Chinese mainland with a daily earning of 54.47 million

yuan (about 7.63 million US dollars) on Tuesday, according to the China Movie Data Information Network. Featuring comedy stars Shen Teng and Ma Li and directed by Yan Fei and Peng Damo, the film tells the story of a wealthy couple who deliberately fakes a challenging environment for their son in order to foster his personal growth. (Xinhua)



## People &amp; Places

## Dance

## Swifties raise funds

## 3 girls killed in UK dance class attack

LONDON, July 31, (AP) — Three young girls killed in a stabbing rampage at a dance class on the first day of summer vacation were mourned Tuesday as hundreds held a vigil in northwest England to support their families and 10 wounded survivors.

A day earlier, the girls had taken part in a Taylor Swift-themed dance and yoga workshop when a person armed with a knife entered the studio and began a vicious attack, police said.

"It's difficult to comprehend or put into words the horror of what happened," Home Secretary Yvette Cooper said while briefing members of Parliament.

"What should have been a joyful start to the summer turned into an unspeakable tragedy."

Alice Dasilva Aguiar, 9, Elsie Dot Stancombe, 7, and Bebe King, 6, died from their injuries, police said.

"Keep smiling and dancing like you love to do our princess," Aguiar's parents said in a statement released by police.

"Like we said before to you, you're always our princess and no one would change that."

King's family said no words could describe their devastation at the loss "of our little girl Bebe."

Eight children and two adults remained hospitalized after the attack in Southport. Both adults and five of the children were in critical condition.

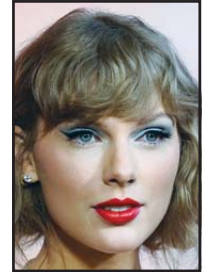
An emotional crowd that gathered in Southport outside the Atkinson theater and museum in the early evening held a minute of silence for the victims.

June Burns, the mayor of neighboring Sefton, called for calm and respect and urged people to be good to one another. She said she was overcome with emotion when she visited the scene of the tragedy earlier.

"It's unbelievable that we find ourselves laying flowers for little girls who just wanted to dance," she said.

Swift said earlier on Instagram that she was "completely in shock" and still taking in "the horror" of the event.

"These were just little kids at a dance class," she wrote. "I am at a complete loss for how to ever convey my sympathies to these families."



Swift

## Tribute

People left flowers and stuffed animals in tribute at a police cordon on the street lined with brick houses in the seaside resort near Liverpool where the beach and pier attract vacationers from across northwest England. They also posted online messages of support for teacher Leanne Lucas, the organizer of the event, who was one of those attacked.

Witnesses described scenes "from a horror movie" as bloodied children ran from the attack just before noon Monday. The 17-year-old suspect was arrested soon afterward on suspicion of murder and attempted murder. Police said he was born in Cardiff, Wales, and had lived for years in a village about 3 miles (5 kilometers) from Southport. He has not yet been charged.

The rampage is the latest shocking attack in a country where a recent rise in knife crime has stoked anxieties and led to calls for the government to do more to clamp down on bladed weapons, which are by far the most commonly used instruments in UK homicides.

Prime Minister Keir Starmer was jeered by some as he visited the crime scene and lay a wreath of pink and white flowers with a handwritten note that said: "Our hearts are broken, there are no words for such profound loss. The nation's thoughts are with you."

"How many more children?" one person yelled at Starmer as he got in his car. "Our kids are dead and you're leaving already?"

Starmer told reporters earlier that he is determined to get a grip on high levels of knife crime but said it was not a day for politics.

Witnesses described hearing screams and seeing children covered in blood in the chaos outside the Hart Space, a community center that hosts everything from pregnancy workshops and meditation sessions to women's boot camps.

## Violence

Joel Verite, a window cleaner riding in a van on his lunch break, said his colleague slammed on the brakes and reversed to where a woman was hanging on the side of a car covered in blood.

"She just screamed at me: 'He's killing kids over there. He's killing kids over there,'" Verite told Sky News.

The woman, who was on the phone with police, directed him to where the violence was unfolding and then collapsed. Verite said he ran in the direction she had pointed.

A woman honking the horn of her car caught his attention and he found her with five or six bloody children inside. The woman said she was trying to get the kids to safety.

"It was like a scene you'd see on a disaster film," he said. "I can't explain to you how horrific it is what I saw."

He carried an unconscious girl to the street and his work partner attended to her while he ran to the dance studio, where he was startled to lock eyes with a man in a hooded tracksuit holding a knife at the top of the stairs.

"All I saw was a knife and I thought: 'There are more people in there,' and I just wanted to hurt him so bad," Verite said. "But I was scared for myself and I wanted to help people. So I came outside and I was screaming because I knew where he was."

He said the first officer who arrived waited for backup and then they went up the stairs and tackled the suspect.

The dance workshop was a summer vacation activity for children aged about 6 to 11. Richard Townes, a children's entertainer from Southport, said parents in texting groups are terrified now to send their children to summer programs.

"I have a 5-year-old daughter who could have just as easily been at the class," Townes said. "I feel helpless and like I can't do anything."

A group of Swift's UK fans calling themselves "Swifties for Southport" launched an online fundraiser to help families of the victims. It raised over 216,000 pounds (\$277,000) a little over 24 hours.

Britain's worst attack on children occurred in 1996, when 43-year-old Thomas Hamilton shot 16 kindergartners and their teacher dead in a school gymnasium in Dunblane, Scotland. The UK subsequently banned the private ownership of almost all handguns.

Mass shootings and killings with firearms are exceptionally rare in Britain, where knives were used in about 40% of homicides in the year to March 2023.

Mass stabbings are also very rare, according to Iain Overton, executive director of Action on Armed Violence. See Also Page 6



Models present a creation by Indonesian fashion designer Irsan during the Jakarta Fashion and Food Festival in Tangerang, Indonesia, Tuesday, July 30. (AP)

## Music

## 'Stampede' bridges country and diverse genres

## Peck makes music for everyone

NEW YORK, July 31, (AP) — It is not easy to be an outsider in country music, but Orville Peck has made a career out of it.

On his third album, "Stampede," his nonconformist spirit has led to collaborations with everyone from Willie Nelson and Elton John to Mickey Guyton and Kylie Minogue.

When the South African musician released his debut album, "Pony," in 2019, little was known about him. A country crooner with a deep baritone more in line with outlaws like Merle Haggard and Waylon Jennings than anything on contemporary radio, Peck hid his identity (Peck is a pseudonym) and his face behind a mask.

A wide strip of leather completely obscured his forehead down to the nose bridge; the rest of his visage was concealed underneath a large Stetson and a foot of cascading fringe. As his public profile rose and he continued to release new music, Peck started slowing stripping back the mask. Now, as he prepares to release "Stampede," a duets album, only the hat and eye mask remain.

"I think it's sort of in parallel with my confidence," he says. "When I first started - my first album - I really needed the mask."

It takes some self-assurance to release a duets album. Each song is a brand-new collaboration, a previously unexplored creative experiment, and a balancing act. "Every single song is me, 50%, and then 50% the other artist," he says. "It's

a long tradition in country to do duets and have sort of duos. You know, I think of Johnny Cash and June Carter, Gram Parsons and Emmylou Harris," he says, suggesting that this kind of album would arrive later in his career.

