



Opinion

The additional fingerprint, an administrative failure?

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

BY MANDATING the addition of a third fingerprint requirement in the public sector, we wonder if the extensive hierarchy of officials, from ministers, undersecretaries, assistant undersecretaries, directors, inspectors and those in supervisory capacity, failed to adequately monitor employee productivity. Does this additional fingerprinting genuinely enhance efficiency, or does it introduce unnecessary complexity where it is not needed?

This indeed highlights an administrative failure that cannot be justified. It suggests either the reluctance of the workforce to perform their duties or a lack of trust in the employees.

Nonetheless, in either case, an additional fingerprint will not solve the problem. It instead is an indication of lack of confidence among executive officials in their ability to urge their subordinates to work, as employees often emulate the work ethic and behavior of their supervisors.

How can an official hold their subordinates accountable if he practices a closed-door policy, neglects to follow up and monitor their work and performance, and then passes the responsibility onto their subordinates?

Otherwise, how does he explain the queue in the middle of the shift for "proving attendance"? How many hours are wasted for this process? Is the time factor not taken into account by the one who invented this "genius" solution?

The introduction of an additional fingerprint requirement is unprecedented in other countries. It appears to be a Kuwaiti innovation aimed at increasing bureaucracy and promoting laziness. This system allows employees to merely demonstrate attendance without necessarily proving their productivity or efficiency, thus potentially fostering a culture of making excuses for not fulfilling their duties promptly.

It is widely recognized that an official must serve as a role model for their employees. If they fail to fulfill their duties, it undoubtedly sets a precedent for subordinates to also neglect their responsibilities.

In this regard, I remember an incident that took place in Dubai in 2016 when the ruler Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid was on a morning tour of some departments. At that time he had posted a Twitter message in which he said, "I made a surprise visit to government departments and I was surprised to see a number of directors sitting behind closed doors. I immediately issued orders to remove all the doors."

Continued on Page 5

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Vision '35 projects cost hits \$120 bln

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 5: The total cost of strategic projects within "Kuwait Vision 2035" from 2010 until the current fiscal year has amounted to \$120 billion, according to Al-Seyassah/Arab Times special report.

These expenditures were allocated across various sectors with significant focus on oil, logistics, energy, housing, education, and health.

The government reports and data seen by the daily reveal that the distribution of spending among the sectors accounts 49 percent for oil and gas, logistics 16 percent, energy 8 percent, housing city construction 8 percent, education 7 percent, health 7 percent and Small and Medium Enterprises 5 percent.

The reports emphasize that the oil sector received the largest share of the spending due to its critical role in Kuwait's economy, following the investment and banking sectors in terms of governance.

This sector's management, marked by complete professionalism, facilitated the completion of numerous major projects during the vision's timeline.

Continued on Page 5

Mol gets tough as more visit visa violators, sponsor held

Wife, husband to be deported



KUNA photo

Undersecretary of the Kuwaiti Ministry of Finance Aseel Al-Munifi and CEO of the Shared Electronic Banking Services Company (K-Net) Essam Al-Khashnam during the contract signing for electronic payment of services. — See Page 5

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 5, (Agencies): The Ministry of Interior has referred a Jordanian expatriate and his family for deportation for breaching the visit visa conditions.

According to a press statement issued by the ministry, this step is based on a decision taken last month by the ministry to deport visit visa violators and their sponsors.

It explained that the Jordanian expatriate had brought his wife and children to Kuwait on family visit visas. However, they stayed beyond the allowed visit period, which is not only a violation of the visit visa conditions but also a violation of the pledge the sponsor signed when he applied for a family visit visa. Hence, necessary legal measures were taken for the deportation of the sponsor and his visiting family, even though his residency is still valid.

The Ministry of Interior affirmed its commitment to taking necessary legal measures against those who do not comply with the law.

It emphasized that it will spare no effort in holding violators accountable, including both sponsors and their sponsored individuals.

The Ministry of Interior stressed that all visitors are required to adhere strictly to the specified time limit for their visit and must leave the country upon the expiry of their visit visa in order to avoid facing legal consequences.

Last month, several visit visa holders, along with their visa sponsors, were referred for deportation for exceeding their legal stay in the country.

The Ministry of Interior had revealed that a group of women residing in the country obtained visit visas for their husbands and children, using which the latter entered the country.

Continued on Page 5

Bid to enhance job output, discipline

Third fingerprint to ensure gov't staff presence

By Abdul Rahman Al-Shammari, Marwa Al-Bahrawi, Mohammad Ghanem, Inaas Awadh, Fares Al-Abdan, Jaber Al-Hamoud and Mohammad Al-Musleh
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 5: The Civil Service Commission (CSC) has issued a decision to implement a third-fingerprint system for all government sector employees. This requires all employees to register a third fingerprint in order to confirm their presence during official work hours, along with the first fingerprint for arrival and second fingerprint for departure. The third fingerprint is to be recorded within 60 minutes after two hours from the start of their shift.

According to informed sources, the implementation of the third fingerprint system in Kuwait highlights the government's dedication to enhancing government performance and promoting job discipline. Despite challenges, the anticipated benefits highlight the significance of this initiative for advancing progress in the government sector. The system aims to bolster job discipline, increase employee adherence to designated working hours, enhance productivity, mitigate negligence, reduce absenteeism, and ensure employees' presence during official working hours.

In accordance with the decision issued by CSC, the Director General of Kuwait Municipality Saud Fayez Al-Dabbous on Sunday issued a circular to mandate all employees of the sectors and departments affiliated with the municipality's executive authority to register a third fingerprint.

The circular emphasizes adherence to these guidelines by all employees of the municipality's executive body from the date of issuance, which is August 4, 2024.

Continued on Page 5

Move to make way for Kuwaitis

Municipality to sack 56 graduate expats

By Inaas Awadh
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 5: Minister of Public Works and Minister of State for Municipal Affairs Dr. Noura Al-Mashaan on Monday issued a decision to terminate the services of all expatriate university graduate employees who specialized in law, engineering and accounting as well as all administrative specializations for those who hold a bachelor's degree, among expatriate employees in the executive body, in view of the availability of nationals who can do their work in the best manner.



Al-Mashaan

The newspaper obtained a copy of the minister's letter to Director General of Kuwait Municipality Saud Al-Dabbous, in which Al-Mashaan gave instructions to prepare a ministerial decision to terminate the services of expatriate legal advisors in the Legal Department and its affiliated departments within three working days; that is, before the end of this week.

In the same context, sources told the newspaper that a total of 56 university graduate employees will be terminated. They said the Civil Service Commission (CSC) has notified the Municipality since the beginning of this year about the need to terminate their services within this year -- until Dec 31, 2024 at the latest.

Sources added the procedures for terminating the services of the remaining expatriate diploma holders in the Municipality will be completed by the beginning of next year until April 30, 2025.

24 arrested Sri Lankans freed, 2 still in custody

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 5: The Sri Lankan Foreign Ministry reported that Kuwait released 24 Sri Lankans, including renowned artists, yesterday, following their detention last Friday, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The ministry confirmed that this release was made possible due to intervention by the Sri Lankan Embassy in Kuwait.

It was noted that the group, which included famous artists such as Indrachapa Liyanage, Samanali Fonseka, Julie Siya, and Upika Nirmani, had been arrested while attending an event organized by the JVP-affiliated organization Ethern Api.

The reason for their arrest was the failure to obtain necessary permission for the organized event.

Continued on Page 5

Huge rush for family 'visas'

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 5: Tamim Madani, Chargé d'Affaires of the Syrian Embassy in Kuwait, has highlighted the rush of Syrians at the embassy who want to bring in their families following the decision by Kuwait's Ministry of Interior to facilitate family reunification, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

This policy change has led to a daily influx of hundreds to nearly a thousand visitors at the embassy, significantly increasing the workload

Continued on Page 5

KAC suspends B'desh flights

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 5, (Agencies): The Kuwait Airways announced on Monday the suspension of flights to and from Bangladesh due to growing security unrest in Bangladesh.

In a press statement, Kuwait Airways indicated that further updates would be provided as the situation evolves.

The cancellation was in response to widespread protests in Bangladesh against ousted prime minister Sheikh Hasina and her government, which have been erupted as student demonstrations demanding reforms to the civil service quota system.

Chief of General Staff of Bangladesh Army, Waqar-Uz-Zaman, told the people of the country on Monday that Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has resigned as reports emerged about her departure to India amid massive anti-government protests.

The Bangladeshi news portal Prothomalo said that in his address the army chief announced resignation of Hasina and promised to form an interim government through discussion, pledging to bring the perpetrators of killings to justice, and maintain peace and tranquility in the country. Meanwhile, thousands of protesters stormed the residence of Bangladesh PM as Hasina, accompanied by her sister Sheikh Rehana, left the country on board a military helicopter.

Continued on Page 5

Newswatch

BAGHDAD: Iraq's Federal Supreme Court (FSC) rejected a lawsuit filed by two members of the Council of Representatives (the Parliament) seeking to expel US forces from Iraq.

The FSC stated on their website that they had dismissed the lawsuit against the President and the Prime Minister of Iraq, filed by parliament members Basem Khazaal and Mustafa Habbar, due to lack of jurisdiction. (KUNA)

ANKARA: Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan accused social media platforms of "digital fascism" on Monday for allegedly censoring photographs of Palestinian "martyrs."

The Turkish leader's comments came as Turkish officials were engaged in discussions with representatives of the social media platform, Instagram, to reinstate access to millions of its users in Turkey. (AP)

TEHRAN: Iran announced on Monday it would shorten working hours for state-run organizations and banks in several provinces as a heatwave sweeps the country.

The government said work hours on Tuesday will be from 06:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. local time. The move aims to protect public health and prevent power outages. (Xinhua)

Kuwaiti civil society organizations call to end Gaza genocide by Israel

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 5: Several civil society organizations in Kuwait urged governments, international legal institutions, and Islamic bodies, most notably the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, to continue imposing international pressure to put an end to the brutal Israeli aggression on the Gaza Strip, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

They also stressed the need to work on allowing into the Gaza Strip substantial humanitarian aid, particularly in the form of medicines and food, that commensurate with the scale of these crises.

In a press statement, these associations and institutions affirmed the need for Arab, Islamic, and international medical institutions and organizations to launch consecutive and urgent medical campaigns and convoys. These efforts aim to treat patients and the injured, and to facilitate the transfer of critical cases from Gaza to medical facilities outside Palestine. This initiative is crucial for saving lives and ensuring the provision of necessary medical care.

They suggested the continuation of Kuwait's efforts in relief and medical campaigns, and to facilitate the reception of the injured and those with

incurable diseases, as a humanitarian initiative that will further enhance the country's legacy of generosity and compassion.

The associations and institutions emphasized the importance of intensifying and coordinating media efforts across all available platforms to express solidarity and support for the people in Gaza, through both official and popular media channels.

They also called for countering the biased media narrative defending Zionist crimes, massacres, and terrorism.

Israel is already in a "multi-front war" with Iran and its proxies, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told a Cabinet meeting Sunday, as the United States and allies prepared to defend Israel from an expected counterstrike and prevent an even more destructive regional conflict.

Tensions have soared following nearly 10 months of war in Gaza and the killing last week of a senior Hezbollah commander in Lebanon and Hamas' top political leader in Iran. Iran and its allies have blamed Israel and threatened retaliation. Hamas says it has begun discussions on choosing a new leader.

Continued on Page 5



KUNA photo

Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Ali Al-Yahya, during his meeting with Oman's envoy to Kuwait Dr. Saleh bin Amer Al-Kharousi.

Kuwait, Oman to boost ties

Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya received on Monday Oman's Ambassador to Kuwait Dr. Saleh Al-Kharousi. During the meet-

ing, both sides discussed bilateral relations, as well as exploring ways to strengthen cooperation in fields of common interests. (KUNA)

Prayer Timings

Fajr	03:42	Asr	15:30
Sunrise ..	05:10	Maghrib ..	18:37
Zohr	11:54	Isha	20:22

Local

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

Weather

Expected weather for next 24 hrs:
By Day: Hot and relatively humid over coastal areas with light to moderate northwesterly wind to moderate northwesterly wind to light variable wind, with speeds of 08-28 km/h and some scattered clouds will appear.

By Night: Hot to rather hot with light to moderate northwesterly wind, with speeds of 10-30 km/h.

Station	Max Exp	Min Rec		
Kuwait City	46	34	Abdaly	46
Kuwait Airport	47	32	Jahra	47
			Salmiyah	43
			Jal Aliyah	46
			Nuwaisib	48
			Wafra	47
				30
				29

Experts work brings smiles to many faces, provides crucial support to local medical staff

Kuwaiti doctors treat over 700 patients in Cambodia humanitarian mission

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 5, (KUNA): The Kuwaiti charitable mission has made a global impact with a dedicated medical team treating over 700 orphans and those in need at the Kuwait Hospital in Cambodia.

This initiative was organized by Kuwait-based Revival of Islamic Heritage Society and featured seven Kuwaiti volunteer dentists, including Dr. Ahmad Al-Sharrad, Dr. Anwar Al-Shammari, Dr. Faisal Al-Sulaili, Dr. Basees Al-Ajmi, Dr. Abdullah Al-Kandari, Dr. Ayoub Al-Kandari, and Dr. Abdulwahab Al-Noumas.

Their work, ranging from emergency surgeries and tooth extractions to gum treatments and fillings, brought smiles to many faces and provided crucial support to local medical staff.

Kuwait Hospital, Cambodia's first charitable hospital since 2015, offers essential services like surgery, obstetrics, pediatrics, dental



Providing medical services for oral and dental health for humanitarian cases there.

care, intensive care, and health awareness, operating around the clock to help the most vulnerable.

Nonetheless, the Kuwaiti effort does not stop there as the "Kuwait Village for Orphans," funded by



The Kuwaiti volunteer medical team with children who are beneficiaries of the humanitarian campaign.

donations and managed by the Revival of Islamic Heritage Society, provides housing and education

for thousands of orphans as well as contains a large mosque that can accommodate up to 1,000 worshi-

pers, showing Kuwait's ongoing commitment to humanitarian work and its global outreach.

Sheikh Jarrah phones Falconer

Kuwait's Deputy FM and UK official discuss bilateral ties

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 5, (KUNA): Kuwait's Deputy Foreign Minister Ambassador Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah phoned the Parliamentary Under-Secretary-General for the Middle East, Afghanistan, and Pakistan at the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office,

Hamish Falconer.

During the call, Sheikh Jarrah congratulated Mr. Falconer on assuming his new position.

Both sides also discussed bilateral ties between the two friendly countries, issues of common interest, and current regional and global developments.

Building of labor cities to tackle chronic problems in Jleeb area

Municipality tasked with transferring ownership of land sites

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 5: The Council of Ministers in Kuwait has emphasized the urgency of establishing six labor cities to address the chronic problems in the Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh region, which has become a hotbed of irregularities despite efforts by the Ministry of Interior and other state agencies, reports Al-Qabas daily.

The plan aims to evacuate the area, improve infrastructure, and contribute to modifying the demographic composition of the region.

The six labor cities will be located in Al-Subbiya, Al-Salmi Road, North Al-Mutlaa, Kabd, South Sabah Al-Ahmad Residential City and the South Al-Khairan Residential City.

The Kuwait Municipality has been tasked with transferring the ownership of the land sites for these labor cities to the Ministry of Finance and the General Residential Care Corporation. This step is seen as crucial for transforming Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh into a model area and solving its issues, which include slums, eroded infrastructure, and encroachments on utilities.

Delayed

A recent government report highlighted that despite the availability of financial resources, the implementation of the labor cities plan has been delayed. The Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh area, which houses approximately 266,000 people over 8 square kilometers, has seen its problems worsen due to this delay.

Key recommendations to address the situation in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh include transferring the responsibility for the lands allocated for labor cities to the ministries of Finance and Housing; submitting a detailed report to the Council of Ministers on the procedures and timeline for land transfer; tasking the ministries of Finance and Housing with preparing plans and studies for the labor cities.

This is in addition to providing the Council of Ministers with a comprehensive report on the progress within two months; finding urgent solutions to demographic imbalances; enhancing security and traffic conditions, and addressing existing violations; developing the main and internal road networks, and modernizing infrastructure.

Utilizing previously acquired plots 19 and 20 for residential care; tightening security control in cooperation with the Ministry of Interior and other relevant authorities and organizing and urgently developing the infrastructure of the Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh area.

The government report also pointed out that the Expropriation Administration has been waiting for the reconstitution of the Jleeb Valuation Committee since 2022 to provide compensation for expropriated properties.

Authorities have renewed their warnings against the area becoming an unregulated settlement with deteriorating infrastructure. The Ministry of Housing is coordinating with Chinese counterparts to establish labor cities in Subbiya and South Jahra. The Ministry of Public Works is also preparing tenders to improve the infrastructure in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh.

The Council of Ministers' focus on these recommendations and the expedited establishment of labor cities reflect a strategic approach to resolving the deep-seated issues in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh and improving the living conditions in the region.



A makeshift market in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh serving people of all nationalities.



File photo of men working on rainwater network.

Al-Jarida photo

Rainwater sewer networks project

CAPT okays several extensions and amendments to contracts

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 5: The Central Agency for Public Tenders has approved several extensions and amendments to contracts related to the maintenance of rainwater sewer networks across various governorates in Kuwait, reports Al-Jarida daily.

In the Capital and Hawalli governorates CAPT has approved the first extension of the tender contract for imaging and general maintenance of the rain sewer network for an additional 365 days, with a total value of KD 1 million.

In Farwaniya and Jahra governorates the first extension of the contract was approved for an additional period, valued at 750,000 dinars.

In the Al-Ahmedi and Mubarak Al-Kabeer governorates the agency approved

an extension order for the tender, extending it from 180 to 365 days, with a value of 750,000 dinars.

The sanitary sewage network for the first extension of time for the tender related to the maintenance and construction of the sanitary sewage network in the Capital governorate was granted for 365 days, with a contract value of 434,000 dinars.

These extensions are part of the efforts of the Ministry of Public Works to conduct comprehensive imaging and maintenance of the rain sewer networks in preparation for the rainy season.

The work involves using specialized devices to examine and rehabilitate the networks. The Ministry's engineers oversee these operations and report on the maintenance progress.

MoE details teacher placement by district for '24/'25

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 5: The Ministry of Education has issued a decision regarding the work places of new Kuwaiti teachers for academic year 2024/2025. Science teachers for all academic levels who are residing in Hawally, Capital and Jahra will be appointed in schools under the Hawally Educational Districts; while those residing in Mubarak Al-Kabeer, Farwaniya and Ahmedi will be assigned in schools under Mubarak Al-Kabeer Educational District.

Philosophy teachers for the secondary stage will be appointed in the Capital Educational District schools if they are residing in the Capital or Hawally, in Ahmedi Educational District schools if they are residing in Ahmedi or Mubarak Al-Kabeer, and in Farwaniya Educational District schools if they are residing in Farwaniya or Jahra.

Decoration teachers for the intermediate stage will be appointed in Jahra Educational District schools if they are residing in Jahra or Farwaniya, and in schools in their respective residential areas if they are residing in the Capital or Mubarak Al-Kabeer.

Electricity teachers for the intermediate stage will be appointed in the Capital Educational District schools if they are residing in the Capital, Farwaniya or Jahra; and in Ahmedi Educational District schools if they are residing in Ahmedi, Hawally or Mubarak Al-Kabeer.

Kindergarten teachers will be appointed in Jahra Educational District schools if they are residing in Jahra or Farwaniya; and in schools in their respective residential areas if they are residing in the Capital, Hawally, Mubarak Al-Kabeer or Ahmedi.

Islamic Studies teachers in all educational levels will be appointed in the Capital Educational District schools if they are residing in the Capital or Farwaniya; in Hawally Educational District schools if they are residing in Hawally, Mubarak Al-Kabeer or Ahmedi; and in schools in their respective residential areas if they are residing in Jahra.

Teachers residing in Ali Sabah Al-Salem suburb, Sabah Al-Ahmad City, Khairan and Wafra are exempted from this decision; provided they start working in these areas.

In a related development, the ministry issued a decision on the schedule of work, exams and holidays for the adult education and literacy centers. Work in administrative supervision and adult education departments will start on Sept 8, and the supervisors will start working on Sept 16.

The enrollment period will be from Sept 16 to Oct 13; while June 12, 2025 will be the last day of work for supervisors and administrative supervision departments in all centers; except the directors, assistant directors and employees in charge of the students' record system.

Other Voices

The source that spread corruption

By Ahmed alsarraf

The citizen suffers, the Ministry of Social Affairs suffers, and the state as a whole suffers from the situation of cooperative societies.

Keeping the situation as it is not in the interest of any party, other than the corrupt people who benefit from the current situation. In our opinion, the government decision-maker has one of two solutions:

The first: Privatizing the entire association project, including the land, buildings, and assets, and selling the entire project, for each residential area, to a joint-stock company, in which the people of the area, for example, will own 50 percent of its shares, 10 percent to the Kuwait Investment Authority, and 40 percent to the professional entity specialized in managing central markets.

Compensating the government with a fair amount for the land and buildings, and distributing the value of the association's assets to the residents of the region in a fair proportion. There are of course many other scenarios.

Second: Keeping the current situation as it is, in accordance with the following conditions and amendments, and this means implementing the law establishing cooperative societies itself, after its reformulation:

■ Separating the dominance of the association's board of directors over the central market. The role of the Council is limited to selecting the managing company, contracting with it, and setting conditions and controls for monitoring its work, according to the schedule of conditions prepared by the Ministry of Social Affairs, provided that the Council's oversight is within the narrowest limits.

■ Keeping all other matters in the hands of the board of directors, such as the administrative and financial affairs of the rest of the association's facilities, the right to rent or invest stores and branches outside the central market, and so on, while setting controls for these matters to prevent abuse in rent, through a clear bidding system.

■ The management of the central market will be in accordance with specific conditions in a booklet, a copy of which the Ministry has from the days of Minister Al-Sabeeh. Obligated



alsarraf

ing the specialized company that will manage the central market to comply with the following requirements and conditions -- preventing the request for free goods; settlement of the merchant or supplier's dues within a period of three months; preventing discounts; follow advanced and smart storage methods for preservation; follow proper preservation and storage methods to prevent damage to the goods and increase the burden on the supplier.

This is in addition to leaving the determination of commodity prices in the market to the managing company; changing the places where goods are displayed on the shelves on a monthly basis, and preventing monopoly in any way over the place where goods are displayed, even with a fee; refusal to place advertisements for candidates for the association's board of directors on or inside the association's doors. It is sufficient to display the biography of each candidate on a special board showing the biography of each candidate and preventing the addition of purchases by "non-members of the association" to the account of any of the members of the board of directors, the association's management, or the owners of the managing company. Rather, sales are recorded on a special number that belongs to the association's charitable work.

Add to this not allowing any party to place religious or partisan posters, or request the collection of donations at the entrances and exits of associations; increasing the penalty for violating board of directors members who are referred to the prosecution; the candidate for the Assembly Council elections must submit a statement to an integrity body, showing his assets, like any member of any financial body, along with a certificate of good conduct; determine the geography of each association on the map.

Other necessities include obligating the association's board of directors to supervise the cleanliness of its area and beaches, if any; preventing associations from carrying out any political activity or work; adopting online sales and free delivery within the association's geography.

The private retail companies that will manage the association's central market are not permitted to manage the markets of more than 10 associations, to create fair competition between the managing companies and provide the best services and prices to the people of the region and shoppers.



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HH Crown Prince's vision for regional and global relations

"AT TEN o'clock in the morning on Monday, July 29, I had the honor of meeting His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Hamad Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah. The session rekindled the familiar camaraderie that binds members of the Kuwaiti diplomatic community. We were colleagues in the profession, as they say, and His Highness exemplified the elegance and high values of etiquette, showing respect for status," columnist, former permanent envoy of the State of Kuwait to the United Nations (UN), and former Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) secretary general **Abdullah Bishara** wrote for **Al-Qabas** daily.



Bishara

"I took the opportunity to renew my congratulations to him for the confidence shown by His Highness the Amir in selecting him as Crown Prince. This decision reflects not only the Amir's trust but also the overwhelming popular support he enjoys, a testament to his integrity, modesty, and competence. These qualities underpin the high hopes and allegiance the people of Kuwait have for him.

"During our meeting, we discussed the priorities and ambitions of Kuwaiti leadership. We focused on Kuwaiti-Gulf relations within the framework of the Gulf Cooperation Council, emphasizing increased coordination and the pursuit of interconnection mechanisms. A key project in this regard is the train linking Kuwait City and Riyadh. Kuwait is also preparing to host the upcoming GCC summit, aiming to enhance development, trade, and investment interconnections.

"We also talked about strengthening our network of interests with Iraq, particularly in diplomatic coordination and expanding economic and investment cooperation. This includes inviting the Iraqi Prime Minister to visit Kuwait and maintaining open communication with Iran while preserving bilateral and collective Arab interconnections through the Arab League.

"His Highness reaffirmed the Kuwaiti-Saudi harmony on regional issues through communication with Iraq and Iran, introducing optimism into the pragmatism of the new Iranian president and the realism of Iraqi trends. This approach emphasizes developmental aspects and commercial ties with strategic partners.

"During our meeting, I conveyed concerns about the current absence of a strong Kuwaiti presence in Washington, the lack of dialogue, and the surprise many Kuwaitis feel about the lack of bridges connecting our nations.

"Today's Kuwait does not seem to enjoy the same intimate diplomatic relations with the United States as in the past. I also shared my criticism of the United States' stance on Palestine during Kuwait's membership in the Security Council.

"In response, His Highness informed me that he would be representing Kuwait at the United Nations in the upcoming session. He plans to maintain continuous communication with the American embassy to arrange a meeting with the US president or his representative.

"Following this, he will spend a few days in Washington to meet senior officials, visit think tanks and analytical centers, and engage with communication networks. I suggested he deliver a speech at the Press Club, which includes major American, European, and Arab networks, to which he showed great interest.

"He also expressed a strong desire to meet members of the Senate and House of Representatives. His Highness emphasized the importance of intensifying trade and economic relations in all areas, highlighting the comprehensive partnership with the United States.

"He noted that this partnership is crucial for Kuwait to fulfill its communication duties and called for more visits from commercial delegations and civil society organizations to help shape American public opinion about Kuwait.

"He referred to the Kuwaiti-British Friendship Society, emphasizing the need to strengthen its presence. Founded in 1993 with support from the Amir Diwan, the society aims to foster closer ties between Kuwait and Britain. His Highness hopes to replicate this intimacy with the United States by intensifying exchanges of consultations and visits.

"Through our dialogue, it became evident that His Highness has outlined a comprehensive plan for future activities to enhance relations with the United States, ensuring that the Kuwaiti voice reaches across most American cities. I hope His Highness's program will successfully establish and sustain the platforms necessary for these relations to flourish.

"I express my gratitude to His Highness the Crown Prince for the time he dedicated to our conversation, attentively listening to my concerns and aspirations reflective of the Kuwaiti people. His Highness is now infused with a vigorous energy aimed at fulfilling the requirements of the strategic partnership, working tirelessly to secure stability and calm in the region.

"This is to be achieved through sincere understanding among regional countries, relying on a collective conviction to preserve the strategic uniqueness of the region. This uniqueness is linked to the realities of the region and the importance of maintaining its stability, allowing it to continue its role as a critical source of energy, ensuring safety for all inhabitants of Earth.

"The truth is, the region has suffered and faced disasters due to leaders driven by criminal and destructive ambitions. These leaders, employing force against perceived easy prey and appeasing their opponents with concessions, brought great harm. A prime example of this is Saddam Hussein's occupation of Kuwait.

"From this painful incident, those

committed to the stability of this unique region have grown more certain of the necessity to eliminate such destructive rulers. The removal of the Baghdad rulers was seen as essential for regional and global reassurance. This conviction is based on the principle of removing saboteurs of the global order by force, a principle that gained global consensus, as evidenced by a resolution passed by the Security Council.

"I recall the international turbulence that ensued following the decision of some Arab countries to ban oil exports to the United States during the October 1973 War. This move led to the convening of a special session of the United Nations General Assembly, requested by several countries to mitigate the escalating tension, particularly in major capitals.

"The deliberations of that session were dominated by tension, and amidst efforts to reduce it, a new discourse emerged. This discourse questioned the extent of the rights of oil-producing countries and whether they had the authority to halt the export of such a critical global commodity.

"This intellectual debate extended to discussions on dismantling the so-called 'power of scarcity,' which referred to the bargaining power provided by energy sources, and whether producing countries had the right to restrict exports and potentially drag the world into perilous confrontations.

"All of that has faded away. When His Highness the Crown Prince heads to Washington, he carries with him the sincerity of partnership, the continuity of its essence, and the affirmation of its intimacy. He is accompanied by the heartfelt prayers of Kuwaitis and others, wishing him success in achieving his goals, which are deeply valued by the people of Kuwait."

Also:

"There is no need to go back to the details of Netanyahu's speech in Congress, as it is available to anyone who wants to know what the human soul has become in terms of deterioration in the simplest levels of humanity and the lowest levels of credibility," columnist **Suad Fahd Al-Moajel** wrote for **Al-Qabas** daily.

"The recent speech raised profound questions about the nature of good and evil in the human soul, particularly in the context of the ongoing tragedy in Gaza. For more than ten months, Gaza has suffered from killing, starvation, displacement, and bloodshed, all while the world remains silent and seemingly powerless to even save or feed a hungry child.

"This situation has led many to question whether evil has triumphed in its eternal battle with good. Prime Minister Netanyahu's speech framed the conflict as one between good and evil, light and darkness, and civilization versus savagery, echoing similar rhetoric from the post-September 11 era, which starkly divided the world into camps of civilized good and barbaric evil.

"The surreal scene in the Congress Hall during Netanyahu's speech exposed numerous flaws, especially given the ongoing genocide in Gaza. It highlighted the impotence of human rights institutions, bodies for the protection of civilians, war relief agencies, and organizations aiding the displaced.

"These entities, which should champion human rights and fight evil, were reduced to mere theatrical slogans in Netanyahu's performance, supported by representatives of organizations ostensibly defending humanity and promoting goodness.

"The narrative of human rights, protection of civilians in war, and refugee relief is undermined by the reality of Gaza. The verbal proclamations about not harming civilians, respecting prisoners' rights, and refraining from destroying homes are revealed as hollow when faced with the daily violations occurring there.

"In a poignant video clip, a young Egyptian man expresses his sorrow and frustration, wondering how he will explain to his daughter, Laila, why evil seems to triumph over good in Gaza. He questions the role of people, systems, and faiths in addressing such a painful situation.

"The video underscores the greatest challenge facing the new generation: the confusion of good and evil and the loss of humanity that neutrality in such situations breeds.

"The speaker warns that losing humanity poses a future threat to national security, as a generation that grows up indifferent to the suffering of martyrs, starving children, displaced families, and destroyed homes will eventually accept similar violations against themselves or others, rendering them incapable of defending their national security.

"The conflict between good and evil is an enduring topic for both philosophers and the general public. Historically, the strong often prevail, not those who are right, and the victories of good are often fleeting.

"Netanyahu's use of the good-versus-evil thesis in his speech, drawing on the ideology of a clash of civilizations, was intended to justify his actions against the Palestinian resistance.

"However, a glimmer of truth pierced the darkness of this scene in the form of the courageous boycott by some members of Congress and the masses outside, waving flags and banners of truth.

"Unfortunately, this support was lacking in Arab countries, where cries for truth and justice should have been louder in defense of their people and in the fight against evil.

"Despite the grim reality, the ongoing struggle in Gaza highlights the need for clarity and action. It calls for a renewed commitment to human rights and a concerted effort to distinguish and champion the cause of good in a world where the lines between good and evil are often blurred."

— Compiled by PFX Fernandes



MoI photo

Tobacco products seized from the warehouse.

Warehouse in Al-Siddiq area shut

MoCI seizes 75,000 pouches of banned chewing tobacco

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

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 5: The Ministry of Commerce and Industry has announced the seizure of 75,000 pouches of banned chewing tobacco from a warehouse in Al-Siddiq.

This operation was conducted by the

Commercial Control Department's Al-Siddiq Emergency Teams in the Capital Governorate.

The warehouse was closed, and the owner was issued a violation notice for dealing in prohibited materials. Legal proceedings are underway against those responsible for the sale of these restricted tobacco products.

Appeals Court reinstates disabled status, benefits for female citizen

Aug 13 set to hear case of 4 accused of selling exam papers

By **Jaber Al-Hamoud**

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff and Agencies

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 5: The Court of Appeals canceled the decision of the Public Authority for Disabled Affairs (PADA) to exclude a female citizen from the disabled list, and then ruled in her favor to include her name, along with the issuance of a 'permanent mild disability' certificate and disbursement of her financial benefits.

Attorney **Zaid Al-Khabbaz** -- who appeared in court on behalf of the citizen -- requested for cancellation of the contested decision with all the consequences, inclusion of his client to the beneficiaries of the Rights of the Disabled Law, and to grant her a certificate proving her disability.

He confirmed that his client suffers from a motor disability. He pointed out that after presenting her case to the concerned committee at PADA, the latter decided that her condition is not considered a disability. He added a petition against the decision was filed; but the decision of the committee was upheld, so the lawsuit was filed.

Exam leak paper case set for Aug 13: The Criminal Court has set the session of August 13 for the trial of four individuals - a Kuwaiti man, a Kuwaiti woman, a Kuwaiti employee of the Ministry of Education, and an Egyptian - who are accused of selling high school question papers to students via social media.

The detention renewal judge today decided to release the Kuwaiti employee of the Ministry of Education and the Egyptian on bail worth KD 500 each.

It is worth highlighting that the first two defendants - the Kuwaiti man and Kuwaiti woman respectively - were previously released on bail.

Role of new Justice Palace highlighted: Minister of Justice, Awqaf and Islamic Affairs **Dr. Mohammad Al-Wasmi** has affirmed that the new Justice Palace is a civilized edifice for the State of Kuwait; representing its honor and interest in ensuring justice for all, while expressing his appreciation and gratitude to all those responsible for completing the operational work of the building as quickly as possible to better serve the citizens and expatriates.

Al-Wasmi made the statement when he visited the new Justice Palace building recently, along with Chairman of the Supreme Judicial Council and President of the Court of Cassation Judge **Adel Bouresli**, acting Undersecretary of the Ministry of Justice **Tariq Al-Asfour**, acting Assistant Undersecretary for Court Affairs **Abdullah Al-Nuaim**, and the directors of the Security and Safety Department and the Court Services Department.

On the other hand, Al-Wasmi announced the launching of the 'Inquiry about the Status of the Judicial Paper Announcement' service on 'Sahel' -- the unified platform for government e-services.

In a press statement issued by the ministry on Monday, Al-Wasmi revealed the service is provided by the Enforcement General Department for the plaintiff to inquire about the status of the announcement of the judicial paper (new - announced - returned) after selecting his case from the list.

The statement added that a notification containing the automated number of the case, type of case, required announcement, date of announcement if any, and status of the announcement will be sent to the plaintiff.

MoE to tackle violations near schools: The Ministry of Education, led by Acting Assistant Undersecretary for Public Education **Mansour Al-Dhafiri**, has instructed directors-general of educational districts and the director of the Religious Education Department to identify and list encroachments and violations adjacent to school buildings, reports **Al-Seyassah** daily.

This initiative aims to address safety concerns by coordinating with the Kuwait Municipality for the removal of these issues in compliance with existing regulations.

In a memo, copy of which has been obtained by **Al-Seyassah**, Al-Dhafiri emphasized the importance of promptly addressing these violations to ensure the safety of students, teachers, and administrative staff.

Meanwhile, Assistant Undersecretary for Educational Facilities and Planning, **Mohammed Al-Khalidi**, has urged all educational districts to collaborate in identifying and preparing for the removal of these encroachments.

Man acquitted of premeditated murder: The Criminal Court, headed by Counselor **Nasser Al-Badr**, acquitted a man of the premeditated murder of his friend in **Saad Al-Abdullah**, reports **Al-Rai** daily.

Attorney **Hussein Al-Khashawi**, the defendant's lawyer, questioned the pieces of evidence presented by the plaintiff. He argued that the elements of the crime attributed to the defendant were fabricated and the case documents did not present any incriminating evidence.

Case files indicate that the Public Prosecution charged the defendant with premeditated murder, as he allegedly planned to kill the victim by equipping himself with a lethal tool (knife). He supposedly asked the victim to accompany him to the toilet with the intention of "relieving himself", but he stabbed the victim who sustained serious injuries, leading to death as described in the forensic and investigation reports.

GTD handles 1,337 accidents

Over 58,000 traffic citations issued in a week: Al-Khadda

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 5: The Traffic and Operations Sector in the Ministry of Interior, under the supervision of Assistant Undersecretary for Traffic and Operations Affairs Major General **Yusef Al-Khadda**, continued the security and traffic campaigns to control the traffic and security situation on external and internal roads in all governorates, reports **Al-Jarida** daily.

In a press statement, Head of the Public Relations and Awareness Unit at GTD Lieutenant Colonel **Abdullah Bu Hassan** disclosed that "patrol officers at the traffic departments in the six governorates, along with that of the Traffic Operations and Traffic Investigation departments, carried out a number of traffic security campaigns last week that resulted in the issuance of 47,048 citations for various violations; arrest of 66 minors for driving without a license; and impounding of 85 vehicles and 32 motorcycles."

Bu Hassan said the patrol officers at GTD dealt with 1,337 cases last week -- 1,117 traffic accidents and 220 other accidents and injuries. He added the GTD patrol officers and the emergency police handled 4,426 reports within the same period.

He said the GTD patrol officers referred 29 individuals wanted by law to the concerned authorities; indicating these individuals were reported for absconding, violation of the Residency Law and for committing different crimes. He revealed the officers impounded 67 vehicles wanted by security and judicial authorities, dealt with 10 drugs and alcohol cases, arrested five persons for failure to present valid identification documents, and one individual in an abnormal condition.



Al-Khadda



Al-Anba photo

MoCI employee in one of the garages.

15 violations cited in shops, markets, garages in Ahmadi

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 5: The Ahmadi Emergency Team from the Commercial Control and Consumer Protection Sector at the Ministry of Commerce and Industry recently conducted an inspection tour in the Ahmadi Governorate. This tour targeted various shops, central markets, and car repair garages, reports **Al-Anba** daily.

During the inspection, the team identified and documented 15 violations. These violations pertained to breaches of the laws and regulations set forth by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

Stalker of lawyer gets 3-months jail

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

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 5: A Kuwaiti citizen was sentenced to three-month imprisonment and his mobile phone was confiscated after the court convicted him of stalking the plaintiff Lawyer **Nour Al-Naqeeb**.

In the case file, Lawyer **Al-Naqeeb** revealed that the defendant, who is her colleague at work, violated religious, moral, and legal principles by stalking and threatening her after she rejected his advances.

She reported that he sent threats and insults to her via WhatsApp and Snapchat messages, persistently harassed her at the workplace, and used offensive language and explicit threats in emails sent to her work email address. These communications also included attacks on her honor and threats towards her family members.

Evidence confirmed the defendant's admission to using the phone number from which the messages were sent. Investigations by detectives revealed his involvement in the crime.

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Ministry of Education speeds up preparation for new school year

Renovations and new openings in full swing

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

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 5: The Ministry of Education is expediting steps towards ensuring readiness for the next academic year, while

the principals of schools or their representatives will start working with a member of the administrative or educational body on Aug 11.

Educational sources confirmed that the work team in each school will address the needs of their schools



Aljarida photo
Ahmadi Governorate, Sheikh Hamoud Al-Jaber with the UN's Representative and Resident Coordinator to Kuwait, Ambassador Ghada Al-Taher, and the head of the office, Nasser Al-Shatti.

Humanitarian impact lauded

Governor of Ahmadi reaffirms global aid efforts commitment

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 5: Ahmadi Governor Sheikh Hamoud Jaber Al-Ahmad emphasized Kuwait's role as an active and distinguished partner in United Nations development projects, particularly those focused on humanitarian efforts in countries experiencing natural disasters or urgent need for support, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

During a meeting at his office in the General Diwan of Ahmadi Governorate, Sheikh Hamoud Al-Jaber met with the United Nations Secretary-General's Representative and Resident Coordinator to Kuwait, Ambassador Ghada Al-Taher, and the head of the

office, Nasser Al-Shatti.

They congratulated him on earning the confidence of the political leadership and wished him success in his duties to serve the country under the wise leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled.

The Governor praised the United Nations' role in providing advice, visions, and strengthening international relations in various areas that benefit people. He expressed hope for the continuation of this cooperation in the future.

and follow up the equipment with other sectors of the ministry; including the engineering departments in educational districts that are in charge of school maintenance, air conditioning, electricity, bathrooms, drinking fountains and floors.

Meanwhile, the Educational Facilities Sector has renovated schools that were closed for years. Four of these schools are under the Capital Educational District — two elementary schools (one for boys and one for girls) and two kindergartens in Jaber Al-Ahmad City. The other school is located in Saad Al-Abdullah City and it is affiliated with the Jahra Educational District. These are among the new schools that will open next year.

In a related development, sources confirmed that the ministry is preparing to open seven new schools in Mutlaa; indicating these schools are affiliated with Jahra Educational District, including two elementary schools — one for boys and one for girls, two high schools (boys and girls), two middle schools (boys and girls) and a kindergarten.

This is in addition to four schools in Ahmadi Educational District — one kindergarten each in Wafra and Sabah Al-Ahmad residential area and two middle schools (boys and girls) in Wafra; as well as three schools in Farwaniya Educational District — two intermediate schools (boys and girls) in Sabah Al-Nasser and a secondary school for boys in West Abdullah Al-Mubarak. The educational districts will provide the administrative and academic staff, technical equipment and furniture in preparation for the start of academic year 2024/2025, sources disclosed.



Sheikh Ahmed Meshaal Al-Ahmad welcomed by Minister of Health Dr. Ahmed Al-Awadhi, Assistant Undersecretary Eng. Mohammed Al-Anzi, and a team of engineers overseeing the project.



Sheikh Al-Meshaal being briefed on the hospital's components and operational mechanisms.



Visit reaffirms commitment to high standards

Government Performance Follow-up Agency evaluates new maternity hospital's progress

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 5: Sheikh Ahmed Meshaal Al-Ahmad, Chairman of the Government Performance Follow-up Agency, recently inspected the new maternity hospital, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

He was welcomed by Minister of Health Dr. Ahmed Al-Awadhi, Assistant Undersecretary for the Construction Projects Sector at the Ministry of Public Works Eng. Mohammed Al-Anzi, and a team of engineers overseeing the project. During the visit, Sheikh Al-Me-

shaal was briefed on the hospital's components and operational mechanisms through a visual presentation from the project team. He emphasized the project's significance as part of Kuwait's broader vision for health sector development and assured that the agency is prepared to address any challenges that may arise.

The visit is part of the Government Performance Follow-up Agency's ongoing efforts to monitor and ensure the successful execution of government projects.

Other Voices

A boiling region

By **Nasser Al-Hajeri**

The Middle East is once again at a critical juncture, with escalating tensions in Palestine, Iran, and Lebanon. The intricate web of historical grievances, geopolitical rivalries, and domestic pressures necessitates a renewed focus on de-escalation and effective mediation to avert further conflict and promote stability.

In Palestine, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has reached another flashpoint, marked by frequent clashes and civilian casualties. The recent violence has drawn international condemnation and calls for restraint. The humanitarian situation, particularly in Gaza, remains dire, with widespread destruction and a severe lack of basic necessities. Efforts by Egypt and Qatar to broker ceasefires have provided temporary relief, but the absence of a comprehensive peace agreement continues to fuel periodic escalations. The international community, led by the United Nations and the United States, must push for renewed negotiations addressing key issues like settlements, borders, and the status of Jerusalem. A two-state solution, though fraught with challenges, remains the most viable path to lasting peace.

Iran's nuclear ambitions and its support for proxy groups across the region, including Hezbollah in Lebanon and various factions in Syria and Yemen, add another layer of complexity. The U.S. withdrawal from the 2015 nuclear deal (JCPOA) and subsequent sanctions have exacerbated tensions. However, the recent resumption of indirect talks between the U.S. and Iran offers a glimmer of hope. The European Union's role as a mediator is crucial in these discussions. Confidence-building measures, such as partial sanctions relief in exchange for Iran limiting its nuclear activities, could pave the way for a broader rapprochement. Ensuring compliance with international norms and fostering regional dialogue are essential to reduce the risk of military confrontations.

Lebanon's situation is particularly dire, with the country grappling with an economic collapse, political paralysis, and social instability. Hezbollah's significant influence, backed by Iran, complicates the domestic and regional landscape. The recent skirmishes along the Israeli-Lebanese border have heightened fears of a wider conflict. International efforts, led by France and the United States, have emphasized the need for Lebanese political reforms and economic stabilization. Supporting Lebanon's state institutions and reducing the military influence of non-state actors like Hezbollah are critical for long-term stability. Mediation efforts must prioritize economic aid and political dialogue to rebuild trust among Lebanon's fragmented political factions.

To effectively de-escalate tensions in the Middle East, a multifaceted approach is required. Engaging regional powers in sustained dialogue, leveraging international diplomatic channels, and addressing socio-economic grievances are key. Confidence-building measures, such as humanitarian aid and economic incentives, can foster goodwill and reduce hostilities. The involvement of neutral mediators, like Norway or Switzerland, could offer fresh perspectives and innovative solutions.

Sustainable peace in the Middle East hinges on a collective commitment to dialogue, respect for international law, and addressing the root causes of conflict. While challenges abound, persistent and coordinated mediation efforts provide the best hope for a more stable and prosperous region.

Call for change

Council pushes for restroom upgrade

By **Inaas Awadh**

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 5: Municipal Council member Fahd Al-Abduljader has submitted a proposal to transfer the management and maintenance of the municipality's public restrooms to the Public Utilities Company.

In his proposal, Al-Abduljader emphasized that providing and maintaining public restrooms is essential for the comfort of citizens and residents.

He cited Article 3 of the Municipality Law, which mandates the provision of municipal services to residents. He highlighted that maintaining clean and well-kept public restrooms is a reflection of the country's civility.

Al-Abduljader pointed out that the Project Development Department in the municipality conducted a study on the development and operation of public restrooms. The study revealed that 90 percent of the restrooms are abandoned and closed for maintenance, making them difficult to access and unsuitable, particularly for people with special needs.

The study recommended reevaluating the locations and number of public restrooms in Kuwait, noting that there are currently 41 toilets after field inspections.

MEW anticipates gradual decrease in temperatures

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 5: The Ministry of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy in Kuwait is nearing the end of a challenging summer season marked by high electricity and water consumption, reports Al-Jarida daily.

The Ministry is preparing to lower its alert level as the summer season approaches its end. The peak electrical load recorded on July 13 was 17,360 megawatts, the highest for this summer.

With only about 10 days left in the summer season, the Ministry expects temperatures to gradually decrease.

According to meteorological reports, there will be no severe heat waves in the coming days. If the peak load remains stable at 17,360 megawatts, the annual increase compared to last summer's peak load of 16,940 megawatts will be about 2.5 percent, lower than the expected increase of 4.5 percent to 5 percent.

The lower-than-expected increase rate is attributed to the Ministry's effective collection of financial dues and consumer cooperation in power conservation during peak times. The Ministry had anticipated that the load index might exceed 17,500 megawatts but has managed to keep it within a manageable range.



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Al-Mutairi presents papers on religious reform and citizenship

Kuwait addresses major issues in Islamic affairs at 9th conference

RIYADH, Aug 5, (KUNA): The 9th Conference of Ministers of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs in the Islamic World, hosted by Makkah Al-Mukarramah, will discuss a number of working papers submitted by Kuwait. These include topics related to renewing religious discourse and enhancing citizenship in Islamic countries, according to Dr. Bader Al-Mutairi, Undersecretary of the Kuwaiti Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs. Dr. Al-Mutairi made this statement to Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) on Sunday, as he led the Kuwaiti delegation participating in the conference organized by the Saudi Ministry of Islamic Affairs, Call, and Guidance. The conference features participation from ministers of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, muftis, and heads of Islamic councils and associations from over 60 countries.

Dr. Al-Mutairi explained that the conference will address several working papers submitted by Kuwait, such as "The Concept of Renewing Religious Discourse Between Reality and Hope," "Enhancing Citizenship in Islamic Countries and Its Impact on the Stability of Societies," and "Visions on Confronting Developments in Extremism, Fanaticism, and Terrorism."

He also noted that Kuwait participated in the 14th Executive Council meeting of the conference on Saturday. Additionally, Kuwait submitted several working papers related to mosque conditions and standards, a summary of the mosque charter, and a project to develop training courses for religious officials. One notable paper, submitted by the General Secretariat of Endowments, is titled "The Role of Endowments in Increasing the Gross Domestic Product in Islamic Countries."

The Kuwaiti delegation, led by Dr. Al-Mutairi, includes the Director of the Undersecretary's Office Department, the Director of the Legal Affairs Department, Muhammad Al-Tayyar, and the First Preaching and Imamate Director, Dr. Abdulsalam Al-Fulajawi, as well as the Minister's Office Supervisor, Salem Al-Omara.

The conference, themed "The Role of the Ministries of Islamic Affairs and Endowments in Promoting the Principles of Moderation and Consolidating the Values of Moderation," features discussions on the role of these ministries in promoting moderation and consolidating values in various working sessions.

The conference aims to enhance Islamic solidarity among member states, improve coordination and cooperation in advocacy, endowments, and Islamic affairs, and to coordinate positions on respecting mosques, preserving holy places, and supporting relations with Islamic organizations and institutions abroad to fulfill their Islamic missions.



KUNA photo
Undersecretary of the Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs, Dr. Bader Al-Mutairi, during his participation in the conference.

Shift allowances slashed for 479 municipality employees

By Inaas Awadh

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 5: The Director General of the Municipality issued an administrative decision to cut the shift allowance, shift bonus, and food allowance for 479 employees.

This move aims to address observations by supervisory authorities and amend the employees' conditions in accordance with the systems and regulations, ensuring compliance with eligibility conditions.

The administrative decision, a copy of which was obtained by Al-Seyassah, emphasized the necessity of transferring the affected employees to the morning work system.

The majority of the municipality employees mentioned in the decision work in the security and safety, emergency and public hygiene, the engineering audit, follow-up, and violation removal departments across the municipality branches in the six governorates.

This decision is part of the municipality's response to address the Audit Bureau's observations following an examination and review of the municipality's work for the past fiscal year regarding shift workers.

The additional

Continued from Page 1

The same Sheikh had also made a surprise visit to the Executive Council of the Emirate, and discovered that nine officials were not in their offices. He then ordered their immediate dismissal and a radical change in the way the Emirate was managed.

The intention here is not to impose strictness for the sake of being strict, but rather to demonstrate the ability to serve the people and ensure that employees fulfill their assigned tasks effectively. However, when an official is unable to do this, he cannot hold the negligent employees accountable. This is because he either "is part of the network of cronies" or "was appointed through connections", or some other excuse. Such an official will resort to this type of solution that indicates administrative failure, as his mission is not only to follow up, but also encourage his employees to produce.

In this regard, there is a story that applies to this army of officials we have - There was a diligent worker who consistently started early and worked actively every day. An official was surprised by the level of efficiency displayed by the worker in his work despite not being supervised. He then wondered how productive the worker would be if he was under supervision.

Subsequently, a supervisor was appointed for him, whose first task was to implement an attendance and departure system. Soon after, realizing the need for administrative support, they hired a secretary to handle the increased paperwork and reporting.

The official then concluded that there was a problem in performance, and he appointed an expert in administrative development, whose first decision was to appoint a personal assistant to help him develop plans and strategies.

When the official reviewed the operating cost, he realized that it had become higher than it was before, and he therefore sought the help of a management consultant and an internal auditor to find an appropriate solution.

After two months of study, a decision was made to dismiss the worker, ultimately leading to the company's downfall. The tale of the additional fingerprint requirement is no different from the story of the worker. We hope that someone will learn from this.

Mol gets

Continued from Page 1

However, these visitors had exceeded their legal stay period. This was discovered by the General Department of Residency Affairs Investigations' Department of Violators Follow-up, and other concerned authorities after following up these cases. Consequently, legal actions had been initiated in preparation for the deportation of the sponsors - the women - and the sponsored - their husbands and children - for failing to abide by the pledge that was signed when applying for the family visit visa and for violating the relevant conditions.

It stated that its decision was based on directives issued by His Excellency the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yusef Saud Al-Sabah.

24 arrested

Continued from Page 1

The artists were detained along with the event organizers, and the band whose musical instruments were

seized.

Following the intervention of Sri Lankan embassy officials, 24 of those detained were released, but two members of the organizing committee are still in police custody.

Huge rush

Continued from Page 1

and pressure on embassy staff.