"But then when Willie asked me to do (the song) 'Cowboys,' it was like, 'Oh, is this maybe the right moment?' And so, then I asked Elton, and then I asked Kylie, and then, you know, so on, so forth."

A dream get that didn't work out? Dolly Parton.

## Classic

In the case of Nelson, Peck is referring to the 1981 queer country cult classic, Ned Sublette's "Cowboys Are Frequently, Secretly Fond of Each Other," covered by Nelson in 2006 and an infrequent staple of Peck's live show. When Nelson and Peck played a festival together a few years ago, the country legend invited Peck onto his tour bus for a cup of coffee and suggested they re-do the song as a duet. He told Peck, "It's more important now than ever," Peck recalls.

"I think the fact that he wanted to do this particular song with me, and the fact that his reasoning behind it was in support, and motivated in the encouragement of LGBTQ people, I mean, it's like the most validating thing ever." Later, they'd film a music video for the duet at Nelson's Luck Ranch in Texas.

Across "Stampede," too, are

non-traditionalist duets and covers. There's "Papa Was a Rodeo," a bluegrass cover of the Magnetic Fields' indie rock song, now with Molly Tuttle and Golden Highway. There's an ode to Sin City, "Death Valley High," with Peck, who told the AP the song was inspired by "Elvis in Vegas is, you know, Vegas by way of Memphis. It's a totally different thing from Sinatra Vegas."

There's also "Midnight Ride," a disco number with Kylie Minogue and Diplo, which the trio debuted live during a Pride event in Los Angeles in June.

"I've learned over the years how important visibility is," Peck says, "Bringing something that's really joyful and inclusive."

A kind of outsidership is where Peck feels home. "Country radio - country with a capital C - it's sort of its own thing," he says. "You got to do a lot of kissing babies and shaking hands to kind of play the Nashville game. And it's just something I've never been interested in doing."

"I just want to have my music and my art speak for itself, and I don't feel like I need to go kiss ... in Nashville to be accepted and validated," he continued.

"I know how country I am. I get to work with incredible legends like Willie Nelson, Tanya Tucker, all these people that I grew up idolizing, that love me. So, you know, that's enough validation for me. And if I'm not on top 40 radio on country music, you know, that's fine with me."



Country music artist Orville Peck poses for portraits on Wednesday, June 26, 2024, in New York to promote his third album 'Stampede.' (AP)



Kushner



Usher

## Variety

LONDON: Six American writers including Rachel Kushner, Percival Everett and Tommy Orange are among 13 semifinalists announced Tuesday for the prestigious Booker Prize for fiction.

Pulitzer Prize-winning Cheyenne and Arapaho author Orange is the first Native American Booker semifinalist for the 50,000 pound (\$64,000) award with his centuries-spanning saga "Wandering Stars."

Everett is nominated for "James," which reimagines Mark Twain's "Huckleberry Finn" from the point of view of its main Black character, the enslaved man Jim.

Everett was a finalist for the 2022 Booker for "The Trees." Kushner, who was a Booker finalist in 2018 for her bestseller "The Mars Room," is a contender again with spy story "Creation Lake." Pulitzer-winner Richard Powers, a finalist in both 2018 and 2021, is on the longlist with "Playground," a story of money, power and climate change set on a Polynesian island. (AP)

LEAWOOD, Kan.: Usher, with over 80 million records sold worldwide and 8 Grammy Awards, is bringing the ultimate intimate concert experience to theaters this fall. AMC Theatres, Trafalgar Releasing and Sony Music Vision, have announced that "Usher: Rendezvous in Paris" concert film will arrive in cinemas around the world for a limited run beginning Sept. 12.

"Usher: Rendezvous in Paris" incorporates the essence of his landmark cultural phenomenon Vegas residencies into a seductive French touch confession. Captured during Paris Fashion week at La Seine Musicale, the film features chart-topping hits including "Yeah!", "My Boo," "Love

In This Club" and more from Usher's 30-year career, performed with never-before-seen costumes and state-of-the-art lighting and special effects. In addition to

bringing the vibrant live concert experience to screen, Usher gives audiences a glimpse inside life beyond the stage - creating a global moment that moviegoers won't want

to miss. (AP)

SINGAPORE: The 6th Singapore International Cultural Festival, attended by over 1,300 participants from countries and regions including China, Germany, India, and China's Hong Kong, concluded here on Monday.

The four-day cultural festival featured martial arts shows, dance performances, calligraphy and painting exhibitions, and the display of intangible cultural heritage.

Held every two years since 2013, the event was hosted by the Singapore Youth Culture and Arts Center this year. (Xinhua)

MORAINE, Ohio: A Chinese automotive glass maker says it was not the target of a federal investigation that temporarily shut down production last week at its Ohio plant, the subject of the Oscar-winning Netflix film "American Factory."

The investigation was focused on money laundering, potential human smuggling, labor exploitation and financial crimes. Homeland Security agent Jared Murphey said Friday.

Fuyao Glass America said it was told by authorities that a third-party employment company was at the center of the criminal investigation, according to a filing with the Shanghai Stock Exchange. (AP)



Artists perform during a park concert for the celebration of the Throne Day in Rabat, Morocco, July 28. The Throne Day, celebrated annually on July 30, commemorates the anniversary of King Mohammed VI's ascension to the throne in 1999. (Xinhua)



## Some suffer complications like bleeding and pain

## More women turn to unsafe methods to end pregnancies

NEW YORK, July 31, (AP): A growing number of women said they've tried to end their pregnancies on their own by doing things like taking herbs, drinking alcohol or even hitting themselves in the belly, a new study suggests.

Researchers surveyed reproductive-age women in the US before and after the Supreme Court overturned Roe v. Wade in June 2022. The proportion who reported trying to end pregnancies by themselves rose from 2.4% to 3.3%.

"A lot of people are taking things into their own hands," said Dr. Grace Ferguson, a Pittsburgh OB-GYN and abortion provider who wasn't involved in the research, which was published Tuesday in the journal JAMA Network Open.

Study authors acknowledged that the increase is small. But the data suggests that it could number in the hundreds of thousands of women.

Researchers surveyed about 7,000 women six months before the Supreme Court decision, and then another group of 7,100 a year after the decision. They asked whether participants had ever taken or done something on their own to end a pregnancy. Those who said yes were asked follow-up questions about

## Patients sue Providence for hepatitis, HIV exposure

NEW YORK, July 31, (AP): Four people who were potentially exposed to hepatitis B and C and HIV during surgeries at a Portland-area hospital have filed a class action lawsuit against Providence, the medical facility and an anesthesiology group claiming their negligence has caused pain, shock and anxiety.

The four patients from Clackamas County, identified in the lawsuit by their initials, underwent surgeries at Providence Willamette Falls Medical Center in Oregon City between March 2022 and February 2024, the lawsuit said. On July 11, Providence sent notices to about 2,200 patients saying the physician who administered anesthesia "failed to adhere to infection control procedures," which exposed patients

their experiences.

"Our data show that making abortion more difficult to access is not going to mean that people want or need an abortion less frequently," said Lauren Ralph, an epidemiologist at the University of California, San Francisco, and one of the study's

to hepatitis and HIV.

Providence encouraged the patients to be tested for the deadly viruses, "and stated that Defendant Providence 'will reach out to discuss test results and next steps' only 'if a patient tests positive.'"

The statement did not identify the physician, who worked with the Oregon Anesthesiology Group. The physician was fired following an investigation, the lawsuit said.