Madani while showing appreciation for the decision, noted its positive impact on residents and community members who seek to bring their families to Kuwait. However, he acknowledged that the surge in transactions has overwhelmed the embassy's resources and staff capabilities.

To address this challenge, the embassy has reactivated its "registration platform" and increased appointment slots to manage the high volume of transactions more effectively. Despite these efforts, the increased demand has led to delays, with transactions taking one to two days to process.

Madani reassured that the embassy is committed to providing efficient service and urged patience from the community.

He emphasized the importance of adhering to Kuwaiti laws and maintaining a positive reputation, encouraging Syrians in Kuwait to continue being model residents and contribute positively to their host country.

KAC suspends

Continued from Page 1

It is assumed that the Bangladeshi PM is heading to West Bengal of India.

The development comes as death toll due to intense protests and subsequent clashes led to the killing of at least 300 people.

Bangladesh's prime minister resigned and fled the country Monday, after weeks of protests against a quota system for government jobs descended into violence and grew into a broader challenge to her 15-year rule. Thousands of demonstrators stormed her official residence and other buildings associated with her party and family.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's departure threatens to create even more instability in the nation on India's border already dealing with a series of crises, from high unemployment and corruption to climate change. Amid security concerns, the capital's main airport suspended operations.

After the embattled leader was seen on TV boarding a military helicopter with her sister, the country's military chief, Gen. Waqar-uz-Zaman, sought to reassure a jittery nation that order would be restored. He said he met with opposition politicians and civil society leaders and would seek the president's guidance on forming an interim government.

He promised that the military would launch an investigation into the deadly crackdown on student-led protests that fueled outrage against the government. He added that he ordered security forces not to fire on crowds.

"Keep faith in the military, we will investigate all the killings and punish the responsible," he said.

But even after he spoke, people continued to pour into and out of Hasina's official residence, taking furniture and pulling raw fish from the refrigerators.

Crowds also ransacked Hasina's family's ancestral home-turned-museum where her father was assassinated, as well as the house of the country's chief justice and Hasina's previous personal home in Dhaka, the capital.

They torched two major offices of the ruling party.

Elsewhere, protests were peaceful, and thousands gathered Monday evening outside the presidential palace, where the military chief, opposition politicians and the country's figurehead president met.

Hasina, meanwhile, landed in a city in India on the border with Bangladesh, according to a military official who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to release the information to the media. It was not clear where she would go next.

The protests began peacefully last

Kuwaiti civil

Continued from Page 1

Netanyahu said Israel was ready for any scenario. Jordan's foreign minister was making a rare trip to Iran as part of diplomatic efforts - "We want the escalation to end," Ayman Safadi said - while the Pentagon has moved significant assets to the region.

"We are doing everything possible to make sure that this situation does not boil over," White House deputy national security adviser Jon Finer told ABC.

In Israel, some prepared bomb shelters and recalled Iran's unprecedented direct military assault in April following a suspected Israeli strike that killed two Iranian generals. Israel said almost all the drones and ballistic and cruise missiles were intercepted.

A stabbing attack on Sunday near Tel Aviv killed a woman in her 70s and an 80-year-old man, according to Israel's Magen David Adom rescue service, and two others were wounded. The police said the attack was carried out by a Palestinian militant, who was "neutralized."

Inside Gaza, the Health Ministry said at least 25 people were killed and 19 others injured when Israel struck two schools in Gaza City. AP video showed at least one child among the dead. Israel's military, which regularly accuses Palestinian militants of sheltering in civilian areas, said it hit Hamas command centers.

"As you can see, there is no equipment to recover the injured. Rescuers are digging with their hands," said one man, Yusuf Al-Mashharawi.

Earlier, Israeli strikes killed at least 18 people. One hit a tent camp for thousands of displaced Palestinians in the courtyard of Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital, killing four people, including one woman, the Health Ministry said. The Israeli military said it targeted a Palestinian militant in the strike, which it said caused secondary explosions, "indicating the presence of weaponry in the area."

The hospital in Deir al-Balah is the main medical facility operating in central Gaza as many others in the territory no longer function. A separate strike on a home near Deir al-Balah killed a girl and her parents, according to the hospital.

Another strike flattened a house in northern Gaza, killing at least eight, including three children, their parents and their grandmother, according to the Health Ministry. Another three people were killed in a strike on a vehicle in Gaza City, according to Civil Defense first responders.

Palestinian militants in Gaza fired at least five projectiles at Israeli communities near the border without causing casualties or damage, the military said. The military later told people in some parts of the southern Gaza city of Khan Younis to evacuate.

The Health Ministry also said an Israeli strike on Saturday at a school-turned-shelter in Gaza City killed at least 16 people. Israel's military said it struck a Hamas command center.

Finance Ministry seals K-Net e-payment deal

Move aims to secure fee collection

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 5, (KUNA): The Kuwaiti Ministry of Finance signed a three-year contract for electronic payment services with the Joint Automated Banking Services Company (K-Net) on Monday. The contract aims to create a safe financial environment for collecting government service fees electronically.

Undersecretary of the Ministry of Finance, Aseel Al-Munifi, told Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) that the Ministry's role is to establish a financial legislative mechanism for collecting government fees safely and in accordance with accounting rules. This falls under the ministry's jurisdiction to prepare instructions and rules that regulate the recording of financial operations and the collection of revenues.

Al-Munifi added that the Ministry of Finance will provide electronic payment services to all government agencies through this contract with K-Net. This will link automated and electronic services of these agencies, facilitating matters for citizens and reviewers, and ensuring safe revenue collection and transfer to the public treasury.

She explained that this contract will convert services to electronic formats, speeding up the collection process and simplifying service completion. Previously, services were cash-based, then paper-based, and have now transitioned to electronic portals and point-of-sale systems via credit cards and the (e-Stamp) application.

Al-Munifi noted that the digitization of services and facilitation for citizens is in line with the directives of the Council of Ministers, which calls for secure links that meet all cybersecurity standards according to the general rules of the Cybersecurity Center in Kuwait.

Vision '35

Continued from Page 1

The overarching goal of 'Kuwait Vision 2035' is to position Kuwait among the top 35 percent of countries globally across 31 competitive indicators.

These include macroeconomic stability, labor market efficiency, electronic participation, perceptions of corruption, and transportation infrastructure.

The vision calls for a strategic shift in the government's role from operator to regulator and monitor, thereby empowering the private sector to drive economic operations.

This shift is particularly important given the numerous major economic projects planned, including the development of the northern region.

The success of Kuwait Vision 2035 hinges on several foundational elements such as the institutions operating within a constitutional framework, infrastructure development in line with international standards and strong government commitment.

Additionally, the vision is built on nine key pillars -- building an international special economic zone, implementing a comprehensive privatization program, strengthening the dynamic private sector and enhancing the capabilities of citizens and institutions.

This is in addition to developing an interconnected and transparent government, building cohesive infrastructure, creating environmentally harmonious living areas, promoting health and well-being for all and ensuring effective participation in the global community.

As Kuwait continues to implement its ambitious Vision 2035, these strategic projects and foundational elements are expected to drive significant economic growth and development, positioning the country favorably on the global stage.

Third fingerprint

Continued from Page 1

According to informed sources, the actual implementation of the circular commences on Monday, August 5, following the completion of data updates.

The first article of the circular affirms the importance of adhering to leave policies and prescribed grace periods. It mandates that employees must prove their attendance: arrival, departure, and presence at the workplace during official working hours using the fingerprint system.

The third article of the circular states that employees who fail to verify their presence using the fingerprint system during working hours will be consid-



Al-Seyassah photo
Dr. Ahmad Assad (center) during the inauguration of the first pediatric dental night clinic in Jahra.

Specialized night clinic for children dental emergencies opens in Jahra

By Marwa Al-Bahrawi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 5: The Ministry of Health has inaugurated Kuwait's first specialized night clinic for children's dental emergencies in the Jahra Governorate.

This clinic, which operates seven days a week from 9 pm to 7 am, was opened in the presence of Dr. Ahmad

Assad, the Assistant Undersecretary for Dental Affairs.

This new clinic is a pioneering initiative within the government sector, designed to address urgent dental issues for children outside of regular office hours.

It represents a significant advancement in providing specialized and timely care for pediatric dental emergencies in Kuwait.

She also mentioned that K-Net will provide modern devices and supplies needed by government agencies to complete these services. The company will also offer training for employees on electronic collection methods and problem-solving for issues that may arise.

Al-Munifi said that the Ministry of Finance has an Electronic Payment Team, consisting of accountants and IT specialists, which was established years ago. This team is responsible for holding regular sessions with K-Net and defining the financial and

legal frameworks for converting services from paper to electronic formats.

For his part, K-Net CEO Essam Al-Khashnam told KUNA that this contract focuses on electronic stamp systems and the government's method of collecting fees for services provided to reviewers, whether citizens or expatriates in Kuwait. Al-Khashnam added that the aim of the contract is to streamline, simplify, and ensure the safety and documentation of the payment process.

The sources explained that the ministry's fingerprint devices are fully capable of supporting the third fingerprint system. However, the ministry is awaiting an official circular from the Civil Service Commission (CSC) to clarify certain aspects related to the application of this system for some categories of employees, particularly those working shifts at stations and external sites.

Ministry of Public Works' employees currently use only two fingerprints - one for arrival and the other for departure, based on their designated working hours. They are awaiting further clarification from the Civil Service Commission regarding the implementation of the third fingerprint. Once clarified, the ministry will proceed accordingly.

The Ministry of Health is yet to implement the third fingerprint system in the ministry and its affiliated departments, as per the latest update.

The Public Authority for Food and Nutrition (PAFN) has started implementing the third fingerprint system as of yesterday based on directives from the Director General of PAFN Dr. Mishaal Al-Zoubi.

Educational institutions, including the Ministry of Education, are continuing operations smoothly without the implementation of the third fingerprint system. They are awaiting the issuance of an official circular to guide their compliance with this new requirement.

Director General of the Public Authority for the Disabled Affairs (PADA) Al-Humaidi Al-Mutairi revealed that a circular with necessary guidelines has been sent to all departments to declare the implementation of the third fingerprint system, and to urge all employees to comply with the new regulations.

Sources within the Ministry of Social Affairs have confirmed that the ministry has not yet implemented the third fingerprint system, citing the absence of an official decision or circular in this regard.

They revealed that no communication had been received from any government agency mandating the implementation, adding that it is expected that CSC would distribute the Civil Service Council's decision to all government entities.

The acting Undersecretary of the Ministry of Social Affairs Dr. Khaled Al-Ajmi affirmed the ministry's commitment to adhering to all directives of CSC without exception, insisting that the ministry will implement all decisions and circulars accordingly.

Dr. Al-Ajmi said instructions from the Minister of Social Affairs Dr. Amthal Al-Huwaila were explicit in emphasizing compliance with all decisions, including those related to the implementation of the third fingerprint system.

World News Roundup

Europe

28 officials sanctioned

'Army' of police to deal with riots: PM

LONDON, Aug 5, (AP) — British Prime Minister **Keir Starmer** said Monday that a "standing army" of specialist police would be set up to deal with rioting and that the justice system would be ramped up to deal with hundreds of arrests after violent disorder rocked cities across the nation over the past week.

Starmer convened an urgent meeting after lawlessness that he blamed on far-right activists and misinformation on social media that whipped up anger over a stabbing rampage at a dance class that left three girls dead and many more wounded. False rumors spread online that the suspect was a Muslim and an asylum-seeker led to attacks on immigrants and Muslims.

"Whatever the apparent motivation, this is not protest. It is pure violence and we will not tolerate attacks on mosques or our Muslim communities," Starmer said. "The full force of the law will be visited on all those who are identified as having taken part in these activities."

On Sunday, angry mobs attacked two hotels used to house asylum seekers, breaking windows and lighting fires before police dispersed the crowds and residents were evacuated. Dozens of police officers have been hospitalized

for injuries in the past six days after being struck with bricks, bottles and large wooden posts.

Oliver Coppard, the mayor of South Yorkshire, where one of the hotels was attacked, attributed the violence to "far-right thugs."

Vulnerable

"As Keir said, as every decent person has said, I think these are far-right thugs who attacked some of the most vulnerable people in our communities and there is absolutely no excuse," Coppard told the BBC. "There can never be any excuse for trying to burn to death 200 of the most vulnerable people in our community."

A Starmer spokesperson said no requests have been made to call in the army.

The Home Office, which is responsible for law and order, has offered mosques greater protection under a new "rapid response process" designed to quickly tackle the threat of further attacks on places of worship.

Starmer's spokesperson said after the meeting that social media companies have not done enough to prevent the spread of misinformation that has fueled far-right violence and vowed that anyone who stokes the disorder - online or on the streets - could face prison. Some of that false and misleading information has come from foreign states.

"The disinformation that we've seen online attracts amplification from known bot activity, which, as I say, can be linked to state-backed activity," the spokesperson said in a read-out of the meeting.

Starmer strongly condemned an attack Sunday on a hotel housing asylum seekers.

Justice

In a statement from 10 Downing Street on Sunday afternoon, the prime minister vowed that the authorities will "do whatever it takes to bring these thugs to justice" and that justice will be swift.

Starmer's statement came as more violence broke out across the country in the wake of a stabbing rampage at a dance class.

South Yorkshire Police, which is responsible for Rotherham, said at least 10 officers have been injured. "The behaviour we witnessed has been nothing short of disgusting. While it was a smaller number of those in attendance who chose to commit violence and destruction, those who simply stood on and watched remain absolutely complicit in this," said Assistant Chief Constable Lindsey Butterfield. "We have officers working hard, reviewing the considerable on-line imagery and footage of those involved, and they should expect us to be at their doors very soon."

Far-right agitators have sought to take advantage of last week's stabbing attack by tapping into concerns about the scale of immigration in the UK, in particular the tens of thousands of migrants arriving in small boats from France across the English Channel.

Tensions were also running high Sunday in the northeastern town of Middlesbrough, where some protesters broke free of a police guard. One group walked through a residential area smashing the windows of houses and cars. When asked by a resident why they were breaking windows, one man replied, "Because we're English." Hundreds of others squared up to police with shields at the town's cenotaph, throwing bricks, cans and pots at officers.

Hundreds of people have been arrested in connection with the disorder and many more are likely as police scour CCTV, social media and body-worn camera footage.

Also:

BRUSSELS: The European Union on Monday slapped sanctions on 28 officials accused of human rights violations in Belarus and links to the ongoing crackdown against opponents of authoritarian President **Alexander Lukashenko**.

In a move just ahead of the anniversary of the disputed 2020 elections that brought Lukashenko to power, the EU said it had frozen the assets of prosecutors and judges "who have issued politically motivated sentences." They were also banned from traveling in the 27-nation bloc.

Others targeted included senior officials at the Belarus interior ministry's department for combating organized crime and corruption as well as top officials at some of the country's prisons and alleged "regime propagandists" working in the media.

The EU said the ministerial department "is one of the main bodies responsible for political persecution in Belarus, including arbitrary and unlawful arrests and ill-treatment, including torture, of activists and members of civil society."

Last Thursday, two Belarusian journalists working for news outlets that the government has declared extremist were handed prison sentences in a closed-door trial, the latest in a persistent crackdown on dissent and independent journalism.

The repression began as huge protests broke out in response to the disputed Aug. 9, 2020 presidential election that gave Lukashenko a sixth term in office. The EU insists the poll was fraudulent.

More than 35,000 people have been arrested in the crackdown. Many prominent opposition figures have fled the country and others have been sentenced to long prison terms. The rights group Viasna says there are nearly 1,400 political prisoners currently in Belarus.



US Vice President Kamala Harris speaks during the American Federation of Teachers' 88th national convention on July 25 in Houston. Harris' campaign on Aug 4 was launching 'Republicans for Harris' as she looks to win over Republican voters put off by Donald Trump's candidacy. (AP)

Politics

Washington attorney gen, sheriff fight for gov's seat

VP campaign launches 'Republicans for Harris'

WASHINGTON, Aug 5, (AP) — US Vice President Kamala Harris' campaign on Sunday was launching "Republicans for Harris" as she looks to win over Republican voters put off by Donald Trump's candidacy.

The program will be a "campaign within a campaign," according to Harris' team, using well-known Republicans to activate their networks, with a particular emphasis on primary voters who backed former UN Ambassador Nikki Haley. The program will kick off with events this week in Arizona, North Carolina and Pennsylvania. Republicans backing Harris will also appear at rallies with the vice president and her soon-to-be-named running mate this coming week, the campaign said.

The Harris campaign shared the details of the program first with The Associated Press before the official announcement.

Her team is trying to create "a permission structure" for GOP voters who would otherwise have a difficult time voting for Harris. The effort will rely heavily on Republican-to-Republican voter contact, with the belief that the best way to get a Republican to vote for Harris is to hear directly from another Republican making the same choice.

Values

Trump's "extremism is toxic to the millions of Republicans who no longer believe the party of Donald Trump represents their values" and will vote against him again in November, said Harris' national director of Republican outreach, Austin Weatherford. He said the campaign would be "showing up and taking the time every single day to earn the vote of Republicans who believe in putting country over party and know that every American deserves a president who will protect their freedoms and a commander in chief who will put the best interests of the American people above their own."

Weatherford is a onetime chief of staff to former Rep Adam Kinzinger, R-Ill., who had endorsed the Biden-Harris ticket before President Joe Biden's disastrous debate performance against Trump. Kinzinger is backing Harris once more as part of the launch.

"As a proud conservative, I never thought I'd be endorsing a Democrat for President," he said in a statement. "But, I know Vice President Harris will defend our democracy and ensure Donald Trump never returns to the White House."

Kinzinger developed a national profile as one of two Republicans on the House committee that investigated the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the Capitol. The committee highlighted a number of Trump's transgressions before and during the deadly attack as Congress tried to certify the results of the 2020 election that Biden won over Trump.

Attempts

Trump has done little to try to win over moderate Republican voters and on Saturday criticized anew Republican Georgia Gov Brian Kemp, who rebuffed Trump's attempts to overturn the 2020 election in the battleground state.

Last month, when Biden was still at the top of the ticket, the campaign went out with an ad highlighting former Trump staffers' criticism of their onetime boss. A separate ad highlighted Trump's often-personal attacks against Haley, including his primary nickname of her as "birdbrain" and suggestion that "she's not presidential timber."

Hundreds of thousands of registered Republicans voted in primaries for Haley even after she ended her bid for the 2024 Republican nomination and as Trump trounced her in almost every contest.

Haley in May announced she would vote for Trump and appeared at last month's Republican National Convention. The Harris campaign's effort includes former Govs Bill Weld of Massachusetts and Christine Todd Whitman of New Jersey, former Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel, former Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood, and 16 former Republican members of Congress, including Kinzinger and Reps. Joe Walsh of Illinois and Susan Molinari of New York. All have been notable critics of Trump in the past.

Former Trump press secretary Stephanie Grisham is also endorsing

Harris.

Also:

SEATTLE: Washington state's long-time attorney general and a former sheriff known for his work hunting down the Green River Killer are vying to become the next governor of a Democratic stronghold that hasn't had an open race for the state's top job in more than a decade.

Democrat **Bob Ferguson**, who has served as attorney general since 2013, will face former US Rep **Dave Reichert** in Tuesday's primary election in a race that has featured weeks of intense sparring between the two frontrunners in a field of more than two dozen candidates.

Ferguson has framed Reichert, a Republican, as a two-faced candidate whose more moderate rhetoric during this campaign does not align with statements he has made in private or his actions in Congress. Meanwhile, Reichert has painted Ferguson as a candidate who wouldn't change anything about the state, while providing a continuation of "one-party rule."

In a state with a long reputation as solid Democratic territory that hasn't had a Republican governor in nearly 40 years, any conservative candidate faces an uphill battle. But polling shows Reichert not far behind Ferguson and the race is considered competitive.

Under Washington's primary system, the top two vote getters in each of Tuesday's races advance to the November election, regardless of party. Experts predict a Ferguson and Reichert matchup in November.

Military veteran Semi Bird also is a key figure in the race after being endorsed by the Washington State Republican Party. But he has become a polarizing figure amid accusations of mischaracterizing his military service, as well as a guilty plea to bank larceny in 1993 for putting his father's name and social security number on a credit application. Bird said he has not been convicted of a crime since then and regrets what he did.

Democrat **Mark Mullet**, a state senator from Issaquah, also has garnered attention as a moderate candidate who would bring the perspective of a small business owner.

Prosecutors earlier said that Doerman, who was taken into custody after he was found sitting on a stoop at the home, admitted to having planned the killings and chased down one of the boys in a field after the child tried to flee. Defense attorneys had argued that he was struggling with severe mental illness.



A driver negotiates a flooded street as Tropical Storm Debby passes just to the west of the Tampa Bay, Florida, region on Aug 4. Hurricane Debby has made landfall on Aug 5 in northern Florida as a Category 1 storm. (AP)

Laura Doerman, the children's mother and the ex-wife of the defendant, wept as a prosecutor read a statement in court from her saying her life had been "ripped away from me and destroyed." (AP)

Debby makes landfall in Fla.: Hurricane Debby reached the Big Bend coast of Florida early Monday, bringing with it the potential for record-setting rains, catastrophic flooding and life-threatening storm surge as it moves slowly across the northern part of the state before stalling over the coastal regions of Georgia and South Carolina.

The storm made landfall as a Category 1 storm near Steinatchee, a tiny community in northern Florida of less than 1,000 residents on Florida's Gulf Coast. It had maximum sustained winds of 80 mph (129 kph) and was moving northeast at 10 mph (17 kph), the National Hurricane Center in Miami said.

The storm made landfall in one of the least populated areas of Florida, but forecasters warned heavy rain could spawn catastrophic flooding in Florida, South Carolina and Georgia. Nearly 214,000 customers were without power in Florida on Monday morning, according to PowerOutage.com.

A tornado watch also was in effect for parts of Florida and Georgia on Monday. (AP)



Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy talks on the occasion of the Air Forces Day standing against the background of Ukraine's Air Force's F-16 fighter jets in an undisclosed location in Ukraine on Aug 4. The F-16 fighter jets that have been delivered to Ukraine by Western countries will be flying sorties in Ukrainian skies and helping the country's current fleet of Soviet-era jets to counter Russia's invasion. (AP)



Doerman



Tekulve

America

Child recovers after shooting self:

A 2-year-old child in suburban Detroit shot himself in his stomach while in the care of a babysitter who allegedly had unsecured guns at her home, police said.

Warren police said Saturday that officers were sent to the home around 6 pm about the injured toddler. The child was taken to a hospital where he was listed in stable condition.

The child was in the care of a 42-year-old babysitter who had two handguns, according to police. Warren police said in a statement that it was "believed that the babysitter left the handguns unsecured in an area accessible to the child."

"Investigators will be examining the details surrounding the safe and secure storage of the handgun as part of their investigation," police said. "As of this point in the investigation, it does not appear that more serious foul play was involved."

A state law took effect earlier this year that requires gun owners with a minor in the home to store firearms in locked storage containers. (AP)

Man gets life for killing sons: A man has been sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole in the shooting deaths of his three young sons at their Ohio home last year.

A Clermont County judge sentenced **Chad Doerman**, 33, on Friday to three consecutive life terms after he pleaded guilty to aggravated murder charges. He was also sentenced to another 16 years on two felonious assault charges for injuring his former wife and his stepdaughter.

Prosecutor **Mark Tekulve** had originally vowed to seek the death penalty in the June 15, 2023, murders of Clayton Doerman, 7, Hunter Doerman, 4, and Chase Doerman, 3, in Monroe Township, about 75 miles (120 kilometers) west of Columbus.

But on Friday he cited the trauma that the surviving family members "experienced that day and continue to experience on a daily basis."

"My job, as I saw it this week, was to relieve them of that additional agony," he told reporters Friday.

Lat/Am

Mexican journo killed

Many concerned over 'arrests' in Venezuela

CARACAS, Venezuela, Aug 5, (AP): Voices across the globe expressed concern Sunday over the growing number of arrests in Venezuela following last weekend's disputed elections.

Pope Francis said Venezuela is "living a critical situation" in his traditional Sunday remarks at the Vatican, adding, "I appeal to all parties to seek the truth, to avoid all kinds of violence."

The remarks came hours after Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro announced Saturday that the government has arrested 2,000 opponents. At a rally in the Venezuelan capital Caracas, Maduro pledged to detain more people and send them to prison.

US Deputy National Security Adviser **Jon Finer** told CBS program "Face the Nation" Sunday that the Biden administration is worried the arrests could spark wider unrest.



Finer

"We are concerned about the prospect of instability, should there continue to be these detentions," Finer said.

And in a statement, the leaders of several European countries including France, Spain, Germany and Italy said "the rights of all the Venezuelans, especially the political leaders, should be respected during this process. We strongly condemn any arrests or threats against them."

Authorities have declared President Nicolás Maduro the victor in last Sunday's election but have yet to produce voting tallies to prove he won. The opposition claims to have tally sheets showing it won.

Serious

An Associated Press analysis Friday of vote tally sheets released by the opposition coalition indicates that their candidate, Edmundo González, won significantly more votes than the government claimed, casting serious doubt on the official declaration that Maduro won.

Both González, a former diplomat, and opposition leader María Corina Machado - who was barred by the government from running - have gone into hiding, saying they fear they will be arrested or killed. Machado and his cadres have threatened to lock them both up.

The government arrested hundreds of opposition supporters who took to the streets in the days after the disputed poll.

Machado braved the threats to speak at a massive opposition rally Saturday in Caracas, but was whisked away afterwards on the back of a motorcycle.

"After six days of brutal repression, they thought they were going to silence us, intimidate or paralyze us," Machado told the rally. "The presence of every one of you here today represents the best of Venezuela."

A few hours later, Maduro again threatened to arrest González for not showing up at the electoral council meeting he had been summoned to. The council, like most parts of Venezuela's government, is completely controlled by Maduro.

Legal

"You face serious legal consequences for disobeying the Constitution, the courts and the law," Maduro said of González.

Maduro also vowed to continue to use a heavy hand against his opponents, saying 2,000 of them have been arrested already.

"This time there will be no pardon, this time there will be Tocarón," he said, referring to a notorious prison.

On Friday, masked assailants ransacked the opposition's headquarters on Friday, taking documents and vandalizing the space.

In his long, rambling speech, Maduro issued threats but also called for reconciliation and peace, claiming, "There is room in Venezuela for everyone," and calling it "the blessed land of opportunity."

Venezuela sits atop the world's largest proven crude oil reserves and once boasted Latin America's most advanced economy, but it entered into a free fall marked by 130,000% hyperinflation and widespread shortages after Maduro took the helm in 2013. More than 7.7 million Venezuelans have fled the country since 2014, the largest exodus in Latin America's recent history.