Gary Walker, spokesperson for Providence Oregon, said, "since this is pending litigation, Providence won't have a statement." When asked if any patients have reported testing positive to any of the viruses, he said, "I don't have anything to share with you." Phone messages left with the anesthesiologists.

authors.

Women gave various reasons for handling their own abortions, such as wanting an extra measure of privacy, being concerned about the cost of clinic procedures and preferring to try to end their pregnancies by themselves first.

biology group seeking comment were not immediately returned.

Hepatitis B can cause liver damage, cirrhosis, liver cancer and possibly death. Hepatitis C is a blood-borne viral infection of the liver, and HIV is a virus that attacks the body's immune system.

The lawsuit said potential exposure to these infections have caused the patients "pain, suffering, shock, horror, anguish, grief, anxiety, nervousness, embarrassment, humiliation, loss of enjoyment of life, and other general and special damages in an amount to be proven at trial."

They have been "forced to incur the expense, inconvenience, and distraction from everyday activities due to

the worry and stress" over the possible infection, the lawsuit said.

One patient was tested for hepatitis B, hepatitis C and HIV and while the tests came back negative, she has experienced symptoms that made her concerned that she may have one of the viruses. She must be tested again in the near future, the lawsuit said.

"Until she receives the new test results, Plaintiff D.C. cannot have any certainty about whether she has been exposed to hepatitis B, hepatitis C, or HIV," the lawsuit said. "And even after she receives her test results, there is no guarantee Plaintiff D.C. is safe from these infections given the possibility of false negative test results."

resorted to potentially harmful physical methods such as hitting themselves in the abdomen, lifting heavy things or inserting objects into their bodies.

Some respondents said they suffered complications like bleeding and pain and had to seek medical

care afterward. Some said they later had an abortion at a clinic. Some said their pregnancies ended after their attempts or from a later miscarriage, while others said they wound up continuing their pregnancies when the method didn't work.

Ralph pointed to some caveats and limits to the research. Respondents may be under-reporting their abortions, she said, because researchers are asking them about "a sensitive and potentially criminalized behavior."

She also cautioned that some women may have understood the question differently after the Dobbs decision, such as believing that getting medication abortion through telehealth is outside the formal health care system when it's not. But Ralph said she and her colleagues tested how people were interpreting the question before each survey was conducted.

The bottom line, Ferguson said, is that the study's findings "confirm the statement we've been saying forever: If you make it hard to get (an abortion) in a formal setting, people will just do it informally."

The research was funded by the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation and a third foundation that was listed as anonymous.

## India formulates Zika action plan

## Australia launches groundbreaking peanut allergy treatment for babies

CANBERRA, July 31, (Xinhua): Australia has launched a world-first oral immunotherapy (OIT) program for babies with peanut allergies.

Under the ADAPT OIT program, children younger than 12 months who are allergic to peanuts will be given daily doses of peanut powder to build up a tolerance to the allergen in the hope of overcoming the life-threatening condition.

Ten public pediatric hospitals across five states have partnered with the government-funded National Allergy Centre of Excellence (NACE) to deliver the treatment. It is the first nationwide OIT program for peanut allergies offered in mainstream care anywhere in the world.

Ged Kearney, the assistant minister for health, said in a statement on Wednesday that the program could be a game changer for Australians with peanut allergies.

"Today's announcement is a big step forward towards combating life-threatening peanut allergies in babies," she said.

The free program will be offered to eligible babies who are receiving care from allergists at the 10 participating hospitals.

Babies in the program will first undertake food tests to confirm their peanut allergy before starting a dose of peanut powder.

After one month of taking a daily prescribed dose at home, they will return to hospital to increase the dose.

The process will continue for two years, after which another food test will be conducted to determine if they are in remission.

The results of the program will be analyzed by the NACE. If successful, the program could then be adopted by more hospitals and private health clinics.

Australian children have the highest prevalence of food allergies in the world. According to the Melbourne's Murdoch Children's Research Institute (MCRI), one in 10 Australian babies and one in 20 primary school-aged children have a food allergy.

## Senate passes bill to protect children online

## US holds tech firms 'accountable' for harmful content affecting kids

WASHINGTON, July 31, (AP): The Senate overwhelmingly passed legislation Tuesday that is designed to protect children from dangerous online content, pushing forward with what would be the first major effort by Congress in decades to hold tech companies more accountable for the harm that they cause.

The bill, which passed 91-3, has been pushed by parents of children who died by suicide after online bullying or have otherwise been harmed by online content. It would force companies to take reasonable steps to prevent harm on online platforms frequently used by minors, requiring them to exercise "duty of care" and ensure that they generally default to the safest settings possible.

The House has not yet acted on the bill. Speaker Mike Johnson, R-La., has said he is "committed to working to find consensus," but has not said whether he will bring it to the floor for a vote. Supporters are hoping that the strong Senate vote will push the House to act before the end of the congressional session in January.

## Legislation

President Joe Biden encouraged the House to send the legislation to his desk "without delay."

"Today our children are subjected to a wild west online and our current laws and regulations are insufficient to prevent this," Biden said. "It is past time to act."

The legislation is about allowing children, teens and parents "to take back control of their lives online," said Democratic Sen. Richard Blumenthal of Connecticut, who wrote the bill with Republican Sen. Marsha Blackburn of Tennessee. He said that the message to big tech companies is that "we no longer trust you to make decisions for us."

The bill would be the first major tech regulation package to move in years, and it could potentially pave the way for other bills that would strengthen online privacy laws or set parameters



Isabella Cimato, 17, from left, Arianna Schaden, 14, and Sofia Harrison, 15, check their phones at Roosevelt Field shopping mall in Garden City, N.Y., on July 27, 2015. The last time Congress passed a law to protect children on the internet was in 1998, before Facebook, the iPhone and long before today's oldest teenagers were born. Now, a bill aiming to protect kids from the harms of social media, gaming sites and other online platforms appears to have enough bipartisan support to pass, though whether it actually will remains uncertain. (AP)

for the growing use of artificial intelligence, among others. While there has long been bipartisan support for the idea that the biggest technology companies should face more government scrutiny, there has been little consensus on how it should be done. Congress passed legislation earlier this year that would force China-based social media company TikTok to sell or face a ban, but that law only targets one company.

"This is a good first step, but we have more to go," said Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y.

If the child safety bill becomes law, companies would be required to mitigate harm to children, including bullying and violence, the promotion of suicide, eating disorders, substance abuse, sexual exploitation and advertisements for illegal products such as narcotics, tobacco or alcohol.

To do that, social media platforms

would have to provide minors with options to protect their information, disable addictive product features and opt out of personalized algorithmic recommendations. They would also be required to limit other users from communicating with children and limit features that "increase, sustain, or extend the use" of the platform - such as autoplay for videos or platform rewards.

The idea, Blumenthal and Blackburn say, is for the platforms to be "safe by design."

"The message we are sending to big tech is that kids are not your product," Blackburn said at a news conference as the Senate passed the bill. "Kids are not your profit source."

Several tech companies, including Microsoft, X and Snap, have supported the legislation. But there was also criticism that signaled a potential lobbying campaign aimed at the House.

## Dementia risk

## Wildfire smoke worse for your brain than pollution

NEW YORK, July 31, (AP): Wildfire smoke may be worse for brain health than other types of air pollution, according to new research linking it to an increased risk of dementia.

The findings, reported Monday at the Alzheimer's Association International Conference in Philadelphia, come as millions spent the weekend under air quality warnings from wildfires spewing smoke across the western US.

At issue is fine particulate matter or PM2.5 - tiny particles about 30 times smaller than the diameter of a human hair that can be inhaled deep into the lungs and move to the bloodstream. This pollution - from traffic, factories and fires - can cause or worsen heart and lung diseases, and the new study adds to evidence it may play some role in dementia, too.

Researchers tracked health records from 1.2 million older adults in Southern California between 2009 and 2019. They used air quality monitoring and other data to estimate residential ex-

posure to PM2.5 over three years from wildfire smoke or other causes.

The study found the odds of a new dementia diagnosis increased about 21% for every 1 microgram increase in the concentration of wildfire particles. That compared with a 3% increased risk for every 3 microgram jump in non-wildfire particles, concluded researchers from the universities of Washington and Pennsylvania.

It's not clear why there would be a difference. But with wildfires increasing, this needs more study, said Alzheimer's Association chief science officer Maria Carrillo. That's especially considering that the risk of Alzheimer's, the most common form of dementia, is higher for lower-income populations who may have a harder time avoiding unhealthy air, she said.

Health warnings urge staying indoors when air quality is poor but "there are a lot of people who don't have the option to stay home or they work outside," she noted.

that need to be taken in response to the disease outbreak.

The information was given by India's federal junior health minister Anupriya Patel on Tuesday in a written statement in the upper house of the Indian parliament.

The minister said an integrated disease surveillance program at the National Center for Disease Control is mandated with surveillance and response to 33 plus outbreak prone communicable diseases including Zika virus.

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## India, Belgium reach knockouts

## Team Great Britain hold favorites Netherlands

PARIS, July 31, (Xinhua): Lee Morton scored two late goals as Britain came from behind to draw 2-2 with tournament favorites the Netherlands in Pool A of the Paris 2024 men's hockey competition.

The game started in a cagey fashion, with neither side having many clear-cut chances across the first two periods, and the score remained 0-0 after the first 30 minutes of action.

The Netherlands began to turn the screw in the third quarter, and took the lead on 44 minutes when Floris Wortelboer fired home from a tight angle after Britain goalkeeper Ollie Payne had parried Thijs van Dam's original effort.

Though Britain tried to hit back immediately, with efforts from Rupert Shipperley and Samuel Ward both being blocked by defenders, it was the Netherlands who doubled their lead in the 52nd minute, when the lively Van Dam turned a defender and fired home.

Team GB halved their deficit three minutes later, when Morton dribbled from the left touchline to fire home a fine individual effort, and the team then promptly withdrew Payne for another outfield player, as they threw everything forward in search of an equalizer.

Britain's brave approach was rewarded with just one minute of play left, when a penalty corner saw David Ames' effort parried into the path of Morton, who unleashed an unstoppable half-volley to break Dutch hearts and ensure a share of the spoils.

Elsewhere in Pool A, Spain pulled back from 2-0 down to draw 3-3 with hosts France in the day's first game. Two quick goals from Timothee Clement had put France ahead by the end of the first quarter, but Al-



France's Delfina Gaspari, left, drives the ball past Germany's Benedetta Wenzel during the women's field hockey match between Germany and France at the Yves-du-Manoir Stadium, at the 2024 Summer Olympics in Colombes, France. (AP)

varo Iglesias and Rafael Villalonga drew Spain level by the 32-minute mark.

France took the lead again through Victor Charlet, but Pepe Cunill's 51st minute effort ensured a share of

the spoils.

Pool A's following game saw Germany thrash South Africa 5-1. Gonzalo Peillat put Germany ahead in the first minute, with a quickfire double from Christopher Ruhr and Justus Weigand seeing the eventual winners 3-0 up by the end of the second quarter.

Matthew Guise-Brown pulled one back for South Africa on 35 minutes, but Peillat's second restored Germany's three-goal lead, before Mats Grambusch added a fifth two minutes before the end.

In Pool B, a double from Harmanpreet Singh saw India ensure their qualification for the knockout stages by defeating Ireland 2-0, while the day's later games saw Argentina withstand heavy pressure to defeat New Zealand 2-0 thanks to goals from Tomas Domene and Lucas Martinez.

In the evening fixture, a hat-trick from Tom Boon helped Belgium to a

6-2 win over Australia that also ensured their place in the quarterfinals. Alexander Hendrickx gave Belgium the lead, before Boon scored his first to give his side a 2-0 win after the first quarter.

Lachlan Sharp pulled one back for Australia on 29 minutes, but almost immediately Boon restored Belgium's two-goal cushion with his second of the game.

Florent van Aubel and Antoine Kina then made it 5-1 to Belgium in the third quarter, and though Blake Govers pulled another back for Australia, Boon was on hand to complete his hat-trick in the closing minutes of the contest.

The Paris 2024 men's hockey tournament begins with two pools of six teams playing each other in a league format. The top four teams in each pool will advance to the quarterfinal stage, with the gold and bronze medal matches to be held on August 8.

## Wemba takes over in OT, helps France escape a serious challenge from Japan



Japan's Akira Jacobs, left, and France's Victor Wembanyama reach for a loose ball in a men's basketball game at the 2024 Summer Olympics in Ville-neuve-d'Ascq, France. (AP)

## Overtime was all Wemby

VILLENEUVE-D'ASCQ, France, July 31, (AP): The first three minutes were easy for Victor Wembanyama. So were the last five minutes.

Everything else was a grind. Grabbing at his lower right leg after a quick trip off the court late in the first quarter, then grabbing

## BASKETBALL

at his left hip a couple of times later in the game, Wembanyama seemed to be laboring at times in France's second game of the Paris Olympics. He finished with 18 points - getting a three-point play that put his team ahead for good 26 seconds into overtime - and France wound up holding off a serious upset bid by Japan, winning 94-90.

"The realization, the dynamic of the game," Wembanyama said when asked what changed in overtime. "They were playing like underdogs and we were waiting for them to punch a little bit too much. I wanted to make a point and punch first in overtime. And it worked."

As far as what seemed to be physically bothering him?

"Not the hip," Wembanyama said. "Other places, but not the hip."

It was tied at 84 going into the extra session, after Wembanyama wasn't much of a factor in the last 3-1/2 quarters of regulation.

Overtime was all Wemby. He had eight points in the first 4:26.

## Sheikh Al-Badr applauds the new sports licensing guidelines for swimming pools

KUWAIT CITY, July 31: Sheikh Khaled Al-Badr, Chairman of the Water Sports Federation, commended the Public Authority for Sports' recent directive requiring clubs with swimming pools to consult the Water Sports Federation before issuing any special licenses or entering into contracts with swimming academies. This review process is crucial for ensuring that all trainer certifications and applicant documents are approved by the Federation, which is responsible for maintaining safety standards and advancing the sport.

Sheikh Al-Badr emphasized that

Nobody else scored a single point in that span - not from France, not from Japan - and he ensured that the hosts would escape.

"Champion maturity. Champion mentality," France coach Vincent Collet said. "He was not good in the second half, but he didn't lose confidence. And he made the tough plays."

Wembanyama had help, most notably Matthew Strazel's four-point play to tie the game for France with 10.2 seconds left in regulation - "the shot of his life," Wembanyama said - and Japanese star Rui Hachimura, who had 24 points, getting ejected early in the fourth quarter after his second unsportsmanlike foul of the game.