US oil sanctions have only deepened the misery, and the Biden administration - which had been easing those restrictions - is now likely to ramp them up again unless Maduro agrees to some sort of transition.

Late Friday, Venezuela's high court, the Supreme Justice Tribunal, ordered the Maduro-controlled National Electoral Council to hand over the precinct vote count sheets in three days. There have been calls from multiple governments, including Maduro's close regional allies, for Venezuela's electoral authorities to release the precinct-level tallies, as it has after previous elections.

The AP processed almost 24,000 images of tally sheets, representing the results from 79% of voting machines.

Also:

MEXICO CITY: A Mexican journalist who covered one of the country's most dangerous crime beats was killed by gunmen Sunday, and two of his government-assigned bodyguards were wounded, authorities said.

The web news page operated by reporter **Alejandro Martínez** confirmed his death. The page covered community news and crime in **Celaya**, the most dangerous city for police officers in **Mexico**.

The Celaya police department said Martínez was shot to death by assailants travelling in another vehicle. The department said the two bodyguards were being treated for their wounds, but did not say what their condition was.

The journalist had been assigned police protection after he reported receiving threats. Prosecutors in the north-central state of **Guanajuato** said they were investigating the killing.

Martínez covered a fatal car accident on a dangerous stretch of highway just hours before he was attacked. His wounded bodyguards drove him to a hospital, where he died.

Guanajuato has the highest number of homicides of any of Mexico's 32 states, largely due to a years-long turf war between the Jalisco drug cartel and the local Santa Rosa de Lima gang. A total of 18 Celaya police officers have been shot to death so far this year in the city of a half million inhabitants. Drug gangs are suspected in most of those killings.

Media workers are regularly targeted in Mexico, often in direct reprisal for their work covering topics like corruption and the country's notoriously violent drug traffickers.



In this aerial photo released by Xinhua News Agency, the impact of flash floods and mudslides can be seen near Ridi Village, Kangding City, Garze Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in southwestern China's Sichuan Province on Aug 4. Inset: Rescuers waded through floodwater to the disaster site of Ridi Village in Kangding City, Garze Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, southwest China's Sichuan Province. (AP/Xinhua)

Torrential rains claim more than 150 lives in China in past 2 months

Landslides and flooding have killed more than 150 people around China in the past two months as torrential rainstorms batter the region.

In the latest disaster, a flood and mudslide in a mountainous Tibetan area in Sichuan province on Saturday left eight people dead with 19 others still unaccounted for, state media said.

The early morning disaster destroyed homes and killed at least six people in the village of Ridi, the official Xinhua News Agency said. Two more peo-

ple died and eight are missing there after a bridge between two tunnels collapsed and four vehicles plummeted.

China is in the middle of its peak flood season, which runs from mid-July to mid-August, and Chinese policymakers have repeatedly warned that the government needs to step up disaster preparations as severe weather becomes more common.

An annual government report on climate said last

month that historical data shows the frequency of both extreme precipitation and heat has risen in China, according to state broadcaster CCTV.

A heat warning was in effect Monday in parts of eastern China, where temperatures were expected to top 40 degrees Celsius (104 Fahrenheit) in several cities including Nanjing, and 37 C (98 F) in nearby Shanghai on the coast.

There have been a series of deadly rainstorms since June. (AP)

Asia

Vietnam coast guard visits Philippines for drills

Australia raises terror threat level to 'probable'

MELBOURNE, Australia, Aug 5, (AP): The Australian government on Monday elevated the nation's terrorism threat alert level from "possible" to "probable," citing concerns about increasing radicalization among young people and community tensions over the Israel-Hamas war.

It is the first time the threat level has been elevated to the midpoint of the five-tier National Terrorism Threat Advisory System since November 2022. The level had been "probable" the previous eight years.

But Prime Minister Anthony Albanese added that while government officials think the current climate makes terrorism an increased danger, they didn't know of any specific threats.

"I want to reassure Australians probable does not mean inevitable, and it does not mean there is intelligence about an imminent threat or danger," Albanese told reporters.

He said the government was acting on the advice of the Australian Security Intelligence Organization, the nation's main domestic spy agency known as ASIO.

"The advice that we've received is that more Australians are embracing a more diverse range of extreme ideologies and it is our responsibility to be vigilant," Albanese said.

Response

Australian authorities last declared a terrorist act in April - a classification that allows greater resourcing of a law enforcement response - when a 16-year-old boy was accused in the stabbing of a Sydney bishop while a church service was being livestreamed.

ASIO director-general Mike Burgess said more Australians are being radicalized more quickly.

"More Australians are embracing a more diverse range of extreme ideologies and more Australians are willing to use violence to advance their cause," Burgess said.

Gunmen kill 8 in Nigeria: At least eight people were shot dead when a group of unidentified gunmen attacked a local community in Nigeria's southern state of Imo late

Vietnam coast guard visits Manila:

A Vietnamese coast guard ship arrived in Manila on Monday for a four-day goodwill visit and joint exercises as the two countries attempt to put aside their own territorial disputes in the face of rising tensions with China over control of key features in the South China Sea.

The Philippines and Vietnam are among the most vocal critics of China's increasingly hostile actions in the disputed waters, a key global trade and security route. The neighboring Southeast Asian countries themselves have overlapping claims in the busy sea passage along with Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan and the disputes are regarded as an Asian flashpoint and a delicate fault line in the U.S.-China regional rivalry.

Saluted

As the host's coast guard personnel waved Philippine and Vietnamese flags and a brass band played under the morning sun at Manila's harbor, a 2,400-ton Vietnamese coast guard ship with 80 crewmembers docked. Some of its officers saluted from the lower and upper decks of the 90-meter white ship.

During its stay in Manila, the two coast guard forces are expected to hold talks and tour each other's ships. They will hold joint search and rescue drills along with fire and explosion contingency drills in Manila Bay, on the western coast of northern Philippines facing the South China Sea.

Kim marks launchers delivery:

North Korea marked the delivery of 250 nuclear-capable missile launchers to frontline military units at a ceremony where leader **Kim Jong Un** called for a ceaseless expansion of his military's nuclear program to counter perceived US threats, state media said Monday.

Concerns about Kim's nuclear pro-

gram have grown as he has demonstrated an intent to deploy battlefield nuclear weapons along the North's border with South Korea and authorized his military to respond with preemptive nuclear strikes if it perceives the leadership as under threat.

North Korea's official Korean Central News Agency said the launchers were freshly produced by the county's munitions factories and designed to fire "tactical" ballistic missiles, a term that describes systems capable of delivering lower-yield nuclear weapons.

Kim said at Sunday's event in Pyongyang the new launchers would give his frontline units "overwhelming" firepower over South Korea and make the operation of tactical nuclear weapons more practical and efficient. State media photos showed lines of army-green launcher trucks packing a large street with seemingly thousands of spectators attending the event, which included fireworks.

Myanmar army HQ captured:

Myanmar's military regime acknowledged Monday it had lost communications with the commanders of a strategically important army headquarters in the northeast, adding credence to claims from a militia group it had captured the base.

The fall of the army's Northeast Command in the city of Lashio would be the biggest in a series of setbacks and a significant blow to Myanmar's military government this year as an offensive launched by an alliance of powerful militias of ethnic minority groups continues to make broad gains in the country's civil war.

"The regime's loss of the Northeast Command is the most humiliating defeat of the war," said **Morgan Michaels**, a Singapore-based analyst with the International Institute of Strategic Studies who runs its Myanmar Conflict Map project.

Danjuma, Imo State police commissioner, told the media during an on-the-spot assessment of the incident on Sunday morning.

Alleging that members of the outlawed Indigenous People of Biafra Eastern Security Network, an armed group in the southern part of the country, were responsible for the attack, Danjuma said security agencies are currently combing nearby forests in search of the perpetrators of the "dastardly act." (Xinhua)

Kids at risk of dying in Darfur:

Malnourished children in a famine-hit camp for war-displaced people in Sudan's western region of Darfur are at risk of dying, an aid group said Sunday, because it was forced to ration malnutrition treatment due to a blockade imposed by a notorious paramilitary group.

Doctors Without Borders said the Rapid Support Forces, which have besieged al-Fasher city as part of its war against the Sudanese military, have blocked three trucks carrying lifesaving medical supplies, including therapeutic food, for the city and the nearby Zamzam camp where famine was confirmed last week.

Sudan plunged into chaos in April last year when simmering tensions between the military and the RSF developed into open fighting in the capital, Khartoum, before spreading across the northeastern African country. Darfur saw some of the worst and most devastating bouts of fighting in the war. (AP)



Police fired tear gas during a protest in Abuja, Nigeria on Aug. 1, 2024. Nigeria's leader on Aug 4, called for an end to mass protests against the West African nation's economic hardship, saying the rallies have turned violent and have become politically motivated. (AP)



Danjuma



Yusov

Africa

90 Ethiopian migrants rescued: South African police said they rescued 90 Ethiopian migrants who were being held against their will at a property in Johannesburg.

Police carried out a search at the property on Sunday for a person reported to have been kidnapped and discovered the migrants, they said. Two people were arrested on suspicion of kidnapping and human trafficking. The alleged kidnapping victim was also rescued, police said Monday.

The Ethiopian migrants are believed to have been illegally trafficked. They were packed into small rooms and kept locked up, police said.

They were taken to a hospital for medical care and the two suspects will face charges in court. Authorities, including Interpol, have raised concerns over the trafficking of Ethiopian migrants through several southern African countries in an attempt to ultimately reach South Africa. The migrants are often trafficked and kept in dangerous conditions. (AP)

Mali cuts 'ties' with Ukraine: Mali's transitional government on Sunday announced it would sever diplomatic relations with Ukraine "with immediate effect," citing Ukraine's acknowledged involvement in an act of aggression against Mali, said Abdoulaye Maiga, the Malian Minister of Territorial Administration and Decentralization, in a statement.

This decision was taken in response to "subversive remarks" made by **Andriy Yusov**, spokesperson for the Ukrainian military intelligence, who recently admitted Ukraine's involvement in an attack by "armed terrorist groups" that resulted in the deaths of Malian defense and security forces personnel in Tinzaoutene, said Maiga, who is also the government's spokesperson.

Since 2012, Mali has been grappling with the expansion of terrorism and a deep multidimensional crisis, including security, political, economic, and humanitarian challenges. (Xinhua)



Philippine Coast Guard personnel wave Vietnamese and Filipino flags to welcome the Vietnam Coast Guard (VCG) ship, CSB 8002, in Manila, Philippines on Aug 5. A Vietnamese coast guard ship arrived in Manila on Monday for a four-day goodwill visit and joint exercises as the two countries attempt to put aside their own territorial disputes in the face of rising tensions with China over control of key features in the South China Sea. (AP)

Change	Closing pts	SAUDI	TASI	Change	Closing pts
↑		DUBAI	DFMGI	-249.91	11,504.46
↓		JAPAN	Nikkei 225	-191.38	4,045.90
		PHILIPPINES	PSEI	-4,451.28	31,458.42
		EGYPT	EGX 30	-170.57	6,434.73
		PAKISTAN	KSE 100	-662.99	27,840.64
				-1,010.47	77,230.31

Business

KPC CEO advocates for full Kuwaitization of oil sector

Ministry of Oil employs 543 workers, 537 are Kuwaitis

By Najeh Bilal

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 5: Sheikh Nawaf Al-Saud Al-Sabah, CEO of the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC), is leading efforts to fully Kuwaitize the oil sector.

His strategy involves increasing the number of national workers in the industry and removing barriers to their employment. He emphasizes the importance of supporting Kuwaiti employees and ensuring job security for them.

Sheikh Nawaf Al-Saud Al-Sabah stresses the need to absorb more Kuwaiti workers into the oil sector and ensure they have the support needed to thrive.

In this regard, the CEOs of affiliated oil companies are encouraged to review the files of national workers, especially those working for private contracting companies, and address any issues related to job security.

He added, private oil companies will be held accountable for any layoffs of national workers, with open channels for Kuwaiti employees to voice their complaints.

The Al-Seyassah daily quoting

Al-Kandari to lead new team in Ahmadi oil sector

KIPIC reinstates Al-Kandari

By Najeh Bilal

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 5: Abdul Wahab Mohammed Al-Kandari, who had been dismissed from his position as Head of the Capability Management and Leadership Development Team at Kuwait Integrated Petroleum Industries Company (KIPIC) in January 2024, has been reinstated following an investigation into his dismissal.

An internal investigation committee, assigned by the new acting CEO, Wadhwa Al-Khatib, found that Al-Kandari's dismissal was arbitrary and involved undue penalties and warnings.

The committee concluded that his dismissal was unjust, particularly noting his diligent work and contributions to improving living conditions for workers and revealing significant issues within the company.

Following the committee's findings, the KIPIC Board of Directors approved the recommendation for Al-Kandari's reinstatement.

He is now leading a new team in the Ahmadi oil sector, effective August 4, and will report to the Director of the Security and Fire Group.

Al-Kandari's reinstatement is seen

as a positive step towards restoring justice and stability within KIPIC. It is expected to boost morale and job security among employees, and signal a commitment to fair treatment and recognition of employee contributions, especially in light of the merger with the Kuwait National Petroleum Company.

The decision is viewed as an encouraging development post-merger, with hopes that it will lead to enhanced business operations and further achievements while safeguarding the rights of workers and national employees.

company employs 5,027 Kuwaitis out of 5,126

- Petrochemical Industries Company 264 out of 305 employees
- Kuwait Petroleum Corporation has 767 Kuwaitis out of 768
- Kuwait Oil Company employs 11,713 workers and has a Kuwaitization rate of 86.84
- Kuwait National Petroleum Company as of 2023 employed 5,671 Kuwaitis out of 6,205.

As a positive step towards restoring justice and stability within KIPIC.

It is expected to boost morale and job security among employees, and signal a commitment to fair treatment and recognition of employee contributions, especially in light of the merger with the Kuwait National Petroleum Company.

The decision is viewed as an encouraging development post-merger, with hopes that it will lead to enhanced business operations and further achievements while safeguarding the rights of workers and national employees.

CBK bonds

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 5: The Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) announced the most recent issues of CBK Bonds and related Tawarruq at a total value of KWD 160 million for 3 months with Rate of Return 4.375%.

Retail banking department enhances digital services

KIB announces key achievements in H1-24

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 5: Kuwait International Bank (KIB) has announced a list of key achievements during the first half (H1) of 2024, reflecting the Retail Banking Department's ongoing efforts towards providing the best quality of digital banking services and products that are constantly being updated and developed in adherence to the highest banking standards and the latest technologies adopted worldwide. These efforts culminate in guaranteeing customers are satisfied and their ever-evolving needs are met while ensuring the safety and security of their data. The set of results also testify to KIB's position among the leading banking institutions in Kuwait.

Commenting on the Bank's achievements in H1 2024, Othman Tawfeeq, General Manager of the Retail Banking Department at KIB, said: "At KIB, we are driven by a commitment to continuously offer our customers an exceptional banking experience that meets their aspirations, as we always seek to live up to our slogan, 'Bank for Life'. From this standpoint, we remain abreast of the latest trends and developments in the world of financial technology to continue elevating our digital infrastructure and developing our digital channels to improve the efficiency of our services that are tailored to suit the lifestyle of our customers."

Comprehensive digital solutions yield positive results

Tawfeeq highlighted that, during the first half of 2024, KIB continued developing effective channels that save customers the time and hassle of visiting physical branches. As a result, the Bank succeeded in allowing its customers to utilize the KIB Mobile application to update their customer civil ID data and complete the "Know Your Customer" form. The Bank also launched a new in-app service that allows customers to apply for a Wakala deposit remotely.

Furthermore, Tawfeeq revealed that the Bank observed a 10% increase in the total number of KIB Mobile users, followed by a 65% increase in account opening operations and a 326% increase in deposit account opening operations through the application, compared to the first half of 2023.

During the same period, KIB Pay transactions via the KIB Mobile application witnessed a 19% increase in H1 2024, which signifies a high level of interest in using the Bank's digital channels and online services. Meanwhile, push notification subscribers increased significantly by 38% compared to the first half of 2023, indicating the effectiveness of this app feature in enabling customers to view their account information and track their banking operations with great precision and ease.

In terms of new additions, the Bank introduced five services to its retail digital platform during the first six months of 2024, including a service that allows customers to apply for a multi-currency prepaid card remotely. These services are part of the Bank's ongoing efforts to enrich the application with more features and solutions that enable customers to enjoy financial tools tailored to their needs, ultimately en-



KIB's Othman Tawfeeq

hancing their overall digital banking experience.

Widespread ATM network
As part of its commitment to providing customers with a high level of comfort and ease, KIB has launched 12 automated withdrawal machines (ATMs) spread across Kuwait. The Bank's widespread ATM network allows it to reach the biggest number of customers from all segments to facilitate their banking transactions.

Introducing the Interactive Teller Machine
In line with the Bank's digital transformation strategy to continuously develop its products and services, KIB launched the Interactive Teller Machine (ITM), an innovative solution designed to provide a distinguished and smooth banking experience for all customer segments.

Combining the convenience of traditional ATM services with the personalized touch of in-person banking, this machine allows customers to carry out a wide range of banking transactions, including cash withdrawals, cash deposits, cheque withdrawals and cheque deposits, in addition to addressing general inquiries – all with the assistance of a live, remote teller through high-definition video and audio communication.

It serves to note that the ITMs are currently available in five KIB branches, including Al-Zahraa, West Jahra, Fintas, 89 Mall and eMall. This comes within the framework of the Bank's firm commitment to providing innovative services that ensure customer satisfaction. The Bank's investment in the latest technology further reinforces its dedication to providing its customers with the best possible banking experience that suits their evolving modern lifestyles, in line with its main slogan, "Bank for Life".

Contact Center and social media
As part of the Bank's commitment to maintaining open channels of communication with its custom-

ers and allowing them to receive support around the clock, Tawfeeq revealed that the KIB Contact Center received a significant number of calls, chat inquiries, and inquiries via the new voicemail service, attesting to the ease, speed, and efficiency of KIB's service in meeting customer requirements, at any time and throughout the entire week. To ensure all customers are easily served and supported, KIB offers its customer service via multiple channels, including KIB Mobile, Live Chat, KIB Online, the official website (www.kib.com.kw), the video call service, and the WhatsApp service.

Additional digital features
Since the outset of the year, KIB's focus has been enhancing its digital features and services through the KIB Mobile application, telephone customer service, and traditional and interactive ATMs. As such, the Bank has enabled customers to apply for a multi-currency prepaid card, open a Wakala Deposit account, create standing orders, pause and un-pause cards, change card PINs, and view branch locations through the mobile app, in addition to accessing the voice mail service via the Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system.

It is worth noting that KIB continuously seeks to elevate its digital infrastructure, in line with its robust approach and long-term goals to ensure customer satisfaction by providing a distinguished banking experience. The Bank also plays an important role in contributing to the efforts directed toward achieving the goals of Kuwait Vision 2035. To this end, KIB's ongoing contributions and accomplishments are conclusive evidence of its commitment to achieving sustainable development as part of its comprehensive strategy.

About KIB
Kuwait International Bank (KIB) is a bank that operates according to the Islamic Shari'ah, based in the State of Kuwait. Incorporated in 1973, and originally known as Kuwait Real Estate Bank, KIB made the transition to its current Islamic operating model in 2007. In 2018, KIB embarked on a new phase of its journey full of innovation and development. As part of its new strategic direction, the Bank focuses on offering a next-level customer experience under the slogan: "Bank for Life".

Through a network of branches spread across the State of Kuwait, KIB offers a broad range of banking products and services, as well as innovative digital banking solutions in line with international best standards. As part of its duty towards the community, the Bank also encompasses a leading social responsibility program that aims at positively impacting all members of the community through a wide range of impactful initiatives and activities.

Today, KIB has taken concrete steps in implementing its new strategic objectives. The Bank has cemented its role as a key player in the local banking industry and has continued to maintain its strong financial performance; enabling it to be globally recognized for its strong credit rating and financial position.

The practice of flaring associated gas – burning off natural gas produced alongside oil – has been a particular problem. But at Ahdab, the story is different.

In late 2011, the central processing plant of Ahdab Oilfield was completed, making it Iraq's first facility to fully cover oil, gas, and water treatment processes.

The plant converts this valuable resource into sulfur, dry gas, and liquefied petroleum gas (LPG), significantly reducing waste and emissions. The dry gas is used to power the oilfield and is also exported to Iraq's largest thermal power plant, helping to meet the country's growing energy demand.

To date, the Ahdab Oilfield has produced over 5 billion cubic meters of dry gas, over 600,000 tonnes of LPG, and about 18,500 tonnes of sulfur, according to Jiang.

To further minimize its environmental impact, Ahdab has implemented a comprehensive wastewater recycling system. Produced water, a byproduct of oil extraction, is treated and reinjected into the oil reservoir to maintain pressure. Domestic sewage from the oilfield is also treated and reused for irrigation.

The efforts of Al-Waha Petroleum have not gone unnoticed.

The company has received numerous awards for its environmental achievements, including the China Construction Engineering Luban Prize, China's most prestigious award for architecture and construction, for the oilfield's surface construction. Iraq's oil ministry also highly praised the oilfield's contribution to green development in the country's energy sector.

"Over the past 15 years, the company has not only brought over 20 billion U.S. dollars worth of revenue to Iraq but also planted more than 10,000 trees, thus realizing the synergistic development of economic and ecological benefits," Jiang said.

Brent crude falls to \$76.77

Oil prices hit eight-month low amid recession fears

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 5: Oil prices hovered at an eight-month low on Monday, as recession fears in the United States outweighed concerns that escalating tensions in the Middle East would affect supplies from the world's largest oil producing region, reports Al-Jarida daily.

By 0035 GMT, Brent crude futures fell four cents, or 0.1 percent,

to \$76.77 per barrel. West Texas Intermediate crude futures fell 13 cents, or 0.2 percent, to \$73.39 per barrel.

Prices received support from the continued fighting in Gaza, as Palestinian officials said that Israeli warplanes bombed two schools and killed at least 30 yesterday, Sunday, a day after negotiations in Cairo ended without result.

Premier market index falls 2.16%

Bursa sees significant declines in early August

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 5: In the initial trading sessions of August, the Bursa Kuwait experienced significant declines, marking its highest losses in the past four months, reports Al-Jarida daily.

The General Market Index fell by 1.99 percent, or 143.45 points, closing at 7,070.68 points. Liquidity was KWD 53.8 million, with 213.5 million shares traded across 14,537 transactions. Out of 120 traded shares, 16 gained, 98 lost, and 6 remained unchanged.

The Premier Market Index dropped by 2.16 percent, or 170.12 points, ending at 7,695.34 points. Liquidity was KWD 45.2 million, with 141.1 million shares traded through 9,747 transactions. Among 34 traded shares, only one gained and 33 lost.

The Main Market Index declined by 1.14 percent, or 69.14 points, to close at 6,002.43 points. Liquidity was KWD 8.6 million, with 72.4 million shares traded through 4,790 transactions. Of the 86 traded shares, 15 gained and 65

lost, while 6 remained unchanged.

The downturn was influenced by sharp declines in US market indices and oil prices due to economic and political factors.

On the previous Friday, Nasdaq fell by 3.5 percent, Dow Jones and S&P by 2.5 percent, and oil prices by 3.5 percent. This had a ripple effect on global markets, including the Bursa Kuwait.

Significant losses were observed in primary market stocks, especially in the banking sector. Leading stocks like KFH, Watani, International, Burgan, and Agility saw sharp declines. Bayan stock, despite an initial drop, showed recovery later in the week due to positive quarterly results.

On Sunday, indices across five GCC markets declined, with the Kuwaiti market seeing the largest drop, followed by Saudi Arabia and Qatar.

The Bahrain and Oman indices also saw limited declines. Oil prices closed at \$77 per barrel, contributing to market sentiment.

Threshold set at 2 million dinars

CMA lowers minimum capital criteria for investment funds

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 5: The Capital Markets Authority (CMA) has recently implemented several key measures regarding investment funds and stock listings, reports Al-Jarida daily.

The CMA has reduced the minimum capital requirement for investment funds to 2 million dinars. Funds falling below this threshold are given deadlines to raise their capital. Failure to meet the requirements may result in liquidation or the appointment of an alternative manager.

Funds that do not meet the capital requirement are granted multiple extensions. The CMA provides a final deadline before deciding on liquidation or other measures in the interest of unit holders.

CMA has also issued 30 licenses for collective investment systems established outside Kuwait and approved 3 for local markets. Two collective investment systems were canceled for

liquidation last year.

Adherence to the minimum capital requirement supports institutional investment in the Kuwait Stock Exchange. Institutional investors help reduce market volatility, increase liquidity, and enable greater diversification.

Meanwhile, the CMA has delisted the shares of Al-Tameer Real Estate Investment Company from the Kuwait Stock Exchange for failing to meet the requirements of Resolution No. 179 of 2023. The decision was finalized on 07/31/2024.

Similarly, Al Masaleh Real Estate Company's shares were delisted following non-compliance with Resolution No. 173 of 2023. This decision was also made on 07/31/2024.

The CMA continues to focus on investor protection ensuring the fair treatment of investors and maintaining transparency in financial markets.

Total market value drops to \$2,153 bln

Crypto market faces losses for 4th consecutive session

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 5: Digital currency trading platforms have faced significant losses for the fourth consecutive session, driven by various factors including economic concerns and market movements, reports Al-Jarida daily.

The combined market value of cryptocurrencies dropped by 13.4 percent losing approximately \$333 billion while the total market value fell from \$2,486 billion on Wednesday to around \$2,153 billion recently.

The Bitcoin, the largest cryptocurrency, experienced a 1.02 percent loss in recent hours and a weekly decline of 9.7 percent. It is currently trading at \$60,846, with a market value of \$1,200.8 billion, holding a 55.77 percent share of the total cryptocurrency market.

Ethereum, the second-largest cryptocurrency, saw a 1.7 percent drop in the past hours and a 9.4 percent decline over the week. It is trading at \$2,914, with a market value of \$350.4 billion, and holds a 16.27 percent market share.

Tether (USDT): Tether remained stable at \$1, with a market value of

\$114.4 billion, capturing a 5.31 percent share of the total crypto market.

BNB (Binance Coin) ranked fourth, declined by 2.4 percent recently and 8.6 percent over the week, trading at \$528.69. Its market value is \$77.16 billion, representing a 3.58 percent market share.