Hachimura's teammates pressed on anyway, nearly pulling off a surprise.

"We lost Rui but never gave up," said 5-foot-8 Japan guard Yuri Kawamura, who led all scorers with 29 points. "That's it."

It seemed like it would be a dominant Wembanyama night in the early going. Hachimura didn't even bother jumping for the opening tipoff; he simply conceded it to Wembanyama, who had eight points in the first 3:20.

But he went strangely silent from there - until OT, that is.

"He's an extremely talented player. No. 1 draft pick, one of the tallest players in the world, he's extremely



Sheikh Khaled Al-Badr

this circular is a significant and positive development, reflecting the

commitment of officials to Kuwaiti sports. He expressed hope that this initiative will lead to increased efforts, improved coordination, and dedicated work to enhance Kuwaiti sports overall.

He also noted that the Water Sports Federation is eager to collaborate with all stakeholders and has a clear strategy to broaden the participation of youth. The Federation aims to share knowledge and expertise, align with continental and international standards set by the Asian and International Federations, and implement regulations that will support Kuwait's progress in water sports.

skilled," said Japan center Josh Hawkins, who spent a lot of his day guarding Wembanyama. "He's still 20 years old. Our game plan is to try to be a little bit physical with him. Obviously, as he matures and grows, he's going to really grow into his body and be able to use his body extremely well."

Wembanyama saved his best for the end while also finishing with 11 rebounds and six assists. And France survived.

"I don't know why he has to prove more," France forward Bilal Coulibaly said. "He was being himself, a great teammate, a great player. Proud of him."

## Al-Arabi in talks to acquire Tandia

Tandia back on Al-Qadisiya's radar for the coming season

By Hassan Musa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, July 31: Mali's Ibrahim Tandia is currently being considered by Al-Qadisiya for a potential extension with the team for another season. Tandia, who played for Al-Qadisiya last season and scored the winning goal against Al-Salmiya in the Amir Cup final, had his contract initially not renewed by the technical and administrative staff.

Al-Qadisiya is reconsidering Tandia's continuation despite already having five foreign players: Brazilian Igor Rossi, Libyan Mohamed Soula, Moroccans Mehdi Barahma and Ismail Khafi, and Nigerian Daniel Jibola. The decision to bring Tandia back stems from Jibola's declining performance during the Cairo camp and Khafi not meeting expectations, coupled with Al-Qadisiya's desire to avoid a dispute involving Khafi and his former club, Ittihad Tangier.

Meanwhile, Al-Arabi has entered negotiations to acquire Tandia, making it a third party in discussions that also involve a Saudi player. Al-Arabi's interest in Tandia is due to the technical staff's dissatisfaction with recent candidate profiles they have received. Al-Arabi currently has four foreign players: Nigerian Anayo Iwala, Algerians Ahmed Khaldi and Sofiane Bouchar, and



Players vie for the ball

Moroccan Hamza Khaba.

In recent matches, Al-Qadisiya drew 1-1 with Saudi Ahad and will play a final friendly match with Saudi Al-Taawoun before returning to Kuwait. They are preparing for a match against Kuwait Club next Thursday in the first round of the Zain Premier League.

Al-Arabi defeated Turkish Erbaaspor 2-0 in a friendly match, with goals from Ahmed Khaldi and Khaled Al-Marshad. It is to face Turkish club Erzurum Spor in its final friendly match before returning from its camp. Al-Arabi coach Nasser Al Shatti expressed satisfaction with the players' performance in the camp, noting the importance of preparing the team for the new season and benefiting from the friendly matches to reach the required readiness.

## Al-Maqseed presents school sports 'strategy' to minister

KUWAIT CITY, July 31: Dr. Amthal Al-Huwaila, Minister of Social Affairs, Family and Childhood Affairs, and Minister of State for Youth Affairs, met with officials from the Kuwait School Sports Federation and Higher Education to discuss future co-operation aimed at enhancing the development of school sports. The meeting included Faisal Al-Maqseed, Chairman of the Board of Directors, and Dr. Ahmed Abdul Hamid Al-Hamdan, Secretary-General of the Federation.

During the meeting, Faisal Al-Maqseed presented the School Union Strategy 2021-2026, titled

"Our Talents in Our Schools," detailing accomplishments and outlining the timeline for future plans. The Minister listened to the Federation's needs to support the strategy in its third year.

Al-Maqseed expressed gratitude to Dr. Al-Huwaila for her receptiveness and commitment to supporting school sports, emphasizing the importance of combining educational achievement with future aspirations. He highlighted that the Federation's efforts are crucial for bolstering various clubs and national teams, making the strategy a significant source of support for players, coaches, and administrators.



Dr Al-Huwaila with other officials

## Change Name

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## Wimbledon champion Krejckikova loses to Anna

PARIS, July 31, (AP): Wimbledon champion Barbora Krejckikova of the Czech Republic bowed out of singles at the Paris Olympics with a 6-4, 6-2 loss to Anna Karolina Schmiedlova of Slovakia in the quarterfinals on Wednesday.

Schmiedlova has now eliminated both women who played

in the final at the All England Club only 2 1/2 weeks ago. She defeated Wimbledon runner-up Jasmine Paolini in the third round Tuesday, and now is the first tennis semifinalist from Slovakia at a Summer Games since 1988.

Krejckikova was seeded ninth in Paris and has fared well on the clay courts at Roland Garros,

which hosts the French Open and is the facility being used for tennis at these Olympics. Her first Grand Slam singles championship came at the French Open in 2021, when she also won the doubles title.

But with the heat at 90 degrees Fahrenheit (32 Celsius) and the air thick with humidity, Krejckikova looked listless down the

stretch against Schmiedlova, a 29-year-old who is ranked 67th and owns one fourth-round appearance at a Slam. That came last year at Roland Garros.

By the end, Krejckikova appeared spent and was barely moving. She slapped a forehand into the net to finish the match, and Schmiedlova raised both

arms overhead.

The two players accumulated nearly the exact same number of winners, with 18 for Krejckikova and 17 for Schmiedlova. But here's what was pivotal: the big difference in unforced errors - 32 by Krejckikova, more than twice as many as Schmiedlova's 15.

That included five double-

faults for Krejckikova, who needed to deal with 11 break points and lost five of her service games.

Next for Schmiedlova will be a match Thursday against Donna Vekic of Croatia - who beat Coco Gauff in the third round - or Marta Kostyuk of Ukraine, with a place in the gold medal final on the line.



### Canada lose appeal against points deduction

Canada lost its appeal against the deduction of six competition points following a drone-spying scandal in the Olympic women's soccer tournament.

The Court of Arbitration for Sport on Wednesday said its panel of three judges dismissed Canada's appeal and confirmed the six-point deduction imposed Saturday by FIFA. Two assistant coaches used drones to spy on New Zealand's practices last week before their opening game.

The urgent verdict was delivered less than eight hours before defending Olympic cham-

pion Canada was scheduled to play Colombia at Nice in the final round of games in Group A. Canada was third in the standings with zero points despite winning both its games, against New Zealand and France.

Canada can still advance to the quarterfinals with a win Wednesday that would lift the team into first or second place. The top two in each of the three groups advance, plus two third-placed teams. Head coach Bev Priestman and her two assistants were banned by FIFA for a year after being removed from the Olympics by Canadian officials. (AP)



China's Chen Yuxi and Quan Hongchan, celebrate on the podium after winning the gold medal flanked by silver medal North Korea's Jo Jin Mi and Kim Mi Rae, (top left), and bronze medal Britain's Andrea Spendolini Sirieux and Lois Toulson after the women's synchronized 10m platform diving final at the 2024 Summer Olympics in Saint-Denis, France. (AP)

# China continue diving dominance

North Korea win first medal ever

**SAINT-DENIS, France, July 31, (AP): North Korea won the silver in the women's synchronized 10-meter platform event to capture the nation's first ever Olympic diving medal, while China continued its dominance of the sport with another gold.**

Chen Yuxi and Quan Hongchan took a commanding lead from the start Wednesday to secure China's 50th Olympic diving gold medal all time.

The women led by nearly 14 points after two of their five dives, making it a competition for silver and bronze behind them. Chen won the same event in Tokyo, partnering with Zhang Jiaqi.

Chen and Quan scored a 359.10. The North Korean pair finished far behind

at 315.90. It marked North Korea's second medal of the Paris Games after winning a silver Tuesday in mixed doubles table tennis.

Jin Mi Jo and Mi Rae Kim hope to one day make a run at mighty China.

"We really wanted to give gold to our country but the performance was not done as we expected, as we tried, so we regret that," Kim said through an interpreter. "The next time we do it we will try hard for the gold."

North Korea skipped the Tokyo Games, citing concerns about the COVID-19 pandemic.

Andrea Spendolini-Sirieux and Lois Toulson of Great Britain took bronze with a score of 304.38.

"It was a tough competition, we knew before it that China was the team to beat and that Great Britain and the Canadians were going to be hard to defeat, but watching videos our coach told us to be aware of North Korea, and they did very well," said four-time Olympian Alejandra Orozco of Mexico, who finished fifth.

China added to its medal haul in the sport it has dominated for decades. The Chinese took another step closer to an unprecedented sweep in the Olympic diving pool.

Kseniia Bailo and Sofia Lyskun finished second-to-last and 74 points

behind the winning Chinese pair - but the result really didn't matter to the Ukrainian women.

Bailo, 19, told The Associated Press she dedicated Wednesday's performance to everyone fighting to protect her war-torn homeland.

"I'm happy to be in the Olympics because I compete today for my country, for soldiers and for athletes and coaches who died in war. I'm really proud of me," she said, sharing that it's



China's Chen Meng plays against Netherlands' Britt Eerland during a women's singles round of 16 table tennis game at the 2024 Summer Olympics in Paris, France. (AP)

a challenge to focus on her sport. "It's really difficult, it's really hard because emotionally, I'm in the Ukraine. I can't just live in Paris right now and don't think about war, because my family is there, my friends are there. I need to compete for them."

Bailo and Lyskun, 22, received warm cheers all morning. They scored a 285.00, ahead of the eighth-place French pair and 2.52 points behind Americans Jessica Parratto and Delaney Schnell in sixth.

A first-time Olympian from the Southern port city of Mykolaiv, Bailo hopes this is the start of a long career on the world stage.

"It's a really good experience for me because it's my first Olympics, so I'm really happy to be in the Olympic family," she said. "It's a really good job for me, because my country has a really bad problem. I feel like I can tell all the world about my country, about the situation, about athletes."

Mexico's Gabriela Agundez and Orozco had aimed for another medal after earning bronze at the Tokyo Olympics three years ago.

It was their final competition together as Orozco plans to retire. The women still have the individual platform event.

"We grew up together, we made

a great team because we dreamt together and we built a legacy and history together," said the 27-year-old Orozco from Guadalajara who was one of Mexico's flag bearers. "We know that no matter what, we are one. We finished this today, and it was an honor to compete together on that platform."

She earned silver in the synchronized platform at the 2012 London Games.

Orozco began pairing with the 23-year-old Garcia of La Paz after diving the first of her two Olympics alongside Paola Espinosa.

The Mexican women had plenty of support.

Brothers César and Azael Jáuregui, both university students in Northern Mexico, couldn't wait to get to the pool. Azael made the 10-minute walk from the train station with a Mexican flag draped over his shoulders.

"It's very special for me as a Mexican because we have like five Olympics in a row that the people are in the finals, they are getting medals, so for me and my brother coming to the diving for the first time it's a really good experience," César said. "We are hoping to see medals and not only medals we hope to see our divers enjoy it and be happy with their results."



Deng Yawen, of China, celebrates after finishing her second run, while Hannah Roberts, of the United States, (stands in the background), during the cycling BMX freestyle women's park final at the 2024 Summer Olympics in Paris, France. (AP)

### Roberts crashes out

## Yawen stars in freestyle BMX

PARIS, July 31, (AP): Deng Yawen of China won gold in the women's freestyle BMX competition at the Paris Olympics on Wednesday, while five-time world champion Hannah Roberts of the United States crashed out of both of her runs and failed to medal.

Deng finished with a score of 92.60 points at the urban sports park built at Place de La Concorde. Perris Benegas of the U.S. rose to the occasion, going from fourth place at the Tokyo Games to a silver medal with 90.70 points. Natalya Diehm of Australia had two clean runs and her first of 88.80 points was good enough for bronze.

Roberts, the silver medalist in Tokyo, may have been feeling the effects of a practice crash. Her first run was



Li Yueru, of China, shoots over Tina Kajisnik, of Serbia, in a women's basketball game at the 2024 Summer Olympics in Villeneuve-d'Ascq, France. (AP)



Iran's Mohammad Rahbari reacts as he competes with Hungary's Andras Szatmari in the men's team sabre semifinal match during the 2024 Summer Olympics at the Grand Palais in Paris, France. (AP)



Gold medal winner, France's Cassandre Beaugrand reacts during a medal ceremony for the women's individual triathlon competition at the 2024 Summer Olympics in Paris, France. (AP)

clean until she fell hard while trying a late front flip. Her second run ended only seconds in when she put her foot down on a landing.

Charlotte Worthington of Britain, the defending Olympic champ, failed to qualify for the finals.

The medal for Deng came after the Chinese team failed to qualify anyone for Tokyo. The result, coupled with the fact that China qualified three and had to leave one rider at home because of quota numbers, showed how far the nation has come.

The medal round got off to an inauspicious start for Roberts, who was going over a jump during a warmup session when she collided with Czech rider Iveta Miculycova. The American seemed to grab at her right shoulder as she ran immediately off the course, leaving her bike gleaming in the sun on the purple-hued flats.

One of her biggest rivals, Sun Jiaqi of China, looked like she was going to put up a big number on her first run. But in the final seconds, she clipped her front tire on the spine and landed hard on her full-faced helmet, essentially scuttling that score.

She also crashed during a tailwhip on her second try, taking Sun out of the medal running.

It was her compatriot who set the standard on her first run. Deng opened with a big double tailwhip, threw down a no-handed backflip and peppered her ride with another tailwhip, a triple bar spin and a double bar spin. The cleanliness of her ride resulted in a score of 92.50 - which she bettered by a tenth on her second run - and put pressure on Roberts to respond.

Roberts was on her way to a medal-worthy run before trying the front flip, where she didn't appear to carry enough speed.

It wasn't the last time the favored American would end up on the ground.