Solana, the fifth-largest cryptocurrency, faced a 4.7 percent drop in recent hours and a 21.2 percent decline over the week. It is trading at \$144.25, with a market value of \$67.14 billion, holding a 3.11 percent market share.

The US employment report for July raised fears of a potential recession, impacting market sentiment. Mizuho Securities' chief analyst, Dan Dolev, noted that Bitcoin is not a safe haven as some might hope, especially if rising unemployment forces people to sell their crypto holdings.

Genesis has started distributing around \$4 billion in crypto assets and dollars to creditors under Chapter Eleven bankruptcy protection. This distribution includes \$1.4 billion in Bitcoin and \$520 million in Ethereum.

Over 5 billion cubic meters of dry gas produced

Ahdab oilfield transforms Iraq's environment with green initiatives

BAGHDAD, Aug 5, (Xinhua): In the scorching summer, rows of towering date palm trees and vibrant desert tamarisk create a lifeful scene at the Ahdab Oilfield in Iraq's Wasit Province, a stark contrast to the saline wasteland it once was.

The Ahdab Oilfield, Iraq's first post-war international oil cooperation project, broke ground in 2009 and commenced production in 2011. Operated by China's Al-Waha Petroleum Company since its inception, the project reflects a commitment to both energy production and environmental stewardship.

"Our company not only tries hard to increase oil production but also pays close attention to protecting the local environment," said Jiang Ming, general director of Al-Waha Petroleum, emphasizing his company's belief that protecting the environment is just as important as producing oil.

Iraq is a country rich in oil and gas, but it has long struggled with the environmental consequences of

its energy industry. The practice of flaring associated gas – burning off natural gas produced alongside oil – has been a particular problem. But at Ahdab, the story is different.

In late 2011, the central processing plant of Ahdab Oilfield was completed, making it Iraq's first facility to fully cover oil, gas, and water treatment processes.

The plant converts this valuable resource into sulfur, dry gas, and liquefied petroleum gas (LPG), significantly reducing waste and emissions. The dry gas is used to power the oilfield and is also exported to Iraq's largest thermal power plant, helping to meet the country's growing energy demand.

To date, the Ahdab Oilfield has produced over 5 billion cubic meters of dry gas, over 600,000 tonnes of LPG, and about 18,500 tonnes of sulfur, according to Jiang.

To further minimize its environmental impact, Ahdab has implemented a comprehensive wastewa-

Türkiye promotes EV charging stations to apartment buildings

ISTANBUL, Aug 5, (Xinhua): Türkiye has taken a significant step toward promoting electric vehicle (EV) adoption by facilitating the installation of EV charging stations in apartment buildings and residential complexes.

Murat Kurum, Minister of Environment, Urbanization, and Climate Change, announced this decision on social media on Sunday, emphasizing its alignment with Türkiye's commitment to a cleaner environment and sustainable transportation.

"We are committed to expanding EV charging infrastructure in apartment buildings and residential complexes," Kurum stated.

The decision has been formalized through a circular sent to all 81 provinces, reflecting Türkiye's aspiration to push forward its green transformation.

"We are determined to reach our 2053 net-zero emission target and achieve green transformation together," Kurum said, highlighting Türkiye's ambitious clean energy goals.

A pioneering document in the Kuwaiti banking sector

Kuwait Finance House releases its 2023 Sustainability Report

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 5: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) has released its 2023 Sustainability Report, a pioneering document in the Kuwaiti banking sector. This comprehensive report integrates the bank's financial and non-financial performance, aligning with Integrated Reporting principles. By enhancing transparency and accountability, KFH demonstrates its commitment to embedding a sustainability strategy in line with global best practices. The 2023 Sustainability Report provides a comprehensive and integrated overview of KFH's business, encompassing the bank's performance, challenges, opportunities, and key activities related to sustainability, social responsibility, and environmental impact.

KFH Chairman, Hamad AlMarzouq

KFH Chairman, Hamad Abdulmohsen AlMarzouq said that: "On behalf of myself and my colleagues, members of the Board of Directors, I am pleased to present to you the sustainability report of Kuwait Finance House Group. This report highlights the bank's significant achievements towards sustainability. The release of the report coincides with the successful phases of the acquisition and merger with Ahli United Bank, marking a historic milestone for KFH strengthening its financial stability and yielding significant benefits for shareholders and customers, while solidifying KFH's position as the largest Kuwaiti private sector institution by market capitalization. This step further strengthens our ability and resolve to achieve unprecedented levels of sustainable development across its various dimensions. This can be realized by leveraging the synergy between KFH's ambitious plan to become a top 100 global bank and its meticulously crafted sustainability strategy, which aligns with both Kuwait Vision 2035 and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)."

A proactive approach to sustainability

KFH considers building a sustainable banking model within (ESG) frameworks as an absolute necessity. This approach aligns with the bank's vision and responsibility for adopting sustainable practices and implementing them in ways that maximize shareholders' value and benefit the communities it serves. This commitment enhances KFH's reputation and solidifies its position as a leading banking institution both locally and globally.

Digital transformation and sustainability

Driven by KFH's digital transformation vision as a fundamental driver for sustainable development and based on its belief that digital transformation is the primary engine for future growth, KFH's digital banking services have undergone significant development, notably the launch of "Tam" Digital Bank, the first sharia-compliant digital bank in Kuwait. This signifies a substantial achievement in KFH's journey towards leading digital bank-



KFH Chairman Hamad AlMarzouq

AlMarzouq:
 ■ Building a sustainable banking model within (ESG) frameworks as an absolute necessity.



Abdulwahab AlRushood

AlRushood:
 ■ Leading sustainability plans within the regional Islamic banking industry.



Sustainability Report.



KFH Final Sustainability Report 2023.

Promoting financial inclusion

Given that sustainability is a principal factor in everything we do, KFH's strategy focuses on enhancing financial inclusion and meeting the financial needs of different communities in which the Group operates, spanning 12 countries around the world. KFH's strategy also focuses on reinforcing the concepts of inclusion and diversity by maintaining an empowering work environment for employees, enabling women, and employing qualified national talents, while providing necessary training for their development and career growth.

In this respect, KFH made significant progress in 2023 by expanding the principles of sustainability and strengthening its concept.

KFH launched Forssah program to invest in talents and empower them. Additionally, KFH directed its focus on supporting women empowerment, leading to the signing of the Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs) Agreement with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) as the first Islamic Bank in Kuwait. The agreement aims to support the bank in creating a work environment conducive to growth and skill-building for female employees. In this regard, a significant number of women hold senior positions at KFH.

Green finance

Demonstrating its dedication to environmental leadership and responsible financial practices, KFH took a proactive approach by releasing the first-of-its-kind Carbon Footprint report in Kuwait's banking sector. The report includes valuable information, insights, and detailed plans to reduce

carbon emissions and mitigate negative environmental impacts in alignment with global climate change initiatives.

Moreover, KFH successfully introduced the green finance campaign, the first of its kind in Kuwait aimed at supporting the construction of private housing with strict environmental standards and emphasizing the use of recycled materials and renewable energy sources.

Additionally, KFH partnered with the UNDP to establish solid standards for Shariah-compliant SDGs, particularly in the realm of green finance.

Added value initiatives

We reaffirm our commitment to be a role model for social responsibility. This strengthens KFH's position as a well-established national financial institution with a strong social mission. Our commitment stems from KFH's identity as a bank that operates according to the principles of enlightened Islamic Sharia, which emphasizes values of giving, solidarity, and Takaful. KFH took part in the United Nations' Conference of the Parties (COP28) to showcase its valuable efforts towards sustainability. The bank also succeeded in hosting the first discussion on the role of Takaful in mitigating the risks associated to climate challenges in partnership with the UNDP.

In recognition of its successful track record and ongoing commitment to social responsibility through long-term programs, KFH was ranked "Market Leader" in Kuwait by Euromoney magazine. This achievement reflects the exceptional social responsibility results achieved in 2023 and the positive impact on society across all segments. Through strategic partnerships

with major institutions and official entities, KFH has been able to provide support and make a positive impact in the communities it serves.

KFH Acting Group CEO, Abdulwahab Iesa AlRushood

Meanwhile, KFH Acting Group CEO, Abdulwahab Iesa AlRushood said that: "KFH is committed to creating a clear framework for a more sustainable future. This commitment is reflected in its integration of Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) considerations. By doing so, KFH maintains its pioneering role in Islamic banking while implementing sustainable development practices that adhere to Islamic Sharia principles."

In this regard, we are pleased to share this report with you. It highlights KFH's achievements and its unwavering efforts in leading sustainability plans within the regional Islamic banking industry. The report also emphasizes KFH's dedication to providing an exceptional banking experience that contributes to balancing social and economic development, while also maintaining the environment. This commitment is evident in KFH's pursuit of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and its ongoing efforts to improve the communities we serve.

Leveraging the momentum from our successful acquisition of Ahli United Bank and the subsequent achievements, we are determined to become a leading global banking entity. This ambition is driven by our commitment to sustainability initiatives, financial inclusion, and offering green finance products across both retail and corporate customers.

A future rooted in sustainability

At KFH, we recognize the immense responsibility we have towards creating a more sustainable future. To this end, we have incorporated over 62 economic, environmental, social, and

governance (ESG) goals into our sustainability strategy.

KFH's commitment to social and environmental responsibility extends beyond its "Keep it Green" campaign. The bank fosters a spirit of collaboration by maintaining strategic alliances with local and international institutions. These partnerships include UNDP, Kuwait's Environment Public Authority, and the Kuwait Scientific Center. Through these collaborations, KFH has made significant contributions to various sustainability and environmental preservation projects, initiatives, and activities focused on protecting the environment and mitigating climate change. Moreover, KFH is committed to supporting the transition to a low-carbon economy across the Group, spanning operations in 12 countries worldwide.

KFH also achieved a significant accomplishment by becoming the first bank in Kuwait to receive the Gold Level Certificate for the Global Sustainability Assessment System (GSAS) for its KFH Auto showroom. This recognition highlights KFH Auto's position as the first eco-friendly showroom that adheres to security standards.

Green finance

KFH prioritizes the issuance of green sukuk alongside the development of green finance products for both retail and corporate clients.

In line with its commitment to promoting environmental and sustainability principles, KFH has launched a groundbreaking personal financing campaign in Kuwait. This campaign, titled "Sustainable Financing of Green Products," targets citizens who own private housing plots. It offers a comprehensive range of resources for customers to construct their homes using green sustainable housing and consumer products that contribute to the preservation of natural resources and the harnessing of renewable energy.

This initiative provides customers with comprehensive services throughout construction phases, ensuring compliance with the latest environmental protection standards. This also aligns with KFH's emphasis on sustainability and environmental enhancement in financial transactions.

Digital Transformation

KFH has succeeded in leveraging technology advancements and utilizing its expertise in Digital Transformation. This included implementing Artificial Intelligence, collaborating with FinTech companies for innovative products and services, as well as enhancing the infrastructure of adaptable and supportive smart systems and programs. These efforts offered customers with a seamless banking experience while supporting sustainability initiatives. Digital Transformation is recognized as a key component in achieving sustainability goals and moving towards a Carbon-Free future.

In 2023, KFH launched Tam, the first digital bank compliant with Islamic Sharia principles. KFH also introduced a suite of new initiatives to enhance customer convenience, including the Zaheh platform for merchants and SMEs owners, the 'Online Finance' service, and expanded digital services like e-payments, account opening, and issuance of cards with distinctive features. KFH has also made advancements in device performance, enabling features like instant card printing and online gold transactions. Additionally, it partnered with Western Union to facilitate international financial transfers. This allows customers to conduct a wide range of transactions without visiting a branch.

Enriching Human Talents

KFH recognizes that diversity, inclusion, women's empowerment, and investing in young talent are vital for strengthening its human resources. To achieve this, KFH has implemented various initiatives, such as the Forssa program, which focuses on training high-achieving graduates, and has promoted financial inclusion within its services. KFH has also prioritized empowering women, leading to significant progress with a growing number of women holding prominent positions across different departments.

Additionally, KFH has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the UNDP to exchange knowledge on sustainability. This included a training program for KFH executive management to boost sustainability skills and awareness within the organization.

In a nutshell, I would like to affirm that we are committed to accelerating KFH's sustainability journey. This will allow us to achieve our future milestones at a faster pace and make significant progress in integrating sustainable practices into our daily operations. By doing this, we can ensure both continued growth for the bank and positive impacts on our customers.

Average rate on a 30-yr mortgage falls to 6.73 pct

LOS ANGELES, Aug 5, (AP): The average rate on a 30-year mortgage fell this week to its lowest level since early February, easing borrowing costs for prospective homebuyers facing record-high home prices.

The rate fell to 6.73% from 6.78% last week, mortgage buyer Freddie Mac said Thursday. A year ago, the rate averaged 6.9%.

Borrowing costs on 15-year fixed-rate mortgages, popular with homeowners refinancing their home loans, also fell this week, pulling the average rate down to 5.99% from 6.07% last week. A year ago, it averaged 6.25%, Freddie Mac said.

After jumping to a 23-year high of 7.79% in October, the average rate on a 30-year mortgage has mostly hovered around 7% this year - more than double what it was just three years ago.

The elevated mortgage rates, which can add hundreds of dollars a month in costs for borrowers, have discouraged home shoppers, extending the nation's housing slump into its third year. Sales of previously occupied U.S. homes fell in June for the fourth month in a row. And sales of new single-family homes fell last month to the slowest annual pace since November.

Still, the average rate on a 30-year mortgage hasn't gone above 7% since late May, reflecting recent signs of cooling inflation, which have raised expectations that the Federal Reserve will cut its benchmark rate in September.

Mortgage rates are influenced by several factors, including how the bond market reacts to the central bank's interest rate policy decisions. That can move the trajectory of the 10-year Treasury yield, which lenders use as a guide to pricing home loans.

Hopes of a Fed rate cut this fall amid signs the economy's growth is slowing have helped lower the yield on the 10-year Treasury note in recent weeks. The yield, which topped 4.7% in late April, was at 3.98% in midday trading in the bond market - the lowest it's been since February.

If bond yields continue to decline in anticipation of the Fed lowering rates this fall, that could lead mortgage rates to ease further.

"Expectations of a Fed rate cut coupled with signs of cooling inflation bode well for the market, but apprehension in consumer confidence may prevent an immediate uptick as affordability challenges remain top of mind," said Sam Khater, Freddie Mac's chief economist. "Despite this, a recent moderation in home price growth and increases in housing inventory are a welcoming sign for potential homebuyers."

Chinese businesses hoping to expand in US and bring jobs face uncertainty & suspicion

Leading the charge is Republican Rep. Moolenaar

WASHINGTON, Aug 5, (AP): It was billed as the "biggest ever economic development project" in north Michigan when Gov. Gretchen Whitmer in 2022 welcomed a Chinese lithium-ion battery company's plan to build a \$2.36 billion factory and bring a couple thousand jobs to Big Rapids.

But now the project by Gotion High-Tech is in the crosshairs of some U.S. lawmakers and local residents.

Leading the charge is Republican Rep. John Moolenaar of Michigan, chairman of the House Select Committee on China, who accuses the Chinese company of having ties to forced labor and says he fears it could spy for Beijing and work to extend China's influence in the U.S. heartland. Gotion rejects the accusations.

"I want to see this area have more jobs and investments, but we must not welcome companies that are controlled by people who see us as the enemy and we should not allow them to build here," Moolenaar said at a recent roundtable discussion in Michigan.

Lured by the large U.S. market, Chinese businesses are coming to the United States with money, jobs and technology, only to find rising suspicion at a time of an intensifying U.S.-China rivalry that has spread into the business world.

U.S. wariness of China, coupled with Beijing's desire to protect its technological competitiveness, threatens to rupture ties between the world's two largest economies. That could hurt businesses, workers and consumers, which some warn could undermine the economic foundation that has helped stabilize relations.

"This is a lose-lose scenario for the two countries," Zhiqun Zhu, professor of political science and international relations at Bucknell University, said in an email. "The main reason is U.S.-China rivalry, and the U.S. government prioritizes 'national security' over economic interests in dealing with China."

Lizhi Liu, an assistant professor of



Rep. John Moolenaar, R-Mich., questions witnesses during a hearing on Capitol Hill, Feb. 28, 2023, in Washington. Moolenaar, chairman of the House Select Committee on China, is leading the charge against Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer's plan to bring a Chi-

nese lithium-ion battery company to Big Rapids, Mich. Chinese businesses are coming to the U.S. with money, jobs and technology, only to find rising suspicion at a time of an intensifying U.S.-China rivalry that has spread into the business world. (AP)

business at Georgetown University, said the trend, along with the decline of U.S. investments in China, could hurt China-U.S. relations.

"Strong investment ties between the two nations are crucial not only for economic reasons but also for security, as intertwined economic interests reduce the likelihood of major conflicts or even war," she said.

But U.S. lawmakers believe the stakes are high. Sen. Marco Rubio said at a July hearing that China is not only a military and diplomatic adversary for the U.S. but also a "technological, industrial and commercial" opponent.

"The technological and industrial high ground has always been a precursor of global power," said Rubio, a Republican from Florida. He argued that U.S. foreign policy should take into ac-

count the country's commercial, trade and technological interests.

The bipartisan House Select Committee on China has warned that widespread adoption in the U.S. of technologies developed by China could threaten long-term U.S. technological competitiveness.

U.S. public sentiment against Chinese investments began to build up during President Barack Obama's administration, and were amplified after President Donald Trump came into office, said Yilang Feng, an assistant professor of business at University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, who studies economic nationalism and resistance to foreign direct investments in the U.S.

"The scale has increased, so has the

intensity," Feng said.

As President Joe Biden's administration seeks to revive American manufacturing and boost U.S. technological capabilities, many politicians believe Chinese companies should be kept out.

"Can you imagine working for an American company working tirelessly to develop battery technology and then you find out that your tax dollars are being used to subsidize a competitor from China?" Moolenaar said as he campaigned against the Gotion project in his congressional district in a state that is critical in the presidential election.

Whitmer's office has declined to comment on the project. The Michigan Economic Development Corporation told The Associated Press it has received "bipartisan support at all levels" to move forward with the project,

which will create up to 2,350 jobs.

Danielle Emerson, spokesperson for MEDC, said the project is "critical to onshore the battery supply chain and create thousands of good-paying local jobs, which reduces our reliance on overseas disruptions and further protects our national security."

Local residents of Green Charter Township, however, revolted against the project over its Chinese connections last year when they removed five officials who supported it in a recall election.

Also in Michigan, a partnership between Ford and CATL, another Chinese battery manufacturer, has been scaled back, following pushback over CATL's potential connections to China's ruling party.

In Worcester, Massachusetts, the Chinese biotech company WuXi Biologics paused construction of a large facility a few weeks after lawmakers introduced a bill that would, over data security concerns, ban U.S. entities receiving federal funds from doing business with a number of China-linked companies, WuXi Biologics included.

John Ling, who has helped South Carolina and Georgia attract Chinese businesses for nearly two decades, said geopolitics have been getting in the way in recent years. Chinese companies are less likely to consider South Carolina after the state senate last year approved a bill banning Chinese citizens from buying property, even though the bill has yet to clear the statehouse, Ling said.

Data by the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis show the total investments by China in the U.S. fell to just under \$44 billion in 2023, from a high point of \$63 billion in 2017, although first-year expenditures rose to \$621 million in 2023, up from \$531 million in 2022 but drastically down from the high of \$27 billion in 2016. The figures include acquisitions, new business establishments and expansions.

Thilo Hanemann, a partner at the research provider Rhodium Group, said there's been an upswing in new Chinese investments in the U.S. following a major decline, prompted by the end of disruptions during the COVID-19 pandemic and the need for Chinese companies to go overseas when margins at home are dwindling.

Bank educates summer interns on fraud prevention techniques

NBK launches 'Let's Be Aware' campaign for banking awareness

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 5: As part of its ongoing efforts to promote financial and banking awareness among all sectors of society, National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) provided a detailed presentation of the 'Let's Be Aware' banking awareness campaign to the students of the 'NBK Aspire' Summer Internship Program for 2024.



Sarah Al-Amad

During the presentation, Senior Communications Officer at National Bank of Kuwait highlighted several examples of fraud that use different schemes, such as phishing scams including e-mail and text messages containing malware, as well as using the information shared unknowingly when using public Wi-Fi or by hacking computers and stealing users' bank account to make unauthorized transactions.

Al-Amad provided many tips and guidelines to avoid such threats, stressing the need not to share banking and personal information with anyone, as well as following the banks' guidelines and benefiting from the banking awareness campaigns and educational materials published by the Central Bank of Kuwait and Kuwaiti banks on different social



Photo from the event.

- Al-Amad: Enable Two-Factor Authentication (2FA) to add an extra layer of security to your bank accounts
- Monitor your account activity regularly to ensure having no suspicious activity

media platforms.

She also stressed the need to verify the sources of phone calls, text messages or e-mails before providing any personal or financial information, calling to stay informed about the latest scams and fraud techniques to recognize and avoid potential threats.

Al-Amad advised the students to enable Two-Factor Authentication (2FA), as it adds an extra layer of security, as well as to keep a close eye

on your bank statements and transaction history to detect any suspicious activity.

NBK makes consistent efforts to combat fraud and educate customers, regarding this as a crucial part of its strategy. To this end, it always uses all communication channels and social media platforms, which are the most popular among all Kuwaiti banks, to maximize financial and banking awareness among the public.

New 'YOU Account' offers youth benefits

Commercial Bank of Kuwait unveils the winners in 'YOU Account' draw

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 5: Commercial Bank of Kuwait conducted the "YOU Account" draw on Sunday August 4, 2024 in the presence of Ministry of Commerce and Industry as represented by Mr. Mansour Al Dhafiri.

The Bank's social media channels lively covered the draw where the prizes of the draw, namely KD 200 for each winner went to:

1. Mohammed Ali Fadel Ali Mohammad
2. Eman Abdulhameed Abbas Ali
3. Zainab Aadel Al Rashed

'YOU Account' is designated for the youth who transfer their monthly social allowance to Commercial Bank



New 'YOU Account' artwork.

of Kuwait. Youths who opt for 'YOU Account' can avail a package of benefits upon opening the account and get KD 50 gift upon transferring the social allowance to Al-Tijari. Further, 'YOU Account' gives customers chances to enter monthly and yearly draws to win valuable prizes. Apart from the above, customers aged 18 and above will get a free of charge prepaid card for one year when opening the account. CBK youth segment can avail the discounts and promotions offered throughout the year. Moreover, new customers who transfer their social allowance will get two chances to enter the monthly draw to win KD 200 cash prize.

The Conversation

Social media comparison 'reflects' in T.Swift's lyrics

By Angeline Close Scheinbaum
Clemson University

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



As an expert in consumer behavior, I recently edited a book about how social media affects mental health.

I'm also a big fan of Taylor Swift. So when I listened to Swift's latest album, "The Tortured Poets Department," I couldn't help but notice parallels to the research that I've been studying for the past decade.

It might seem like an outlandish comparison. What can the bestselling album of 2024 have to do with research into the dark side of social media?

But bear with me: Taylor Swift lives in the same social media-saturated universe as the rest of us. That may be why the melancholic themes of her album resonate with so many people.

With young people out of school for the summer and spending free time on social media, now is a time to put on some tunes and think about mental health and what is called "consumer well-being" in the transformative consumer research area of scholarship.

Here are three Taylor-made takeaways that shed light on some of the themes in my latest edited book, "The Darker Side of Social Media: Consumer Psychology and Mental Health."

If you've been feeling out of sorts lately, you're hardly alone: Anxiety and depression can be exacerbated by overuse of social media, research summarized in Chapter 1 shows. And social media use is on the rise.

The average American teenager spends nearly five hours every day scrolling TikTok, Instagram and the like, polling shows, while adults clock more than two hours a day on social media. Such could be com-

pulsive social media use and overall overuse.

Digital life can simulate addiction and sometimes manifest as a distinct form of anxiety called "disconnection anxiety," researchers Line Lervik-Olsen, Bob Fennis and Tor Wallin Andraassen note in their book chapter on compulsive social media use. This can breed feelings of depression - a mood that recurs throughout "The Tortured Poets Department."

Oftentimes, depression goes hand in hand with feelings of loneliness. Social media has, in some ways, made people feel even lonelier - nearly 4 in 5 Americans say that social media has made social divisions worse, according to Pew Research. In our book chapter, my graduate student Betül Dayan and I consider the prevalence of loneliness in the digital world.

The pandemic showed the world that social media relationships can't replace physical company. Even celebrities with hundreds of millions of followers simply want someone to be with. In the song "The Prophecy," Swift sings of loneliness and wanting someone who simply enjoys her presence:

Don't want money/Just someone who wants my company ("The Prophecy")

Social media is a breeding ground for comparisons. And since people tend to portray idealized versions of themselves on social media - rather than their authentic selves - these comparisons are often false or skewed. Research has shown that people on social media tend to make "upward comparisons," judging themselves relative to people they find inspiring. Social media can breed false comparisons, as what someone is aspiring to may not be authentic.

This can lead to what researchers call a "negative self-discrepancy" - a sense of disappointment with one's failure to meet a personal ideal. As researchers Ashesh Mukherjee and Arani Roy note in their book

chapter, social media makes people more dissatisfied with their own sense of control, intelligence and power. This, in turn, can worsen stress and anxiety.

The theme of comparisons comes through loud and clear in the song "The Tortured Poets Department," in which Swift castigates a partner with literary pretensions - and herself for dating him. Swift may be the most rich, famous and successful pop star on the planet, but comparing yourself with even more heroic figures is sure to make anyone feel worse:

You're not Dylan Thomas, I'm not Patti Smith. This ain't the Chelsea Hotel, we're modern idiots. ("The Tortured Poets Department")

In today's social media-focused world, bullying has transitioned to online platforms. And arguably, platforms breed bullying: People are more likely to engage in cruel behavior online than they would face to face.

Policymakers increasingly recognize bullying as an important political concern. In their book chapter, researchers Madison Brown, Kate Pounders and Gary Wilcox have examined laws intended to fight bullying.

One such effort, the Kids Online Safety Act, which among other things would require online platforms to take steps to address cyberbullying, recently passed the U.S. Senate.

Lawmakers aren't the only ones taking bullying seriously. In her latest album, Swift refers to bullies in her own life as vipers who "disgrace her good name" and who say insults that stick with her for a long time. Themes of reputation and bullying have run throughout Swift's entire body of work - hardly surprising for someone who has lived such a public life, both online and off.