### Britain dash Dutch hope at last stroke

PARIS, July 31, (Xinhua): The Dutch rowing team must have felt a pang of regret, as their near-triumph in securing both the men's and women's quadruple sculls Olympic golds in Paris was snatched away by the British at the very last stroke.

In the gripping final of the women's quadruple sculls at the Vaires-sur-Marne Nautical Stadium on Wednesday, the Dutch quartet, who had maintained their lead almost throughout the race, was edged out by a mere 0.15 seconds, succumbing to the late surging British squad.

Britain claimed the gold with a time of six minutes 16.31 seconds, leaving the Netherlands with the silver and Germany taking home the bronze.

"We got to 250 meters to go, and I could sense we were coming back, so I was like, 'Guys, now, we're going now.' And then I called it again about 150 meters to go, 'We can do this,'" said Lauren Henry of Britain after the race.

"I kind of knew we'd crossed the line first but we had to wait to see, and when I saw 'GBR, I' come up it was amazing," the 22-year-old added.

For the men's part, the Dutch team successfully defended their title in the quadruple sculls, powering home to Olympic gold with a time of 5:42.00, almost three

seconds ahead of their nearest rivals of Italy, who took home the silver in a time of 5:44.40. Poland clinched the bronze in 5:44.59.

The Chinese team of Cui Xiaotong, Lyu Yang, Zhang Ling, and Chen Yunxia, entered the final through the repechage and were unable to replicate their stellar performance from the Tokyo Olympics, where they not only secured China's second Olympic rowing gold since 2008 but set a world-best time of 6:05.13, a record that still stands unbroken. They finished in sixth.



Members of team Britain react to winning gold in the women's quadruple sculls rowing final at the 2024 Summer Olympics in Vaires-sur-Marne, France. (AP)

### Yee holds off Wilde

## Beaugrand wins women's triathlon after concerns about water quality

PARIS, July 31, (AP): Cassandre Beaugrand of France won the women's Olympic triathlon on Wednesday, making her way through a Seine River that was under scrutiny for its water quality and navigating slick roads that turned the cycling portion into a series of spills.

Beaugrand finished the run on top of the Pont Alexandre III bridge and collapsed to the ground in exhaustion and

exhilaration. It was on top of the "Paris 2024" logo, with a home crowd cheering her on. Her time of 1 hour, 54 minutes, 55 seconds edged Julie Derron of Switzerland by six seconds. Beth Potter of Britain captured bronze.

In the men's race that started less than an hour after the women finished, Alex Yee of Britain held off Hayden Wilde of New Zealand by six seconds to win gold. Leo Bergere earned another



Britain's Alex Yee runs to the finish line to win the gold medal at the end of the men's individual triathlon competition at the 2024 Summer Olympics in Paris, France. (AP)

medal for France by taking bronze.

The men's race originally supposed to take place on Tuesday but was postponed because of elevated levels of bacteria in the water. The organizers said early Wednesday the latest tests of the water showed compliance with quality standards.

Holding the race in Paris' famed waterway was all part of an ambitious plan to clean up the long-polluted Seine. Organizers have been steadfast in their insistence that the swimming portion of the triathlon and the marathon swimming events next week could safely be held in the river.

A steady rain subsided just before the triathletes dove into the water. Derron said water quality wasn't on her mind - only a medal.

The tricky part proved to be on the bike and racing through the wet streets. Romina Biagioli of Argentina fell off her bike on Lap 2, her water bottles rolling away.

"It was a nice course, but with the rain it was dangerous," she said. "It was nice but dangerous."

As for swimming in the Seine, Biagioli said she would've preferred more practice time to prepare for its currents. "I wasn't worried about the pollution," Biagioli said. "I was worried about how it could affect me not to try it before the race."





Members of Team USA, (from left to right), Simone Biles, Jade Carey, Jordan Chiles, Suni Lee and Hezly Rivera pose for a photo after winning the gold medal during the women's artistic gymnastics team final round at Bercy Arena at the 2024 Summer Olympics in Paris, France. (AP)

# Sports

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## Biles & US earn redemption

Italy, Brazil complete the podium

PARIS, July 31, (AP): Simone Biles, Jordan Chiles and Suni Lee spent the night before perhaps the biggest gymnastics meet of their lives restless. Italy, which was a surprising second to the U.S. during qualifying, returned to the podium for the first time since 1928 by holding off Brazil for silver.

There was a tension in the air. They'd all been in the Olympic spotlight before, experiences that left them with medals but also the kind of scars - be they physical, psychological or both - that heal but never really go away.

And here they were in Paris, the leaders of a star-laden U.S. team everyone expected to finish atop the medal stand,

and something wasn't right.

In a different time, in a different era, it might have festered. Might have followed them onto the floor at Bercy Arena and into the history books, too.

This is not a different time. This is not a different era. This is now.

So the oldest team the U.S. has ever sent to the Olympics, including a trio that has spent their respective careers breaking barriers about what a female gymnast can and can't do, what they can and can't be, did something they never used to do.

They talked, with Biles - three years removed from a Tokyo Games that dragged the conversation around by the time they walked onto the floor for the Olympic final, the tension was gone, largely replaced with joy.

And not soon after, gold.

The self-described "Redemption Tour," the moniker given to a team filled with women who wanted to return to the Games for deeply personal reasons, ended with Biles and the Americans where they have almost

always been since she burst onto the scene 11 years ago: on top of the podium, the rest of the world looking up.

Eight years after winning gold in Rio with a team that called Aly Raisman grandma because she was all of 22, Biles - now 27 and married - was back again with Jade Carey (24), Chiles (23), Lee (21) and teenager Hezly Rivera at her side.

### GYMNASTICS

With Biles at her show-stopping best, the Americans' total of 171.296 was well clear of Italy and Brazil and the exclamation point of a yearlong run in which Biles has cemented her legacy as the greatest ever in her sport, and among the best in the history of the Olympics.

Chiles, who seemed like a longshot to make it this spring after injuries piled up, was pretty good in her own right. She began the night by drilling her double-twisting Yurchenko vault,

sending the Americans on a four-aparatus stop on their "Tour" that felt equal parts coronation and celebration.

By the time Biles, the left calf that bothered her during qualifying heavily taped, stepped onto the floor for the final event - a floor exercise set to music by Taylor Swift and Beyonce - it was over.

She joked she knew she simply needed to stay on her feet to win. She did more than that, providing an exclamation point on the U.S.'s third gold in its last four trips to the Games.

The Americans remain peerless (if not flawless, this is gymnastics after all) when at their best.

And over two hours in front of a crowd that included everyone from tennis great Serena Williams to actor Natalie Portman, Biles left little doubt about anything.

Her status as the sport's greatest of all time. Her ability to move past the "twisties" that derailed her in Japan. Her spot in the pantheon of the U.S. Olympic movement.

She now has a staggering 38 medals

in major international competitions. Eight of those have come under the Olympic rings, moving her past Shannon Miller for the most by an American gymnast.

Yet her return wasn't so much about winning. That's never really been the point anyway, just a byproduct of her unparalleled excellence. It was about a joy she had lost somewhere along the way.

It seems to have returned. She leaned into the crowd that roared at every flip, every leap and, yes, every twist. With her husband - on break from NFL training camp - waving an American flag while sitting next to her parents, Biles did what she has done so well for so long save for a couple of difficult days in Japan during a pandemic: she dominated.

Biles met with her therapist in the morning to put her in the right mindset. There was brief - very brief - moment of trepidation as she raced down the vault runway, the event that began to spin out of control in Tokyo.