I'll tell you something 'bout my good name. It's mine alone to disgrace. I don't cater to all these vipers dressed in empathy's clothing. ("But Daddy I Love Him") (AP)

University hosts Kon Social Entrepreneurship Program for 8th year

AUK and LOYAC's collaborative efforts in youth development

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 5: The American University of Kuwait (AUK) continues to showcase its dedication to community engagement through its ongoing support of LOYAC's educational and empowerment initiatives. AUK's collaboration with LOYAC this summer includes hosting the Kon Social Entrepreneurship Program and the 7 Habits Workshops, both of which aim to foster youth development and social responsibility.

As a longstanding academic partner and venue host, AUK has successfully hosted the Kon Social Entrepreneurship Program for eight consecutive years. The program includes interactive training sessions, workshops, guest talks, and mentoring hours, all designed to build self-awareness, encourage entrepreneurial mindsets, and develop critical thinking skills in the youth.

In addition to the Kon Program, AUK is hosting the 7 Habits of Highly Effective People, and the 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens workshops this summer. These workshops are renowned for their life empowerment framework, helping participants take control of their lives, set goals, build resilience, prioritize tasks, work effectively with others, and strengthen relationships.

The University's state-of-the-art campus and advanced facilities play a crucial role in accommodating such initiatives. Equipped with modern classrooms, auditoriums, and labs, AUK provides an ideal environment for interactive training sessions, workshops, and mentoring activities. The latest technology available on campus enhances the learning experience, enabling participants to engage with digital resources and innovative tools.

AUK's involvement in these programs underscores its dedication to youth empowerment and community engagement. By supporting LOYAC's initiatives, AUK not only contributes to the growth and development of young minds but also enriches its own community, fostering an environment of learning and social awareness.

About AUK:

The American University of Kuwait (AUK) is an independent, private, equal opportunity, and coeducational liberal arts institution of higher education. The educational, cultural and administrative structure, methods and standards of AUK are based on the American model of higher learning. The language of instruction is English. More information on the American University of Kuwait can be found at www.auk.edu.kw



Group photo of workshop participants.



Group photo of workshop participants.

People

Did a father tell his teenage son to kill rapper PnB Rock?

COMPTON, Calif., Aug 5. (AP) — The two sides at the murder trial in the killing of Philadelphia hip-hop star PnB Rock agree that a 17-year-old boy walked into Roscoe's Chicken and Waffles restaurant in South Los Angeles, shot the rapper twice in the back and once in the chest. Both agree that the boy's father, Freddie Trone, the defendant in the trial, helped his son after the shooting and tried to cover up the killing. But in the two-week trial's closing arguments set for a Compton, California, courtroom on Monday, prosecutors will argue that Trone sent the boy into the restaurant with a gun and with orders to rob PnB Rock. The rapper, 30, was eating with his fiancée, the mother of his 4-year-old daughter. Trone's lawyer says he is in no way guilty of murder, and has emphasized that he was not in the restaurant and did not pull the trigger. He said the evidence points to his son acting alone. Trone's son is in custody of the county's juvenile justice system, and a judge has found that he is not currently competent to stand trial. The Associated Press does not generally name minors accused of crimes. PnB Rock, whose legal name is Rakim Allen, was best known for his 2016 hit "Selfish" and for making guest appearances on other artists' songs such as YFN Lucci's "Everyday We Lit" and Ed Sheeran's "Cross Me" with Chance the Rapper. The trial in his killing, not held in the downtown courthouse that is home to most high-profile proceedings, has attracted little attention.

The gallery has remained nearly empty, with Rolling Stone the only media outlet giving it regular coverage. FBI agents arrested Trone in Las Vegas more than two weeks after the Sept. 12, 2022, shooting in Las Vegas. He has pleaded not guilty to one count of murder, two counts of second-degree robbery and one count of conspiracy to commit robbery. A co-defendant who is not charged with murder, 46-year-old Tremont Jones, has pleaded guilty to two counts of robbery, one count of conspiracy, and one count of being a felon in possession of a firearm. Prosecutors allege Jones tipped off Trone to the rapper's location, and showed jurors surveillance video of the two men talking outside the restaurant minutes before the killing. **Witness** Allen's fiancée, Stephanie Sibounheuang, was the trial's most dramatic witness. She said she had a "bad feeling" about the situation before they walked into the restaurant. The couple was set to fly home to Atlanta later in the day. She tearfully testified that the two had just gotten their food at Roscoe's when the ski-masked shooter appeared, put his gun in Allen's face, and demanded all the couple's jewelry, which she said was worth hundreds of thousands of dollars. Sibounheuang said he seemed like a kid "who didn't know what he

was doing." She said the shooter then fired on Allen, who pushed her out of the way and shielded her to protect her as he was shot. She called him a "hero" who saved her life. The masked shooter then collected a watch and other jewelry off Allen. Surveillance footage showed that he fled about a minute after entering. Sibounheuang put pressure on Allen's wounds to try to stop the bleeding, as did the first police officer who arrived at the scene, but the rapper was later declared dead. An autopsy report states that Allen was shot once in the chest and twice in the back. Investigators found that Allen had a gun on him at the time, but said he did not pull it out before he was shot. Sibounheuang posted a picture of the couple's food on Instagram shortly before the shooting, but she testified that she removed the tag on it that would have shown which of the six Southern California Roscoe's restaurants where they were eating. Authorities initially said that post might have led to the robbery and shooting, but later backed off and instead blamed Jones for leading Trone and his son to the restaurant. Surveillance footage from later in the day showed Trone and his son entering an apartment, and leaving soon after with the son wearing different clothes and holding a trash bag.

Variety



This image released by Greenwich Entertainment shows Peter Sarsgaard in a scene from 'COUP!' (AP)

Film

Sarsgaard shines in a complex role

In 'COUP!,' a sharp 'comedy of menace'

By Lindsey Bahr

It's the early days of the 1918 pandemic when a mysterious new chef descends on a wealthy family's estate in the new film "COUP!" The chef, played by Peter Sarsgaard, is a worldly and questioning sort with a mischievous streak who torments his employer, Billy Magnussen, a self-styled progressive journalist looking out for the plight of the worker from his gilded fortress. As the world shuts down around them and the grounds become ever more isolated, tensions continue to rise with both comedic and tragic outcomes. "I fell in love with it right away," Magnussen said. But "COUP!," in theaters Friday, is the kind of original script that doesn't often see the light of day. Its tonal and aesthetic inspirations range from the works of playwright Harold Pinter to Luis Buñuel's "The Exterminating Angel" and the genre-bending work of the Coen brothers. So, when co-writers and directors Austin Stark and Joseph Schuman asked Magnussen if he was interested, the actor went a step further. He brought his production company Happy-Bad Bungalow into the fold. "I was like, 'Yeah, and I'll help make this thing with you,'" said Magnussen. "This was us getting down and dirty, you know? Doing it all ourselves. It was finding the locations, getting the people organized, getting all the department heads together. It was a whole team effort." Sarsgaard was one of their earliest asks, someone Stark and Schuman said they imagined while writing Floyd. He's the kind of actor who they knew had the dexterity to handle the complex character, who may or may not have murdered someone, and whose arrival hastens the unraveling of Magnussen's gentleman journalist and the delicate social structure of his household. "It was kind of unlike anything I'm usually offered," Sarsgaard said. "I thought of him as really a man of the world. A guy who knew more than this

rich fella sitting pretty in his castle. He doesn't have the intellectual 30,000-foot understanding of what's going on. But he certainly has the on-the-ground understanding, and something more interesting than street smarts." Sarsgaard, too, became an executive producer, wanting to help make sure the film was made at the right price point that would also maximize creativity, like staying in one main location. "He elevated the character in ways we never imagined," the co-directors said in an email. "Probably because he shares our twisted sense of humor." Sarsgaard is also having a bit of a moment with his riveting small screen turn as prosecutor Tommy Molto in the AppleTV+ series "Presumed Innocent," and not just because of the bolo tie (his idea, by the way). Though both Tommy and his "COUP!" character are a little mysterious and odd, Sarsgaard insists he isn't consciously toying with audience expectations in either case. **Character** "I think the filmmakers are doing that for you and not me. I truly just honored the way I thought a person would act in a given moment," he said. "When people would tell me that the character seemed like he was up to something or, God forbid, said he was creepy, I truly didn't understand." "COUP!" debuted at the Venice Film Festival last year where it garnered strong reviews, but even so, it's an uphill battle for a small distributor like Greenwich Entertainment to get something like it to audiences. It's not one that you're necessarily going to hear about from an ad during the Olympics, or through a flashy international press tour with stops in Tokyo and London. It's the kind of film that needs word of mouth most of all. "It's challenging when everyone's like 'the market doesn't do this,'" Magnussen said. "You're like what market? It's art. Let's remember that. And audiences are capable of elevated material and ideas."

This summer Hollywood has churned out its share of remakes, reboots and popcorn fare. But there's also an undercurrent of enthusiasm for original gambles, with films as different as "Thelma" and "Longlegs" finding audiences without the marketing budgets of "Twisters" or "Deadpool & Wolverine." "It's kind of a rollicking good time," Sarsgaard said. "I think at this current moment, the news has taken over the slot for movies that make you think real hard. I respect that. This is not that. This is absurd and fun." **Also:** **NEW YORK:** "Nickel Boys," an adaptation of Colson Whitehead's Pulitzer Prize-winning novel, will open the 62nd New York Film Festival in September, organizers said Monday. Filmmaker **RaMell Ross** directed the drama based on the 2019 novel about two Black teenagers in an abusive reform school in Florida in Jim Crow-era Florida. Whitehead used the real Dozier School for Boys, and its victims, as a model. The cast includes **Ethan Herisse, Brandon Wilson, Hamish Linklater, Fred Hechinger, Daveed Diggs and Aunjanue Ellis-Taylor.** "Nickel Boys' signals the emergence of a major filmmaking voice," said **Dennis Lim**, the festival's artistic director, in a statement. "RaMell Ross' fiction debut, like his previous work in photography and documentary, searches for new ways of seeing and, in so doing, expands the possibilities of visual language. It's the most audacious American movie I have seen in some time." Ross is best known for the documentary "Hale County This Morning, This Evening," which followed Black residents in Alabama's Hale County and was nominated for an Oscar in 2019. The film, from Amazon MGM Studios' Orion Pictures, will open the festival on Sept. 27 before hitting theaters on Oct. 25. The New York Film Festival, presented by Film at Lincoln Center, runs through Oct. 14. (AP)

NEW YORK: After 10 days in theaters, "Deadpool & Wolverine" is already the highest-grossing R-rated movie ever, not accounting for inflation. In its second weekend, the Marvel Studios blockbuster starring **Ryan Reynolds** and **Hugh Jackman** continued to steamroll through movie theaters, collecting \$97 million according to studio estimates Sunday. That raised its two-week total to \$395.6 million, pushing it past the long-reigning top R-rated feature, "The Passion of the Christ," which held that mark for 20 years with \$370 million domestic. Worldwide, the **Shawn Levy**-directed "Deadpool & Wolverine" has quickly amassed \$824.1 million in ticket sales, a total that already surpasses the global hauls of the first two "Deadpool" films. The 2016 original grossed \$782.6 million worldwide; the 2018 sequel collected \$734.5 million. The weekend's primary challengers both struggled. **M. Night Shyamalan**'s latest thriller, "Trap," managed a modest opening of \$15.6 million at 3,181 theaters for Warner Bros. The film, starring **Josh Hartnett** as a serial killer hunted by police at a pop concert, didn't screen for critics before opening day and scored lower in reviews (48% fresh on Rotten Tomatoes) than **Shyamalan**'s films typically do. Audiences gave it a C+ CinemaScore. With a budget of about \$35 million that Shyamalan largely finances himself, "Trap" didn't need a huge opening. But it may struggle to break even. "This is a soft opening for an M. Night Shyamalan suspense crime thriller," wrote **David A. Gross**, a film consultant who publishes a newsletter for Franchise Entertainment. "The writer/director's movies out-earn other original thrillers by a wide margin, and that's true here, but this start is not on the level of recent Shyamalan films." The live-action "Harold and the Purple Crayon," adapted from the classic kids book, also didn't make much of a mark in theaters. The Sony Pictures release debuted with \$6 million. It, too, got dinged by critics (28% fresh on Rotten Tomatoes), though audiences (an A- CinemaScore) liked it more.

"Harold and the Purple Crayon," which stars **Zachary Levi**, cost about \$40 million to make. "Twisters," the Universal Pictures disaster film, continues to kick up a storm at the box office. It held in second place with \$22.7 million in its third weekend. **Lee Isaac Chung**'s sequel to the 1996 original, starring **Glen Powell**,



Hartnett



Reynolds

Daisy Edgar-Jones and **Anthony Ramos**, has racked up \$195.6 million domestically. While it has made less of an impression overseas, "Twisters" is holding particularly well in North American theaters, down just 35% from the week prior. Hollywood closed July with its best month in a year and its first

\$1 billion month since July 2023. While comparisons to last year aren't favorable - July was when "Barbie" and "Oppenheimer" launched - a pair of Walt Disney Co. releases in "Inside Out 2" and "Deadpool & Wolverine" (the two top films of the year) powered a banner month for the movie industry.

There will still reminders, though, of harder times in cinemas earlier in the spring and early summer, when a sparse release calendar and a few notable flops put the box office at a deficit. On Friday, AMC Theatres, the largest North American chain, posted a \$32.8 million loss for the second quarter of 2024. (AP)

People & Places

Music

Global music fusion

Chinese musicians 'forge' bonds during WOW in NY

NEW YORK, Aug. 5. (Agencies): Young musicians from China staged a performance at Carnegie Hall on Sunday, the undisputed highlight of their week-long visit to the Big Apple during World Orchestra Week (WOW!).

Over 100 musicians from Beijing Youth Orchestra not only showcased their mastery of both Chinese and Western pieces, but also engaged with peers from the United States, Afghanistan and African countries in interactive workshops.

During their stay, the young Chinese musicians were also scheduled to have joint rehearsals with members of other six orchestras participating in WOW! and jointly perform with members of the National Youth Orchestra of the United States of America under the auspices of the Chinese Consulate General in New York.

Chinese musicians and their peers developed and shared their wishes for the world in guided workshops on Friday and Saturday, which helped them get to know each other better and formed a special bond between them.

The young musicians attended peer exchange workshops at the Iris Cantor Theater of New York University.

They were divided into several groups and were encouraged to write down their wishes on ribbons, tie them together, and share their wishes with each other on Friday.

"My wish is that music as a tool and a form of power could help promote world peace and development," said Liu Fenghe, a cellist who will be a freshman this autumn.

Sydney Richardson, a horn player from Texas, the United States, said her wish was that people would laugh a little bit more and relax more during tense times.

Richardson told Xinhua that making wish ribbons and tying them together was powerful and impressive.

Perspective

"Just seeing all these different people coming together and then tying each of our wishes together really just puts it in perspective," said Richardson. "It's amazing ... I've personally never really met someone from a different country."

The most impressive moment was when people talked about their favorite music pieces, as music is the only thing everyone present could completely understand, said Liu. He added that music made communica-

tion more natural and easygoing between them.

Carnegie Hall also collected some wishes and projected them onto the interior walls of the music hall where the young musicians performed in a bid to expand the "Wish for Our World" theme to the audience.

Kurt Falzon's wish for the world was that "everyone feels healthy, connected and loved." His wish was one of those projected on the wall. Falzon is a Maltese violinist from the European Union Youth Orchestra.

The Beijing Youth Orchestra, a new ensemble jointly curated by China's National Center for the Performing Arts (NCPA) and the Beijing Municipal Education Commission this June, wowed the audience on Sunday as it presented both traditional Chinese and classic Western masterpieces at Stern Auditorium, which can hold over 2,500 people.

Young musicians from Beijing played selections from Chinese Sights and Sounds by Bao Yuankai and Pipa Concerto No. 2 by Zhao Jiping featuring Chinese traditional instruments like the pipa, bamboo flute and others.

In the second half of the performance, the audience was treated to Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 5, and the musicians garnered rounds of applause.

The performance marked the first public appearance on the world stage by the Beijing Youth Orchestra, said **Lyu Jia**, the conductor of the orchestra.

Lyu said it's a remarkable start, taking into account the phenomenal response from the audience, such an important music hall and a very big audience comprised of people from many countries. The orchestra would continue to carry out international exchanges and planned to give performances throughout China, other areas in Asia as well as Europe, Lyu said.

The audience was very passionate and it was a moving and unique experience to perform at an orchestra in another country, said Jin Zhicheng, a horn player from Beijing.

Andrew DeWeese, a violinist and an alumnus of the National Youth Orchestra of the United States of America, said he saw so much energy and passion from the musicians. DeWeese added he was impressed by the novelty of the pipa concerto and the mixture of both Eastern and Western music.

Music is just so emotional that it's one of the best ways to do people-to-people exchanges, DeWeese said.

Lyu added that though some members of the Beijing Youth Orchestra may not become career musicians, the experience of performing music together with others could inspire emotions, kindle the imagination and create a feeling of beauty in life.



Lyu



Gene Simmons, singer of the band 'Kiss,' performs at the Wacken Open Air metal music festival, in Wacken, Germany, Friday, Aug. 2. (AP)

Books

'Over Ruled' focuses on harmful effects of too many laws

Gorsuch's book raps overregulation

WASHINGTON, Aug. 5. (AP): Supreme Court Justice Neil Gorsuch said ordinary Americans are "getting whacked" by too many laws and regulations in a new book that underscores his skepticism of federal agencies and the power they wield.

"Too little law and we're not safe, and our liberties aren't protected," Gorsuch told The Associated Press in an interview in his Supreme Court office. "But too much law and you actually impair those same things."

"Over Ruled: The Human Toll of Too Much Law" is being published Tuesday by Harper, an imprint of HarperCollins Publishers. Gorsuch has received a \$500,000 advance for the book, according to his annual financial disclosure reports.

In the interview, Gorsuch refused to be drawn into discussions about term limits or an enforceable code of ethics for the justices, both recently proposed by President Joe Biden at a time of diminished public trust in the court. Justice Elena Kagan, speaking a couple of days before Biden, separately said the court's ethics code, adopted by the justices last November, should have a means of enforcement.

But Gorsuch did talk about the importance of judicial independence. "I'm not saying that there aren't ways to improve what we have. I'm simply saying that we've been given something very special. It's the envy of the world, the United States judiciary," he said.

The 56-year-old justice was the first of three Supreme Court nominees of then-President Donald Trump, and they have combined to entrench a conservative majority that has overturned Roe v. Wade, ended affirmative action in college admissions, expanded gun rights and clipped environmental regulations aimed at climate change, as well as air and water pollution more generally.

A month ago, the Supreme Court completed a term in which Gorsuch and the court's five other conservative justices delivered sharp rebukes to the administrative state in three major cases, including the decision that overturned the 40-year-old Chevron decision that had made it more likely that courts would sustain regulations. The court's three liberal justices dissented each time.

Gorsuch also was in the majority in ruling

that former presidents have broad immunity from criminal prosecution in a decision that indefinitely delayed the election interference case against Trump. What's more, the justices made it harder to use a federal obstruction charge against people who were part of the mob that violently attacked the Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021, in an effort to overturn Trump's defeat by Biden in the 2020 election.

Gorsuch defended the immunity ruling as necessary to prevent presidents from being hampered while in office by threats of prosecution once they leave.

The court had to wrestle with an unprecedented situation, he said. "Here we have, for the first time in our history, one presidential administration bringing criminal charges against a prior president. It's a grave question, right? Grave implications," Gorsuch said.

Immigrants

But in the book, co-authored by a former law clerk, Janie Nitze, Gorsuch largely sets those big issues aside and turns his focus to a fisherman, a magician, Amish farmers, immigrants, a hair braider and others who risked jail time, large fines, deportation and other hardships over unyielding rules.

In 18 years as a judge, including the past seven on the Supreme Court, Gorsuch said, "There were just so many cases that came to me in which I saw ordinary Americans, just everyday, regular people trying to go about their lives, not trying to hurt anybody or do anything wrong and just getting whacked, unexpectedly, by some legal rule they didn't know about."

The problem, he said, is that there has been an explosion of laws and regulations, at both the federal and state levels. The sheer volume of Congress' output for the past decade is overwhelming, he said, averaging 344 pieces of legislation totaling 2 million to 3 million words a year.

One vignette involves John Yates, a Florida fisherman who was convicted of getting rid of some undersized grouper under a federal law originally aimed at the accounting industry and the destruction of evidence in the Enron scandal. Yates' case went all the way to the Supreme Court, where he won by a single vote.

"I wanted to tell the story of people whose lives were affected," Gorsuch said.

The book expands on a theme that has run through Gorsuch's opinions over the years, from his criticism of the Chevron decision back when he served on a federal appeals court in Denver to his statement in May 2023 in which he called emergency measures taken during the COVID-19 crisis that killed more than 1 million Americans perhaps "the greatest intrusions on civil liberties in the peacetime history of this country."

While Gorsuch has voted with the other conservative justices in most of the court's momentous cases, he also has joined with the liberals in notable cases, including those in which he wrote the opinion in 2020 that expanded protections against workplace discrimination to LGBTQ people. Gorsuch also has sided with the liberal justices in all the court's cases involving Native Americans since he joined the court.

Immigration, especially when people fighting deportation have complained they were given inadequate notice about hearings, is another area where he has typically broken with his conservative colleagues.

Gorsuch recently returned from a summer teaching gig in Porto, Portugal, for the George Mason University law school. Last year, he spent two weeks in Lisbon, Portugal, with the same program for which he was paid nearly \$30,000, plus meals, lodging and travel.

He will travel to the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library in Simi Valley, California, later this week to talk about the new book.

The day he met with AP, he said, was the first time in weeks that he put on a tie. He wore a dark blue suit, cowboy boots and a Western-style belt.

He seemed at ease, offering chocolate chip cookies and coffee to visitors and joking with a reporter who talked about an upcoming trip to the New Jersey shore. "Go fly some flags up there," Gorsuch said, a reference to the controversy over flags, similar to those carried by Jan. 6 rioters, that were flown at homes owned by Justice Samuel Alito and his wife.

Gorsuch is not the only justice rolling out a book this summer. Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson's memoir, "Lovely One," will be published next month.

Variety

NEW YORK: Keanu Reeves and Alex Winter, who played a pair of extraordinary slackers in three "Bill & Ted" films, are reuniting on Broadway for a revival of the brainy, existential classic "Waiting for Godot."

The play is planned for the fall of 2025 under the direction of **Jamie Lloyd**, a four-time Tony nominee set to direct a revival later this year of "Sunset Boulevard."

Samuel Beckett's pioneering play centers on two tramps, Estragon and Vladimir, who are awaiting the arrival of the mysterious title character, if he ever shows up. It is filled with vaudevillian high jinks that mask increasingly agitated desperation. Reeves will play Estragon and Winter will play Vladimir.

The play was first performed on Broadway in 1956 and has been revived three times since, most recently in 2013 with **Ian McKellen** and **Patrick Stewart**.

After "Bill & Ted," Reeves would go on to star in the "Matrix" and "John Wick" franchises. He will be making his Broadway debut with "Godot." Winter has appeared on Broadway twice before - in the 1970s in musical revivals of "The King and I" and "Peter Pan."

In other theater news, **Adam Driver** will star in a new production of Kenneth Lonergan's "Hold on to Me Darling" this fall off-Broadway at the Lucille Lortel Theatre. (AP)

LOS ANGELES: A statue of late Los Angeles Lakers star **Kobe Bryant** and his daughter, **Gigi Bryant**, was scheduled to be unveiled during a private ceremony on Friday, according to a published report.

The statue is located outside Crypto.com Arena near the Los Angeles Kings' monument celebrating the team's 50th anniversary, ESPN reported, citing anonymous sources. The statue will be available for the public to visit starting Saturday morning.

The statue is the second of three planned monuments to Kobe Bryant, who died in a helicopter

crash along with Gigi Bryant and seven others in January 2020.

The first statue, unveiled on Feb. 8, is a 19-foot bronze memorial to Bryant's 81-point game against the Toronto Raptors.

Friday's date (8/2/24) holds similar numerology meaning to the February ceremony (2/8/24), representing both of Bryant's uniform numbers (8 and 24) and the No. 2 that 13-year-old Gigi wore on the basketball court. (AP)

ATLANTA: Former President **Jimmy Carter** will be honored next month, ahead of his 100th birthday, with a musical gala at the Fox Theatre in Atlanta. The Carter Center announced Thursday.

The Sept. 17 event - "Jimmy Carter 100: A Celebration in Song" - will feature musicians from a range of genres and celebrity guests. Carter's birthday is Oct. 1.

Artists include **Chuck Leavell**, **D-Nice**, **Drive-By Truckers**, **Eric Church**, **GROUPLOVE**, **Maren Morris** and The Atlanta Symphony Orchestra Chamber Chorus. Notable guests include former Atlanta Braves star **Dale Murphy**, Atlanta rap artist **Killer Mike** and actor **Sean Penn**. Other guests will be announced before the event, organizers said.

The 39th president, who served from 1977 to 1981, remains at his home in **Plains, Georgia**, where he has been receiving hospice care since February 2023. He was last seen publicly at funeral services for former first lady **Rosalynn Carter**, who died in November. But those close to



Bryant



Reeves

him say he remains in good spirits, sometimes receiving visitors, regularly watching Braves games on television and still enjoying music.

"Whether it was on his record players, on the campaign trail, or on the White House lawn, music has been and continues to be a source of joy, comfort and inspiration for my grandfather," **Jason Carter** said in a statement.

Jason Carter chairs the governing board at the Carter Center, the human rights organization that Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter launched in 1982, not long after leaving the White House. (AP)

CAIRO: **Marsa Matruh**, located in **Egypt's** Mediterranean Coast, 524 kilometers from the Capital, is known for its lagoons and white sandy beaches, attracting many from across the globe.

Marsa Matruh is on a large bay with resorts stretching along the shore including Cleopatra's Beach, which is surrounded by rocks, creating a natural pool called Cleopatra's Bath.

Marsah Matruh's is one of the best tourist destinations on the north Coast for what is called medical tourism, especially the Siwa Oasis, which is famous for its natural recovery resorts for treating rheumatism, joint and spinal pain. (KUNA)

BRADENTON, Fla.: A former ballerina has been convicted of manslaughter in the 2020 shooting death of her estranged husband in **Florida**.

A **Manatee County** jury returned the guilty verdict late Tuesday against **Ashley Benefield**, court records show. She had been charged with second-degree murder, but the jurors opted for a lesser offense after nearly seven hours of deliberations.

Benefield, 32, claimed that she killed her then-58-year-old estranged husband, **Doug Benefield**, during a September 2020 argument at her mother's home, where she had moved from **South Carolina** after leaving him. Authorities say she shot him twice.

She now faces up to 30 years in prison because she used a firearm in the killing. A sentencing date hasn't been set. (AP)

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Fit pregnant athletes can compete safely: experts

Pregnant Olympians push beyond limits in Paris

PARIS, Aug 5, (AP) — Many Olympic athletes take to Instagram to share news of their exploits, trials, victories and heartbreaks. After her fencing event ended last week, Egypt's Nada Hafez shared a little bit more.

She'd been fencing for two, the athlete revealed - and in fact had been pregnant for seven months.

"What appears to you as two players on the podium, they were actually three!" Hafez wrote, under an emotional picture of her during the match. "It was me, my competitor, & my yet-to-come to our world, little baby!" Mom (and baby) finished the competition ranked 16th, Hafez's best result in three Olympics.

A day later, an Azerbaijani archer was also revealed on Instagram to have competed while six-and-a-half months pregnant. Yaylagul Ramazanova told Xinhua News she'd felt her baby kick before she took a shot - and then shot a 10, the maximum number of points.

There have been pregnant Olympians and Paralympians before, though the phenomenon is rare for obvious reasons. Still, most stories have been of athletes competing when they're far earlier in their pregnancies - or not even far enough along to know they

were expecting.

Like US beach volleyball star Kerri Walsh Jennings, who won her third gold medal while, unknowingly, five weeks pregnant with her third child.

"When I was throwing my body around fearlessly, and going for gold for our country, I was pregnant," she said on "Today" after the London Games in 2012. She and husband Casey (also a beach volleyball player) had only started trying to conceive right before the Olympics, she said, figuring it would take time. But she felt different, and volleyball partner Misty May-Treanor said to her - presciently, it turned out - "You're probably pregnant."

Exercise

It makes sense that pregnant athletes are pushing boundaries now, one expert says, as both attitudes and knowledge develop about what women can do deep into pregnancy.

Ackerman notes there's been little data, and so past decisions on the matter have often been arbitrary. But, she says, "doctors now recommend that if an athlete is in good condition going into pregnancy, and there are no complications, then it's safe to work out, train, and compete at a very high

level." An exception, she says, might be something like ski racing, where the risk of a bad fall is great.

But in fencing, says the Boston-based Ackerman, there is clearly protective padding for athletes, and in less physically strenuous sports like archery or shooting, there's absolutely no reason a woman can't compete.

It's not just an issue of physical fitness, of course. It is deeply emotional. Deciding whether and how to compete while trying to also grow a family is a thorny calculus that male athletes simply don't have to consider - at least in anywhere near the same way.

Just ask Serena Williams, who famously won the Australian Open in 2017 while pregnant with her first child. When, some five years later, she wanted to try for a second, she stepped back from tennis - an excruciating decision.

Williams welcomed Adira River Ohanian in 2023, joining older sister Olympia. And Olympia was the name that U.S. softball player Michele Granger's mother reportedly suggested for the baby Granger was carrying when she pitched the gold-medal winning game in Atlanta in 1996. Her husband suggested the name Athena.



Egypt's Nada Hafez competes with United States' Elizabeth Tartakovsky in the women's individual Sabre round of 32 competition during the 2024 Summer Olympics at the Grand Palais, Monday, July 29, 2024, in Paris, France. (AP)

Granger preferred neither.

At the Paris fencing venue over the weekend, fans were mixed between admiration for the bravery and determination of Hafez, a 26-year-old former gymnast with a degree in medi-

cine, and speculation about whether it was risky.

"In any case," she noted, "it is courageous. Even without making it to the podium, what she did was brave."

Marilyne Barbey, attending the

fencing from Annecy in southeastern France with her family, wondered about safety too, but added: "You can fall anywhere, at any time. And, in the end, it is her choice."

Ramazanova, who was visibly pregnant when competing, also earned admiration, including from her peers. She reached the final 32 in her event.

Casey Kaufhold, an American who earned bronze in the mixed team category, said it was "really cool" to see her Azerbaijani colleague achieving what she did.

"I think it's awesome that we see more expecting mothers shooting in the Olympic Games and it's great to have one in the sport of archery," she said in comments to The Associated Press. "She shot really well, and I think it's really cool because my coach is also a mother and she's been doing so much to support her kids even while she's away."

Kaufhold said she hoped Ramazanova's run would inspire more mothers and expectant mothers to compete. And she had a more personal thought for the mom-to-be: "I think it's awesome for this archer that one day, she can tell her kid, 'Hey, I went to the Olympic Games and you were there, too.'"

No return date yet

Stuck in space, two NASA astronauts receive spiritual support from home

NEW YORK, Aug 5, (AP) — About 10 miles from Johnson Space Center, a Houston-area church takes a moment during Wednesday Bible studies and Sunday evening services to pray for two members who cannot be there.

In fact, there's no way on Earth for NASA astronauts Barry "Butch" Wilmore and Tracy Dyson to show up at Providence Baptist Church. They're in space, orbiting the planet. More specifically, these two members are working on the International Space Station together.

Like many astronauts before them, they brought along their faith when they launched into space.

"God uses all of us in pretty neat ways, and I think I get the most joy from what I do thinking about it in those terms," said Dyson, discussing her job on the "Bible Project" podcast ahead of her March launch on a Russian Soyuz spacecraft.

Dyson's six-month mission isn't scheduled to end until September, but Wilmore and his fellow NASA test pilot, Sunita Williams, should have been back weeks ago. They are staying longer than expected following thruster failures and helium leaks on Boeing's inaugural crew flight for its Starliner capsule. Wilmore and Williams have said they are confident the capsule will return them home safely; engineers are still poring over Starliner test data.

Worries

There's no return date yet, which means the congregation's worries have subsided for now since they are safe aboard the space station, said Tommy Dahn. He is a pastor for the Pasadena, Texas, church where Dyson worships as a newer member and Wilmore is a longtime elder.

It's the launch and return days that ratchet up their anxieties - and prayers. "We will definitely be on vigil as we find out when that's going to happen," said Dahn, who is in close contact with Wilmore and his wife during the latest mission.

Wilmore paused before boarding the Starliner on each launch attempt, huddling in prayer with technicians and Williams. He acknowledged the risks of spaceflight - especially on a test



In this photo provided by NASA, Boeing Crew Flight Test astronauts Sunita Williams and Butch Wilmore, (center), pose with Expedition 71 Flight Engineers Mike Barratt, (left), and Tracy Dyson, aboard the International Space Station's Quest airlock on June 24, 2024. (AP)

flight like his.

"Our families have been a part of this from the beginning. ... As far as preparing them, they're prepared. We trust in sovereign God. Whatever the plan is, we're ready for it, whatever that might be," he told reporters ahead of the flight. Wilmore's faith that God is in control gives his family great peace, his wife, Deanna Wilmore, said via text message. He is content on the space station, neither worrying nor fretting, she said.

"We're not saying this means that nothing bad will happen or the Starliner will bring Barry home safely, but whatever the Lord does, will be for our good and for His glory," even if they don't fully understand it, she said.

The US space program has had stunning achievements and devastating tragedies.

Former NASA astronaut Mike Hopkins knew space exploration was high-risk, but didn't feel its full weight until his first assignment. A life insurance company drove that home ahead of his Soyuz rocket launch in September 2013. Hopkins said, recalling being told they didn't insure astronauts.

Hopkins realized he was not spiritually ready. Between trainings, he be-

gan converting to Catholicism, a faith he'd been immersed in since he began dating his Catholic wife but insisted he would never join.

"It's the idea of being an astronaut and recognizing the risks that we take," he said. "It felt like something was missing for me."

When he received Communion for the first time, he was overcome with a clarity and peace that he wanted to take into space. With his priests' help, Hopkins secured permission to take a pyx of consecrated hosts. He administered weekly Communion to himself and on long, intense spacewalk days.

"It just set the tone for the day," he said. "Then, you just go through the step-by-step process of executing the spacewalk but doing it knowing that Christ is with me."

Others have taken Communion in space, including Apollo 11 astronaut Buzz Aldrin after landing on the moon with Neil Armstrong in 1969.

The Rev. Wencil Pavlovsky, pastor of St. Paul the Apostle Catholic Church in the Houston area, helped former astronaut Mark Vande Hei bring Communion into orbit. Vande Hei was aboard the space station in 2017 when Pope Francis called it.

Curative treatments still nonexistent

COVID-19 leaves its mark on brain, including low IQ: study

By Ziyad Al-Aly

Washington University in St Louis

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

From the very early days of the pandemic, brain fog emerged as a significant health condition that many experience after COVID-19.

Brain fog is a colloquial term that describes a state of mental sluggishness or lack of clarity and haziness that makes it difficult to concentrate, remember things and think clearly.

Fast-forward four years and there is now abundant evidence that being infected with SARS-CoV-2 - the virus that causes COVID-19 - can affect brain health in many ways.

In addition to brain fog, COVID-19 can lead to an array of problems, including headaches, seizure disorders, strokes, sleep problems, and tingling and paralysis of the nerves, as well as several mental health disorders.

A large and growing body of evidence amassed throughout the pandemic details the many ways that COVID-19 leaves an indelible mark on the brain. But the specific pathways by which the virus does so are still being elucidated, and curative treatments are nonexistent.

Now, two new studies published in the New England Journal of Medicine shed further light on the profound toll of COVID-19 on cognitive health.

I am a physician scientist, and I have been devoted to studying long COVID since early patient reports about this condition - even before the term "long COVID" was coined. I have testified before the US Senate as an expert witness on long COVID and have published extensively on this topic.

Here are some of the most important studies to date documenting how COVID-19 affects brain health:

■ Large epidemiological analyses showed that people who had COVID-19 were at an increased risk of cognitive deficits, such as memory

problems.

■ Imaging studies done in people before and after their COVID-19 infections show shrinkage of brain volume and altered brain structure after infection.

■ A study of people with mild to moderate COVID-19 showed significant prolonged inflammation of the brain and changes that are commensurate with seven years of brain aging.

■ Severe COVID-19 that requires hospitalization or intensive care may result in cognitive deficits and other brain damage that are equivalent to 20 years of aging.

■ Laboratory experiments in human and mouse brain organoids designed to emulate changes in the human brain showed that SARS-CoV-2 infection triggers the fusion of brain cells. This effectively short-circuits brain electrical activity and compromises function.

■ Autopsy studies of people who had severe COVID-19 but died months later from other causes showed that the virus was still present in brain tissue. This provides evidence that contrary to its name, SARS-CoV-2 is not only a respiratory virus, but it can also enter the brain in some individuals. But whether the persistence of the virus in brain tissue is driving some of the brain problems seen in people who have had COVID-19 is not yet clear.

■ Studies show that even when the virus is mild and exclusively confined to the lungs, it can still provoke inflammation in the brain and impair brain cells' ability to regenerate.

■ COVID-19 can also disrupt the blood brain barrier, the shield that protects the nervous system - which is the control and command center of our bodies - making it "leaky." Studies using imaging to assess the brains of people hospitalized with COVID-19 showed disrupted or leaky blood brain barriers in those who experienced brain fog.

■ A large preliminary analysis pooling together data from 11 studies encompassing almost 1 million people with COVID-19 and more than 6 million uninfected individuals showed that COVID-19 increased the risk of

development of new-onset dementia in people older than 60 years of age.

Most recently, a new study published in the New England Journal of Medicine assessed cognitive abilities such as memory, planning and spatial reasoning in nearly 113,000 people who had previously had COVID-19. The researchers found that those who had been infected had significant deficits in memory and executive task performance.

This decline was evident among those infected in the early phase of the pandemic and those infected when the delta and omicron variants were dominant. These findings show that the risk of cognitive decline did not abate as the pandemic virus evolved from the ancestral strain to omicron.

In the same study, those who had mild and resolved COVID-19 showed cognitive decline equivalent to a three-point loss of IQ. In comparison, those with unresolved persistent symptoms, such as people with persistent shortness of breath or fatigue, had a six-point loss in IQ. Those who had been admitted to the intensive care unit for COVID-19 had a nine-point loss in IQ. Reinfection with the virus contributed an additional two-point loss in IQ, as compared with no reinfection.

Generally the average IQ is about 100. An IQ above 130 indicates a highly gifted individual, while an IQ below 70 generally indicates a level of intellectual disability that may require significant societal support.

To put the finding of the New England Journal of Medicine study into perspective, I estimate that a three-point downward shift in IQ would increase the number of U.S. adults with an IQ less than 70 from 4.7 million to 7.5 million - an increase of 2.8 million adults with a level of cognitive impairment that requires significant societal support.

Another study in the same issue of the New England Journal of Medicine involved more than 100,000 Norwegians between March 2020 and April 2023. It documented worse memory function at several time points up to 36 months following a positive SARS-CoV-2 test. (AP)

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Red card an emotional blow to player

Brazil appeals Marta's suspension for the Paris Olympics semis

PARIS, Aug 5, (AP): Brazil has appealed FIFA's decision to suspend Marta for two matches after her red card in the group stage of the women's soccer tournament at the Paris Olympics.

Brazil is set to face World Cup champion Spain in a semifinal match in Marseille on Tuesday.

Marta sat out Brazil's 1-0 quarterfinal victory over host France after she received a red card in her team's group finale against Spain for a foul on Olga Carmona.

The red card was an emotional blow to Marta, the team captain and a six-time world player of the year who has said this is final international tournament with the team.

FIFA's disciplinary committee later determined the foul merited a two-match suspension. The Bra-

zilian soccer federation announced late Sunday it was appealing the decision.

"Marta has an impeccable record of respecting the rules of the sport and fair play, being a world reference in the sport for several generations for every-

SOCCER

thing she has achieved on and off the field," the federation said in a statement.

The 38-year-old Marta is playing in her sixth Olympics. She watched Brazil's quarterfinal victory cheering from the stands.

Even if Brazil loses to Spain in the semifinals, Marta will still have a chance to play in the bronze medal match set for Friday in Lyon. A Brazilian victory

Taiwan asks for investigation into a fan at Olympic badminton having a sign taken away and ripped up

TAIPEI, Taiwan, Aug 5, (AP): Taiwan's government on Monday called on French authorities to investigate an incident at the Paris Olympics men's doubles badminton final against China when a Taiwan supporter had her sign reading, "Let's go Taiwan," ripped from her hands and torn up.

The Taiwan Foreign Ministry described the incident as violent and against the Olympic values of

friendship and respect. A towel with a similar sentiment was also stolen off a fan during the match, in which Taiwan's Lee Yang and Wang Chi-Lin beat China's Liang Wei Keng and Wang Chang to win gold.

The Badminton World Federation did not immediately respond to a message seeking comment on the situation.

China claims Taiwan as its own territory to be annexed by force if

necessary and rejects all manifestations of the island's independent identity. Chinese students and undercover officers living abroad are frequently deployed to disrupt support for Taiwan, Hong Kong, Tibet and the traditionally Muslim northwestern region of Xinjiang, according to Taiwan's de-facto ambassador to France, Wu Chih-chung.

China constantly subjects Taiwan

to political isolation and military threats, and the island is only allowed to participate in the Olympics and other international competitions under the name Chinese Taipei. It cannot fly its own flag or play its national anthem.

Despite that, Taiwanese fans at the match sang the anthem during the medal ceremony, drawing a huge wave of support online and in local media.

Brazil has a pair of silver medals in the Olympics, most recently in 2008.

Spain defeated Brazil 2-0 in the group stage. The Spanish, playing in their first Olympics, were vying

to become the first team to win a gold medal after winning a Women's World Cup.

US rider Kristen Faulkner sprints clear to take women's road race

PARIS, Aug 5, (AP): Kristen Faulkner timed her attack to perfection to win the women's road race at the Paris Olympics, becoming the first American rider in 40 years to win a medal in the event.

The 158-kilometer (98-mile) route started and finished in Paris, with Faulkner crossing the line at the Trocadéro in a fraction under four hours.

Faulkner finished 58 seconds clear of Dutch rider Marianne Vos, Lotte Kopecky of Belgium and Blanka Vas of Hungary, who were separated by a photo finish with Vos taking silver and Kopecky clinching the bronze.

CYCLING

Faulkner and Kopecky caught up Vos and Vas with about three kilometers left. As Faulkner attacked, the other three hesitated and then could not catch her.

She only had the Eiffel Tower and glory ahead of her.

"It's a dream come true," Faulkner said. "It's the best feeling in the world. I don't know how to describe it."

The 31-year-old Alaska native is the first American to win a road race medal of any color since the 1984 Los Angeles Games, when Connie Carpenter and Alexi Grewal swept the gold medals.

Huge crowds cheered the riders rolled through Paris' Latin Quarter and then along past the Orsay museum - once a train station.

The trek featured eight hilly sections along the way, with the biggest ascent up Côte des Gardes lasting 1.9 kilometers as riders approached Versailles - home to a famed palace and where equestrian events are taking place during the Paris Games.

There were also three climbs up to Montmartre, the area of Paris known for its cobblestoned passageways, its quaint artistic atmosphere and, most visibly, the white Sacré Coeur basilica perched imperiously atop Montmartre hill as if watching over Parisians.

Afghan sisters Fariba and Yulduz Hashimi were briefly part of an early breakaway, but they were soon caught. Slovakian Nora Jencusova then broke away on her own before being joined by the Hashimis and two other riders.

After entering Paris, riders zoomed past crowds flocking around the Louvre museum - home

Vos settles for silver in photo-finish



Kazma players preparing for the new season.

Kazma Club gets ready for the new season with major changes

By Khaled Al-Anzi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 5: Kazma Club has contracted Cuban professional Abraham Alfonso and French professional Samuel Gini to strengthen the ranks of volleyball first team for the new 2024-2025 season.

The management of the "Sons of Al-Adiliya" has made significant changes to the first team, both technically and at the player level. Brazilian coach Cacarato has been contracted to replace Iranian Javad Shamami. Cacarato, who is currently

coaching the Brazilian youth team, will join the team" in the first week of September. Additionally, Brazilian physical trainer Rivera will arrive on the 12th of this month. The French professional will arrive next Thursday, followed by the Cuban professional the subsequent Sunday.

The Kazma volleyball first team will begin its preparations for the next season this coming Sunday. Assistant Saad Yaqoub, confirmed that the Kazma team will look completely different in the new season, with an 80% change rate. He stated, "The club's management and the coaching staff are keen to prepare

the team before the start of the new season's competitions and to compete seriously for local titles."

Yaqoub expressed his optimism about the team's performance, hoping these changes will translate well on the field during official matches.

Notably, the Kazma volleyball team has included several experienced local players to support the first team, namely Abdulaziz Muharab, Abdulwahab Al-Jiran, Ali Al-Saqan, and Mubarak Abdulhadi Al-Eidan.

The new volleyball season will start on September 15 and conclude in early June 2025.

to the Mona Lisa - and the breakaway was swallowed up by the peloton.

As riders tackled the emblematic 1-kilometer climb up Butte-Montmartre for the first time, a new group formed at the front - Vos, Italian Elisa Longo Borghini and Faulkner. Lorena Wiebes, among the pre-race favorites, and Kopecky were not in it.

Kopecky chased hard on her own and caught up the lead group with about 40 kilometers left. Demi Volerling worked to help Wiebes close the gap, but Wiebes could not and placed 11th.

Defending champion Anna Kiesenhofner of Austria, who won the race in Tokyo because everyone else forgot she was in front, finished nearly eight minutes back in 52nd spot.

With 20 kilometers left, Vos and Bas attacked. They didn't open up enough of a gap and Faulkner waited patiently.

Her time came, and ended America's long wait for a road race medal dating back to the Los Angeles Games.

She can now defend her medal there in 2028.

Chinese player tops Swede

Fan wins table tennis men's singles Oly title

PARIS, Aug 5, (Xinhua): China's Fan Zhendong overcame Truls Moregard of Sweden 4-1 to win the table tennis men's singles gold medal at the Paris Olympic Games.

Fan, 27, second seed in the event, outclassed the 22-year-old Olympic newcomer Moregard 7-11, 11-9, 11-9, 11-8, and 11-8 at the South Paris Arena 4.

Fan gave high praise to his Swedish opponent after the match. "He put a lot of pressure on me today. His playing style made me hard to

TABLE TENNIS

get into my own rhythm, and I had to deal with every point very carefully." "I lost the first set, then fell behind in the second and third set. If I didn't deal with some key points well, the result might be different," said Fan. "I believed in myself and was able to adjust and find solutions. I'm quite happy with that." This is the second time that Fan competed in the Olympic men's singles final. At the Tokyo Olympics, he was defeated by his compatriot Ma Long 4-2.

"Without the experience from Tokyo 2020, I probably wouldn't be here today. Every failure or challenge helps you grow. The prerequisite is that you have the courage to face your failure," Fan said.

Moregard, who was defeated by Fan in the men's singles final at the 2021 World Table Tennis Cham-



Fan Zhendong of China celebrates after the men's singles gold medal match of table tennis between Truls Moregard of Sweden and Fan Zhendong of China at the Paris 2024 Olympic Games in Paris, France. (Xinhua)

ionships in Houston of the United States, eliminated the top-seeded Wang Chuqin of China in the round of 32 at Paris 2024.

Although Moregard failed to win the men's singles title at Paris 2024, this is the first time that Sweden has taken an Olympic medal in table tennis after the country's legendary Jan-Ove Waldner's silver at Sydney 2000.

Earlier, host favorite Felix Lebrun claimed the bronze medal after beating Hugo Calderano of Brazil 4-0.

Denmark's Axelsen, S. Korea's An capture badminton singles titles

PARIS, Aug 5, (Xinhua): Viktor Axelsen of Denmark and An Se-young of South Korea clinched gold medals in men's and women's badminton singles events, respectively, at the Paris Olympics on Monday, to conclude the sport's competitions.

A total of 15 medals were distributed among seven countries, as China leads the tally with two golds and three silvers.

Defending Olympics champion Axelsen triumphed over Thailand's Kunlavut Vitidsarn in the final with an easy 21-11, 21-11 victory. Malaysia's Lee Zii Jia secured the bronze after rallying past India's Lakshya Sen 13-21, 21-16, 21-11.

Axelsen, the No. 2 seed from Denmark, has become the second athlete after China's Lin Dan to defend the men's singles title.

The 30-year-old Dane broke a six-month title drought in May by winning the 2024 Malaysia Masters, setting the tone for his Olympic success.

Axelsen started strong in the preliminary stages, winning all three matches to advance to the knockout rounds. After receiving a bye in the first knockout round, he overcame Singapore's Loh

Kean Yew and India's Lakshya Sen before defeating the reigning world champion Vitidsarn in the final.

In the women's singles, South Korea's top seed An Se-young outplayed China's He Bingjiao with scores of 21-13, 21-16 to secure the gold medal. Indonesia's Gregoria Mariska Tunjung took the bronze after Spain's Carolina Marin was forced to withdraw due to injury.

"That was amazing and I felt so happy," An said after the match. The 22-year-old Korean first surged to international attention with a victory at the 2019 New Zealand Open.

An's impressive career was amplified with 10 individual titles in 2023, including a gold at the Asian Games in Hangzhou. Despite a knee injury diagnosed after Asian Games, she extended her momentum into the Games.

An had previously reached the quarterfinals at the Tokyo Olympics, losing to eventual champion Chen Yufei from China. Ahead of the Games, An had already secured three titles and a runner-up finish in Opens in 2024, she was poised to be a strong contender for the title here and actually delivered the expectations.

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Paris Olympic men's basketball quarters are star-studded, all with a Game 7 feel

PARIS, Aug 5, (AP): There are NBA champions, All-Star selections and award winners all over the men's basketball quarterfinals at the Paris Olympics.

And if that wasn't enough, all four matchups will have a Game 7 feel.

This is it. The most decisive day of the Olympic men's tournament is Tuesday, where eight teams will enter, four teams will be eliminated, and the four surviving clubs will be one big step closer toward their goal of leaving France with a medal.

The quarterfinal games: the four-time defending gold medalist U.S. vs. Brazil; Canada vs. France in a showdown of pre-tournament medal favorites; reigning World Cup champion Germany vs. Greece; and Serbia vs. Australia.

Every game features at least one NBA champion, one MVP winner or finalist and at least one perennial All-Star (or in the U.S. case, about 10 perennial All-Stars).

"The guys, I think, are well prepared for it," U.S. coach Steve Kerr said. "They've done a great job of not only preparing on the floor but adapting to these weird circumstances of having 12 starters in the NBA adjust to being a 12-man team here and some



South Sudan's Wenyen Gabriel, (left), and Serbia's Nikola Jokic battle for a rebound during a men's basketball game at the 2024 Summer Olympics, in Villeneuve-d'Ascq, France. (AP)

guys playing certain nights, not playing other nights. They've all really committed to

the goal. And the goal is within sight now." There are 15 current or former All-Stars still

in the Olympic field with a combined 97 selections among them; most are from the U.S., along with Greece's Giannis Antetokounmpo, Serbia's Nikola Jokic, France's Rudy Gobert and Canada's Shai Gilgeous-Alexander.

"It's a lot of great teams," said U.S. forward LeBron James, the 20-time All-Star seeking his fourth Olympic medal and third gold.

A lot of great players, too. For some, getting to this stage is the norm: Australia's Patty Mills is about to play in his fifth Olympic quarterfinal, and teammate Joe Ingles is here for the fifth time as well. For the U.S., a pair of standouts - James and Kevin Durant - are in the quarters for the fourth time.

For others, this is new territory. Antetokounmpo has never made it this far at an Olympics. "It's incredible," Antetokounmpo said. "I'm happy that I'm here, I don't take it for granted. I will enjoy it to the fullest because you never know if you're going to have this opportunity again."

Also still in the mix: France's Victor Wembanyama, the NBA rookie of the year whose time as an All-Star and MVP candidate likely starts soon, like this coming season soon. Put simply, the basketball medal hopes of his homeland rest on his shoulders.

Li wins maiden gold

China's veteran shooter Li Yuehong won his maiden gold at his third Olympics after victory in men's 25m rapid fire pistol.

The 34-year-old made 32 hits in the final to secure the fifth shooting gold for China, the best record for the powerhouse in an over-sea Olympics. Cho Yeong-jae of South Korea took the silver medal with 25 hits and Li's compatriot Wang Xinjie came in third.

Taking a three-hit lead before the last series, Li, shooting first, needed only three hits to win but made a perfect five to enjoy his moment of celebration, pumping his fist in the air before

bursting into tears when hugging his coach.