A Kuwaiti player goes for a basket.

## Kuwait face Saudis in a 'crucial' match

KUWAIT CITY, July 31: The Kuwait youth basketball team is set to play its third match against Saudi Arabia at 7:30 pm today at the Union Hall in Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Sports Complex for Indoor Halls. This game is part of the fourth round of the Asian Youth Cup qualifiers (Gulf Region), hosted by Kuwait, which will conclude tomorrow, Friday. Before this match, Oman will face Qatar at 5:00 pm.

In the second round of the Asian qualifiers, the Kuwait team was defeated by Qatar 79-60 while Saudi Arabia lost to Bahrain 94-97. After this round, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Bahrain are tied with 3 points each, Qatar has 2 points, and Oman remains with 1 point.

The third round took place last night, with Oman playing against Bahrain and Saudi Arabia facing Qatar.

### BASKETBALL

while Kuwait had a rest day according to the tournament schedule. In today's match, the Kuwait team aims to keep their hopes alive for qualifying for the Asian Cup finals by defeating Saudi Arabia.

Additionally, the Speaker of the Arab Parliament, Adel Al-Asoumi, commended the organization of the Asian Championship and the efforts of the Kuwait Basketball Federation's Board of Directors. During his attendance at the second day of the championship, he expressed his gratitude and appreciation for the hospitality and excellent organization, emphasizing the importance of the qualifiers in fostering fraternal ties within the Gulf Cooperation Council and enhancing the technical development of young players through strong competition and sportsmanship.

## Italy overcome France in final

PARIS, July 31, (AP): The fans at fencing are among the loudest and most passionate at the Paris Olympics, especially when France is challenging for a gold medal. They usually leave disappointed.

Italy overcame a passionate "Marseillaise"-singing crowd at the Grand Palais to hand France its fourth fencing silver medal of the Games in the women's team epee Tuesday.

Alberta Santuccio got the winning touch for Italy in overtime against France's Auriane Mallo-Breton to complete a hard-fought 30-29 win for gold. It was the second time that Mallo-Breton lost a Paris Olympic final by a single point after a 13-12 loss to Hong Kong's Vivian Kong Man Wai in the individual epee Saturday.

### FENCING

French fencers are 0-3 in finals against non-French opponents at the 2024 Olympics, with those losses coming in epee events. The host nation's only gold came when Manon Apithy-Brunet beat her teammate Sara Balzer in the women's saber final on Monday.

"If you look at the (epee) finals, of course we seem to be losing, but we're in the finals all the same," Mallo-Breton said Tuesday through an interpreter. "I think that in the teams, there are possibilities to go and get some wonderful medals, and we hope that the other (French) teams will be able to go and do that, so we're going to be supporting them."

Team fencing involves squad members fencing one-on-one in a rotating sequence that means everyone gets to face each opponent once.



The New Zealand Rugby Sevens team react as they stand on the podium with their gold medals at the 2024 Summer Olympics, in the Stade de France, in Saint-Denis, France. New Zealand defeated Canada to win gold. (AP)

US shock Australia for bronze

Britain cruise to second consecutive victory

## New Zealand defend women's rugby title

PARIS, July 31, (Xinhua): The final day of rugby sevens at Paris 2024 concluded with New Zealand successfully defending their gold medal against Canada, while the United States shocked Australia to claim bronze.

Meanwhile, China placed sixth overall after defeating Britain 19-15, before falling 21-7 to France in the 5th/6th playoff.

Favorites New Zealand quickly raced into an early lead, but Canada shocked the crowd and the Black Ferns by scoring two consecutive tries to take a surprising lead at the end of the first half.

Despite the misfiring start from New Zealand, the Black Ferns started the second half with more gusto and control, scoring in the first minute of the half. Despite not holding much possession, Canada remained valiant in defense. However, the Kiwis were too much for Canada to contain, and in the sixth minute of the half, Stacey Waaka went over to give New Zealand the gold and a 19-12 win.

In the bronze medal match, the Americans scored a dramatic winner in overtime to come from behind and claim a famous victory over Australia.

China's day three was a significant improvement on Monday's performance following their 55-5 loss to New Zealand. In the first positional playoff game against Britain, Yang Feifei scored more than a minute after the final hooter to give China a spectacular winner in the final play of the game.

After falling behind early in the



New Zealand's Stacey Waaka dives over the line to score a try during the women's gold medal Rugby Sevens match between New Zealand and Canada at the 2024 Summer Olympics, in the Stade de France, in Saint-Denis, France. (AP)

first half, China raced into a first-half lead through Chen Keyi and Yang, securing a 14-10 lead by virtue of converting both tries. With the game finely poised in the second half, Team GB came out firing, breaking through the China defense a minute into the half. The rest of the second half was a tense affair until Yang raced through to secure another massive scalp for China from the tournament.

In China's second game, France, supported by the passionate home crowd, proved too much for them to handle.

## Wiffen secures Ireland's first gold

PARIS, July 31, (Xinhua): Swimmer Daniel Wiffen secured Ireland's first gold medal of the Paris Olympics, setting a new Olympic record en route to victory in the men's 800m freestyle final on Tuesday.

The 23-year-old surged home in the last 25 meters to touch the wall in seven minutes, 38.19 seconds, smashing Mykhailo Romanchuk's previous Games record by more than three seconds.

American Bobby Finke took silver in 7:38.75 and Italian Gregorio Paltrinieri claimed bronze in 7:39.38 at La Defense Arena.

"I always knew it [a gold medal] was going to come, I didn't know what event it was going to be in but I knew I was going to win one of them," a confident Wiffen said after the race.

"For it to be my first event is even better. I don't [know] how to sum it up, to be honest. Incredible."



Daniel Wiffen, of Ireland, celebrates after winning the men's 800-meter freestyle final at the 2024 Summer Olympics in Nanterre, France. (AP)

Australia's Kaylee McKeown also established a new Games record as she won her second consecutive Olympic 100m backstroke title.

McKeown finished in 57.33 seconds, beating her own previous mark of 57.47 set in Tokyo three years ago. American world record holder Regan Smith took silver in 57.66 and her compatriot Katharine Berkoff claimed bronze

### SWIMMING

in 57.98.

"It feels surreal to be honest with you, and I wasn't sure if I'd be any good there tonight," McKeown said after the race. "I didn't put expectations on myself, I was going to get out and enjoy the atmosphere, and that's the best you can do for yourself." "I knew it was going to come down to the last five meters. She [Smith] pushed me the whole

way through. You wait for the race and finish it, and I can't even remember it now." In the last medal race of the evening, Britain cruised to its second consecutive Olympic men's 4x200m freestyle relay title by holding off challenges from the United States and Australia.

Britain's team of James Guy, Tom Dean, Matthew Richards and Duncan Scott led at every turn to finish in six minutes, 59.43 seconds.

The United States' combination of Luke Hobson, Carson Foster, Drew Kibler and Kieran Smith took silver, more than a second further back.

Australia's Maximillian Giuliani, Flynn Southam, Elijah Winton and Thomas Neill claimed bronze.

"We worked very hard for this and it's nice to be rewarded with the gold medal," an elated Guy said after the race.



Jordan's Zeyad Eashash celebrates after defeating Japan's Sewonrets Okazawa in their men's 71 kg preliminary boxing match at the 2024 Summer Olympics. (AP)