Bronze medalist at both Rio de Janeiro and Tokyo Olympics, Li took an early lead in the final but saw his position overtaken by Cho when he only made two hits in the fourth series. He came back on top two series later and remained stable afterwards to change the color of his medal to gold.

Wang, despite a perfect five in the opening series, was on the verge of elimination after three shaky ones, but managed to edge Florian Peter of Germany to make the top three through shoot-off and finished third one hit short. (Xinhua)



Denmark's Viktor Axelsen plays against Thailand's Kunlavut Vitidsarn during their men's singles badminton gold medal match at the 2024 Summer Olympics in Paris, France. (AP)

Part of bank's partnership with KOC and its dedicated efforts to bolster sports culture in Kuwait

Burgan Bank reaffirms support of Kuwaiti athletes at Paris Games

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 5: As the 2024 Olympic Games unfold in Paris, Burgan Bank reaffirms its unwavering support of Team Kuwait, commending the extraordinary athletes' efforts in pursuing Olympic glory. This comes as part of Burgan's renewed partnership with the Kuwait Olympic Committee (KOC) and its proud sponsorship of Team Kuwait. These initiatives align with the Bank's comprehensive social responsibility program and efforts to elevate Kuwait's sporting landscape. Moreover, it reinforces Burgan Bank's commitment to integrating Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) principles into its endeavors to advance Kuwaiti society across all dimensions.



Mrs. Kholoud Rida AlFeeli, Deputy General Manager - Marketing and Communication at Burgan Bank.

distinction amidst the world's elite athletes."

"The Burgan Bank family takes pride in Team Kuwait's participation in the 2024 Olympic Games," said Mrs. Kholoud Rida AlFeeli, Deputy General Manager - Marketing and Communication at Burgan Bank. "Regardless of the competition's outcome, each team member's dedication and countless hours of rigorous training are truly worth praising and celebrating. They represent Kuwait with

"Burgan Bank's presence alongside Team Kuwait throughout the games is a testament to our support for these exceptional Kuwaiti athletes," she added. "We also extend our sincere gratitude to the Kuwait Olympic Committee for their invaluable partnership, cooperation, and meticulous arrangements in ensuring the well-being and comfort of our nation's athletes."

The Kuwaiti contingent at the

Paris 2024 Olympics comprises nine athletes competing in shooting, athletics, sailing, rowing, swimming, and fencing, including Amal Al Roumi, Ameena Shah, Lara Dashti, Soaad Al-Faqaan, Khaled Al-Mudhaf, Mohammad Al-Daihani, Mohammad Zubaid, Yousef Al-Shamlan, and Yaqoub Al-Youha. Several of these athletes have benefited from Burgan Bank's sponsorship through the Olympic Athlete Preparation Program and at various regional and international competitions.

Burgan Bank's enduring commitment to nurturing athletic talent and fostering a thriving sports culture in Kuwait is evident in its extensive sponsorship portfolio. This includes supporting Tareq Al-Qallaf, Kuwait's wheelchair fencing world champion, the Kuwait Equestrian Federation, the Kuwaiti national Padel team, and the Kuwait Women's Football League. Additionally, the Bank has contributed to the success of major sporting events such as the 8th edition of Flare Festival, Kuwait's premier fitness challenge, the 5th edition of the Women's Football Tournament, and the 2023 final match of the Kuwait Crown Prince Cup.



The Kuwaiti Athletes at Paris 2024 Olympic Games.

US set two world records on wild final night of swimming

China halt Americans streak

NANTERRE, France, Aug 5, (AP): The final night of swimming at the Paris Olympics stirred a wide range of emotions for an American team that no longer rules the world.

A world record from Bobby Finke. Elation. A historic loss that reignited gripes about Chinese doping.

Stunning. Finally, another world record for the women's 4x100-meter medley relay team to edge out rival Australia for the top spot in the gold-medal table.

Whew! "Just an awesome way to cap off the meet," said Lilly King of the winning relay team, who joined her teammates in strolling around the deck holding up the stars and stripes as the crowd filed out La Defense Arena.

Finke set his new standard in the 1,500 freestyle before the American women closed a thrilling nine days of swimming in style.

The U.S. finished with eight gold medals to top Australia, which won seven events. Still, it was the lowest victory total for the Americans since the 1988 Seoul Games, when they were beaten by a doping-tainted East German program.

They finished with 28 medals overall, two shy of their total three years ago in Tokyo. In all, 13 countries won at least one gold - French star Léon Marchand was essentially a country unto himself - and 19 teams made the medal podium.

After a bevy of disappointing performances by some of its biggest names, the U.S. team was very much aware of its gold-medal battle with the Aussies.

King, whose third Olympics will be her last, made up for a disappointing showing in her individual events by powering to the lead on the breast-stroke segment.

Then it was Gretchen Walsh and Torri Huske, two of the biggest U.S. stars at these games, bringing it home in 3 minutes, 49.63 seconds to break the record of 3:50.40 set by the U.S. at the 2019 world championships.

Regan Smith led off in the back-stroke leg, earning a relay gold for the second night in a row after starting her Olympic career with five silvers and a bronze.

Australia, the defending Olympic champion, took the silver this time in 3:53.11. The bronze went to China in 3:53.23.

Four world records were set during the meet, three of them by the U.S. China stunningly won the gold in the men's 4x100 medley relay, ending the American run of dominance that stretched back to the introduction of the event at the 1960 Rome Games.

The only time the U.S. didn't win gold was in 1980, when it boycotted



United States' Bobby Finke celebrates winning the gold medal in the men's 1500-meter freestyle final at the Summer Olympics in Nanterre, France. (AP)

the Moscow Games.

The winning team included Qin Haiyang and Sun Jiajun, who were both among the nearly two dozen swimmers who tested positive for a banned substance before the Tokyo Games but were allowed to compete. The result stirred more hard feelings from other nations that feel the Chinese might have gotten away with cheating.

The real star of the Chinese team was Pan Zhanle, who had previously set a world record while winning the 100 free and powered away from American Hunter Armstrong on the anchor leg to touch in 3:27.46.

The Americans were left with the silver in 3:28.01, with France taking bronze in 3:28.38 to give Marchand his fifth medal of the games - four of them

individual golds.

British star Adam Peaty, whose team barely missed out on a medal by finishing fourth, blasted a system that allowed the Chinese swimmers to compete at the Olympics.

"If you touch and you know you're cheating, you're not winning, right?" Peaty said. "As an honorable person, I mean, you should be out of the sport, but we know sport isn't that simple."

Peaty noted that after the initial revelations, additional reports surfaced of more positive tests in the Chinese program that went unpunished.

Caeleb Dressel, who swam the butterfly leg for the Americans, said prior to the Olympics that he didn't have faith in the World Anti-Doping Agency or his sport's governing body, World Aquatics.

With a silver around his neck, he seemed resigned to the belief that nothing will change.

SWIMMING

Finke was under record pace the entire race and really turned it on coming to the finish. He touched in 14:30.67 to break the record of 14:31.02 set by China's Sun Yang at the 2012 London Games.

The silver went to Italy's Gregorio Paltrinieri in 14:34.55, while race favorite Daniel Wiffen of Ireland couldn't follow up his triumph in the 800 freestyle.

He was never a factor and settled for the bronze in 14:39.63, barely holding off Hungary's David Belthelm for the

final spot on the podium.

Finke became only the fourth swimmer to defend the men's title in the longest event at the pool, and the first since Australia's Grant Hackett in 2004.

Sarah Sjöström of Sweden claimed her second gold medal of the Paris Olympics, furiously dashing from one end of the pool to the other to easily claim the 50 freestyle title.

The 30-year-old Sjöström, competing in her fifth Summer Games, had already won the 100 free - an event in which she holds the world record but only decided to swim at the urging of her coach.

She was more surprised than anyone with that victory, which had her overflowing with confidence heading into the 50 free.

Sjöström touched in 23.71, just shy of the world record of 23.61 she set at the 2023 world championships in Fukuoka, Japan. In a race that's usually decided by mere hundredths of a second, the Swedish star turned this into a relative blowout.

She was fastest off the block and clearly in control by the midway point of the single lap, where the swimmers don't even bother coming up for air.

Meg Harris of Australia took the silver in 23.97, while the bronze went to China's Zhang Yufei in 24.20. For Zhang, another of the swimmers implicated in the Chinese doping scandal, it was her fourth bronze of the games to go with a silver.

Walsh, in her first swim of a busy night, just missed out on a medal in 24.21.



China's Xu Jiayu, Qin Haiyang, Sun Jiajun, and Pan Zhanle pose for a photo with their gold medals during the awards ceremony for the men's 4x100-meter medley relay at the Summer Olympics in Nanterre, France. (AP)

Oka claims 3rd gold medal

Zou defends parallel bars title

PARIS, Aug 5, (AP): Zou Jingyuan lived up to his nickname and Shinosuke Oka capped off his dream Olympic debut with another gold medal.

The King of Parallel Bars was close to perfection Monday to defend his Olympic title on the apparatus on the final day of artistic gymnastics at the Paris Games.

It was a rare feat from Zou, who became the first man to defend his title on parallel bars at the Olympics since Sawao Kato of Japan in 1976.

Zou, who is also a three-time world champion in the discipline, claimed gold ahead of Illia Kovtun of Ukraine. Shinosuke Oka of Japan, the all-around champion, took bronze, before he won the horizontal bar title.

A right shoulder injury has been hampering Zou in the buildup to the Games and in Paris. He said his "passion for gymnastics" helped him through.

GYMNASTICS

It was Zou's third medal in Paris after he and his teammates were runner-up behind Japan in the team event. He also claimed a silver in rings.

"I'm super excited for this result, because coming to these Olympics, I had injuries," he said. "I didn't really practice that much. But I went through my routine over and over again in my head, so many times. I had pain in my body, but coming here and seeing all the crowd supporting us has helped me a lot. It made me feel better."

Kovtun kicked off the event with a difficult routine that included a spectacular handstand on one rail that impressed judges and earned him a score of 15.500.

He remained in the lead until Zou posted a massive 16.200 with a sublime routine combining strength elements with impressive aerials that he capped with a stuck dismount. That was the highest single score in artistic gymnastics at these Games.

Oka concluded his Paris Games with a gold on the horizontal bar, his third gold of these Olympics.

The former junior world champion whose career was put on hold by a serious knee injury two years ago edged Angel Barajas of Colombia. Both athletes finished tied for first position with 14,533 points, but Oka was declared the winner thanks to a better execution note.

"I didn't really expect to win a gold medal on the horizontal bar," Oka said. "But I didn't make any mistakes."

Oka, who upset favorites to win the all-around at his first Olympics, said his favorite medal was the gold he won in the team final.

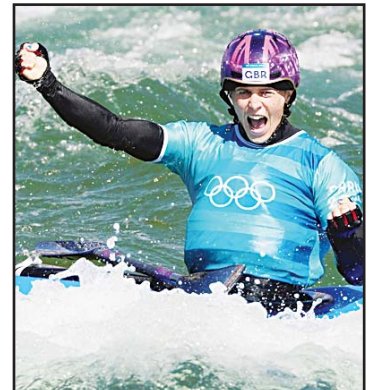
"Because that's what we've been working so hard for," he said. "It's a collective result."

Oka, who won the junior world title when he was 15 but then tore his right ACL, has recently resurfaced at the top of men's gymnastics.

The horizontal bar contest was very tight. Behind Oka and Barajas - who claimed Colombia's first ever medal in gymnastics - Zhang Boheng of China and Tang Chia-Hung of Taiwan shared the bronze medal with a score of 13,966 points and an identical execution note.



Zou Jingyuan, of China, competes during the men's artistic gymnastics individual parallel bars finals at the 2024 Summer Olympics in Paris, France. (AP)



Kimberley Woods of Britain reacts as she competes in the women's kayak cross finals during the canoe slalom at the 2024 Summer Olympics in Vaires-sur-Marne, France. (AP)



Jacob Schubert of Austria competes in the men's boulder and lead sport climbing at the 2024 Summer Olympics in Le Bourget, France. (AP)



Japan's Kenichiro Fumita celebrates after defeating Iran's Mehdi Seifollah Mohsen Nejad during their men's Greco-Roman 60kg wrestling quarterfinal match, at Champ-de-Mars Arena, during the 2024 Summer Olympics in Paris, France. (AP)



Britain's Katy Marchant, Britain's Sophie Capewell and Britain's Emma Finucane compete during the women's team sprint event, at the 2024 Summer Olympics in Paris, France. (AP)

Sports

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Lyles wins dramatic men's 100m gold

Mahuchikh rules the high jump

PARIS, Aug 5, (Xinhua): Noah Lyles of the United States lived up to his pre-race billing by taking gold in the men's 100m, winning an exceptionally tight contest by just 0.005s from Jamaica's Kishane Thompson.

With no runners stretching clear of the rest, a photo finish was required to separate the leading contenders, with Lyles ultimately being determined the winner in a personal best time of 9.784s.

The 27-year-old, who is the current world champion over 100m and 200m, becomes the first Olympic men's 100m winner from the U.S. since Justin Gatlin at Athens 2004.

ATHLETICS

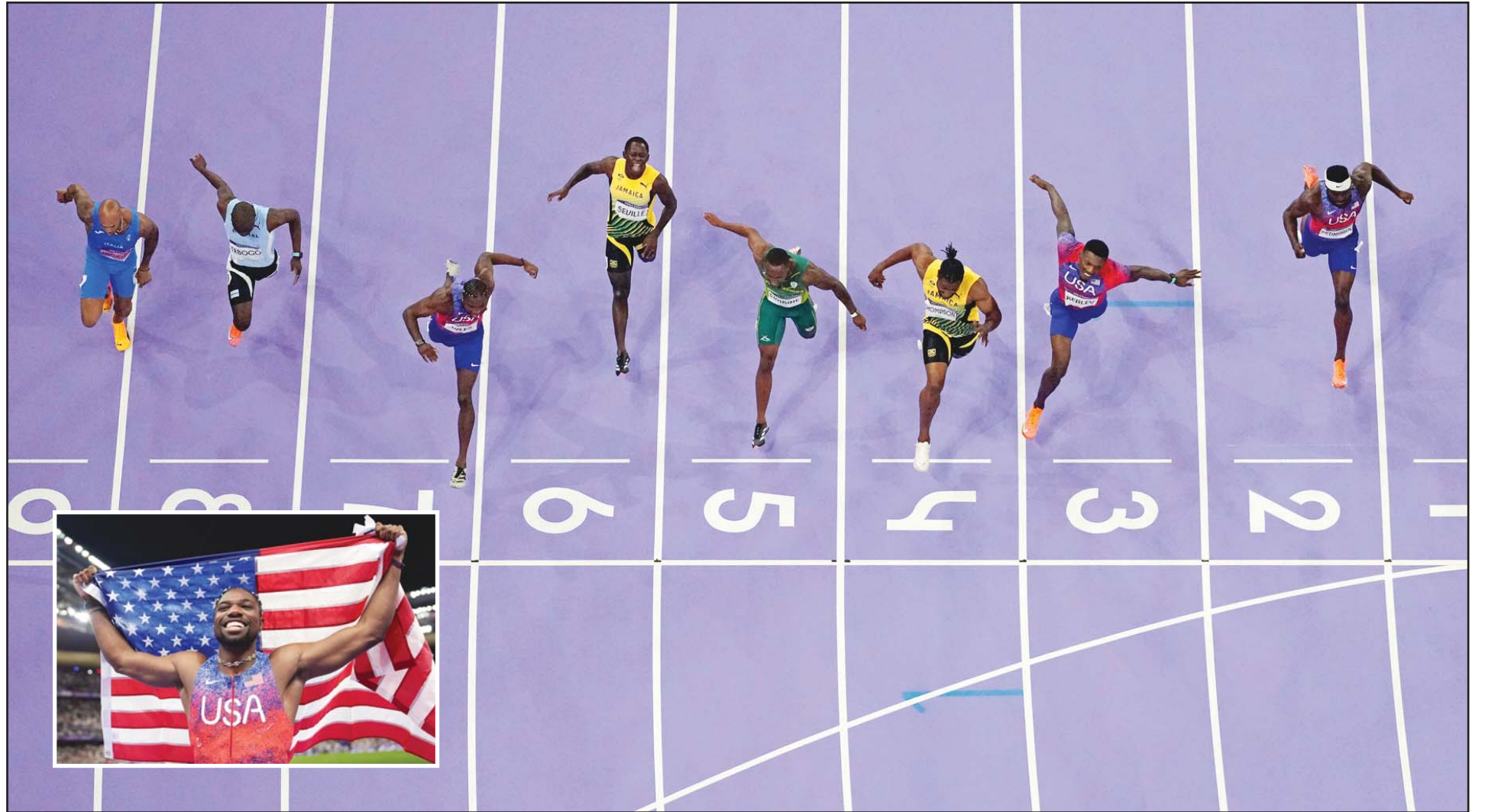
The luckless Thompson, who had appeared slightly ahead of Lyles at the race's halfway point, took silver in 9.789s, with Lyles' teammate Fred Kerley rounding out the medal placings in 9.81s.

Tokyo 2020 gold medalist Lamont Marcell Jacobs finished fifth in 9.85s, after having only narrowly squeezed into the final as one of the two fastest non-automatic qualifiers.

Akani Simbine (South Africa) and Letsile Tebogo (Botswana) both ran national record times of 9.82s and 9.86s respectively as they finished fourth and sixth.

Oblique Seville of Jamaica had run a personal best of 9.81s in his semifinal, but faded to finish eighth and last in the final.

In the women's high jump, world record holder Ukraine's Yaroslava Mahuchikh claimed gold, clearing her best effort of 2.00m on her first attempt.



Noah Lyles, of the United States, in lane seven, wins the men's 100-meter final at the 2024 Summer Olympics in Saint-Denis, France. Inset: Lyles celebrates after winning the men's 100-meters final. (AP)

Australia's Nicola Olyslagers also cleared 2.00m but required three attempts to do so. With neither competitor clearing 2.02m, Mahuchikh was thus awarded gold by virtue of having fewer misses.

Mahuchikh and Olyslagers dominated proceedings, with each athlete having cleared every bar at the first attempt up to 1.98m, by which point every other competitor had been eliminated.

After having confirmed her gold medal, Mahuchikh also had an at-

tempt at 2.04m which she missed, bringing the competition to a close.

Iryna Gerashchenko (Ukraine) and Eleanor Patterson (Australia) tied for the bronze medal on 1.95m, having both been knocked out at 1.98m with three misses each.

The men's hammer was dominated by reigning world champion Ethan Katzberg of Canada, whose first attempt of 84.12m was just 0.68m shy of the Olympic record.

Silver went to Bence Halasz of Hungary with 79.97m, while

Mykaylo Kokhan (79.39m) took bronze, scoring Ukraine's first medal in the men's hammer throw for 28 years.

Tokyo 2020 men's hammer champion Wojciech Nowicki could only finish a disappointing seventh.

Italians dominate balance beam with gold and bronze

Biles finishes off return to Oly with a silver on floor exercise

PARIS, Aug 5, (AP): American gymnast Simone Biles didn't get the golden sendoff she sought.

Biles earned silver in the floor exercise finals on Monday - her 11th Olympic medal - after a routine that included a couple of costly steps out of bounds.

Brazil's Rebeca Andrade became the first gymnast to beat Biles in a floor final in a major international competition, posting a score of 14.166 that finished just ahead of Biles at 14.133.

Jordan Chiles, a longtime friend and teammate of Biles, earned the bronze.

The 27-year-old Biles, considered the greatest in the history of the sport, wasn't at her usual best during a routine set to music from pop icons Taylor Swift and Beyonce.

Still, she boosted her medal haul in Paris to four - gold in the team, all-around and vault finals and a silver that came as a surprise in her signature event.

"I can't be more proud of how I've done," Biles said. "I'm 27 years old walking away from this Games with four medals to add to my collection. Not mad about it."

Biles' medal total (including seven gold, two silver, two bronze) ties Czechoslovakia's Vera Caslavskaja for the second-most by a female gymnast in Olympic history. She missed a chance to add a fifth Paris medal earlier Monday when she fell during the beam final, finishing fifth which was won by Alice D'Amato of Italy with a score of 14.366. Zhou Yaqin of China earned silver with a 14.100, just ahead of bronze medalist Manilla Esposito of Italy. Italy, which won silver behind the U.S. in the team competition, had never medaled on beam before.

Though she can make it look easy at times, it is not. She tumbled to the mat during her floor warm-up and had the balky left calf she tweaked in qualifying last week re-wrapped before she competed.

Her tumbling passes weren't per-

fect - she stepped out of bounds twice - but her difficulty is usually so far above everyone else that it hardly matters.

Not this time. She received a 7.833 execution score that included 0.6 in deductions for stepping out of bounds, allowing Andrade to win her second Olympic gold.

Still, wearing a red-white-and-blue leotard featuring thousands of crystals, Biles ended nine days of competition in Paris by silencing the critics once and for all who have long derided her for pulling out of multiple events at the Tokyo Games three years ago.

GYMNASTICS

She won four medals in all, just one less than she did eight years ago in Rio de Janeiro.

Chiles - the last competitor of the day - initially received a 13.666 from judges. After some delay, her total was boosted by 0.1 when she filed an inquiry about the difficulty component of her score. That pushed

Chiles past Romanians Ana Barbosu and Sabrina Maneca-Voinca and into third.

Biles said after winning the vault final on Saturday that she noticed her haters were "really quiet now, so that's strange."

As opposed to the constant roar of support that followed Biles wherever she went inside Bercy Arena, which has become a hub for celebrities from across the spectrum - including former NFL great Tom Brady on Monday - whenever she performs.

Floor exercise is Biles' signature event, one that allows her to mix boundary-pushing tumbling passes that are the hardest ever done in her sport with charismatic choreography that work together to produce perhaps the most exciting 75 seconds in her sport.

The excitement, however, was tinged a bit by an uncharacteristic lapse in execution.

The routine ends with Biles blowing a kiss, a little wink that she has incorporated into her program in various forms for years.



Gold medalist Rebeca Andrade, center, of Brazil, celebrates on the podium with silver medalist Simone Biles, left, of the United States, and Jordan Chiles, also of the United States, during medal ceremony for the women's artistic gymnastics individual floor finals at Bercy Arena at the 2024 Summer Olympics in Paris, France. (AP)



Italy's Diana Bacosi celebrates after winning the gold medal with teammate Gabriele Rossetti in the Skeet mixed team final at the 2024 Summer Olympics in Chateauroux, France. (AP)

Italians shine

After four Olympic gold medals, Vincent Hancock has had to settle for a silver.

Italy edged the United States 45-44 on Monday in the final of the first Olympic mixed team skeet competition, the first time U.S. shooter Hancock has won a medal of any color other than gold in an Olympic career going back to 2008.

Italy's Gabriele Rossetti and Diana Bacosi, both individual skeet gold medalists in 2016, needed to hit at least seven of their last eight targets to win the gold medal and avoid a shoot-off.

Rossetti missed one of his four - after hitting 20 targets in a row - but Bacosi closed out the contest with four hits to win the last shooting event of the Paris Olympics.

Hancock is also a coach and was shooting alongside his student, Austen Smith, the women's individual skeet bronze medalist.

Hancock was aiming for his fifth career gold medal and second of the 2024 Olympics. It followed his victory in the men's individual skeet which helped him become one of just six Olympians to win the same event four times. No Olympic shooter has won five career gold medals since 1924.

The Italians led team qualification Monday with 149 hits from 150 shots, equaling the world record, and the U.S. had 148 for second place. Rossetti and Hancock posted the only two perfect scores of 75.

China's Jiang Yiting and Lyu Jiani won the bronze medal 44-43 against India's Maheshwari Chauhan and Anantjeet Singh Naruka.

The first mixed team skeet competition replaced the mixed team trap competition which was on the Olympic program in Tokyo three years ago. (AP)

Kuwait U-18 basketball team draws tough Group B for Asian Cup finals

By Khaled Al-Anzi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 5: Kuwait's U-18 basketball team has been placed in a "tough" Group B alongside Iran, South Korea, and India, following the draw for the Asian Youth Cup finals.

Group A features Australia, Chinese Taipei, Lebanon, and Mongolia. Group C includes China, Japan, Kazakhstan, and Qatar, while group D consists of the Philippines, New Zealand, Jordan, and Indonesia.

According to the tournament system, the top two teams from each group will qualify for the quarter-finals. Kuwait will face Iran in its first match on September 2, followed by a match against South Korea the next day, and will conclude its preliminary round on September 4 against India.

The team qualified for the Asian Cup finals after securing second place in the Asian qualifiers held in Kuwait last weekend, alongside the



A file photo of the team in action.

Qatari team.

Kuwait will head to an external training camp to prepare for the Asian Cup, where it will play several friendly matches to enhance its technical and physical readiness.

Norway eliminate Americans

PARIS, Aug 5, (AP): The slam dunk contest was a spectacle. Facing Kobe Bryant was something he will never forget.

Now Chase Budinger has some Olympic memories to go along with those NBA career highlights.

"Playing in the Olympics, playing in this venue, will definitely be up there with some of my greatest basketball moments, for sure," Budinger said after Norway eliminated the Americans from the beach volleyball men's tournament at the Paris Games on Monday.

"My first couple of matches, stepping onto the court with 12,000 people cheering ... it was just an incredible atmosphere," the former Houston Rockets and Minnesota Timberwolves forward said. "Playing underneath the lights, underneath the Eiffel Tower, which was sparkling -- you can't replicate these type of memories that we'll have."

A high school hoops and indoor volleyball star who helped lead Arizona to the NCAA basketball Sweet 16 before playing seven years in the NBA, Budinger joined with Miles Evans in a partnership that was a longshot at the beginning of the two-year Olympic qualifying season. It wasn't until June

- the final two weeks -- that they rose high enough in the points rankings to secure a spot in Paris.

"So much respect for Chase, who was able to play the NBA for many years and was a great player there," said Norway's Anders Mol, who teamed with Christian Sorum to win the gold medal in Tokyo and to beat the Americans on Monday to advance to the quarterfinals. "And now he manages to play an Olympic sport for USA, beach volleyball. Those two sports are so different. He is a really athletic guy. And it's really cool. I have so much respect for that journey."

Budinger and Evans started out the Summer Games with a victory over host France but lost to the Netherlands and Spain, requiring a victory in the lucky loser stage to reach the round of 16. On Monday, they were over-matched by the Norwegians 21-16, 21-14.

"They'll probably go down as the one of the best teams -- if not the best team -- to ever to play together," Budinger said. "They've been playing really great the last few tournaments, and I feel like they are definitely peaking right now."