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GOV'T WORKS OUT LONG TASKS MANIFESTO, EYES SPEEDY EXECUTION

'Upgrade e-systems, shield digital base'

Facelift at Assembly

KUWAIT CITY, July 24, (KUNA): The Kuwaiti Cabinet has urged concerned bodies to develop its electronic systems and applications to raise their efficiency and protect the state's digital infrastructure.

Chaired by His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah at Bayan Palace Tuesday, the Cabinet watched a presentation by Minister of Commerce and Industry, and Minister of State for Communication Affairs Omar Al-Omar about the recent global IT disruption.

Minister Al-Omar assured other Cabinet members that the State of Kuwait dealt immediately with that incident as concerned bodies took some measures topped with opening an operation room, a hotline to receive local complaints and channels for communications with global service providers. Shereeda Abdullah Al-Mousherji, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs, said after the meeting.

Al-Omar noted that government applications and electronic systems have not been affected by that global glitch, due to continued efforts made by the government in enhancing its electronic systems and infrastructure.

"We are paying much attention to information security and electronic infrastructure protection," he said.

On this regard, the Cabinet highly appreciated the big efforts made by the minister and the staff of Kuwait IT and cyber watchdogs.

In addition, First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Minister Interior Sheikh Fahad Yusuf Saud Al-Sabah briefed the ministers about the outcomes of the second international Baghdad conference on combating drugs.

The minister further informed the min-

Kuwait reports KD1.6bn fiscal deficit for FY 2024

See Page 5

isters about the gist of his meetings, on the sideline of the conference, with Iraq's Prime Minister Mohammad Al-Sudani and some senior officials, on means of enhancing bilateral ties in a manner that serves the supreme interests of the two countries.

Furthermore, Minister of Health Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi apprised the Cabinet of the signing of 63 contracts valued at KD 47 million to purchase medicines and medical supplies.

This comes in line with the ministry's eagerness to boost medical sector and ensure the availability of all medicines and medical supplies, the minister stressed.

The Cabinet watched a presentation by Minister of Finance, Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investment and Acting Minister of Oil Anwar Al-Mudhaf on the final financial statements of the government financial departments for FY 2023-2024 which posted a deficit of KD 1.56 billion (USD 5.1 billion).

The Cabinet stressed the need of boosting cooperation of all the State's bodies with the Ministry of Finance to stop any waste of public funds and increase non-oil revenues.

Continued on Page 5

Newswatch

KUWAIT CITY: The Amiri Diwan on Wednesday mourned the passing away of Sheikh Jaber Duaij Al-Ibrahim Al-Sabah at the age of 71.

The funeral service is scheduled to take place after Maghreb (sunset) prayers tomorrow (Thursday). (KUNA)

KUWAIT CITY: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent Wednesday a cable of condolences to Chinese President Xi Jinping, expressing sincere condolences over fatalities inflicted in collapse of a bridge in Shaanxi province due to flash floods.

His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah also sent on Wednesday a cable of condolences to Chinese President Xi Jinping expressing sincere condolences over victims of flash flood that destroyed a highway bridge in Shaanxi province. (KUNA)

KUWAIT CITY: The launch of the new news channel on July 28 represents a qualitative leap and a pioneering step for Kuwaiti media, said Head of the Local Affairs Sector and Official Government Spokesman, Amer Al-Ajmi Wednesday.

In remarks to KUNA, Al-Ajmi affirmed that the launch of the new news channel embodies the directives of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and under a close follow-up of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and the ambitious vision of the Minister of Information and Culture, Abdurrahman Al-Mutairi. (KUNA)



A general view of houses in Sabah Al Ahmed Residential City on Wednesday. The Public Authority for Housing Welfare (PAHW), in collaboration with the First Group Company for General Trading and Contracting, continued to receive completed constructions in the west of Sabah Al Ahmed Residential City for the second day. - See Page 8

Photo by Samer Shaqir

Joint efforts vital for fruitful results: Kuwait

Support pledged for global peace, no nukes

Kuwait committed to safeguard human rights: Sheikha Jawaher

KUWAIT CITY, July 24, (KUNA): Kuwait is dedicated to advancing and safeguarding human rights, affirmed Assistant Foreign Minister for Human Rights Affairs, Ambassador Sheikha Jawaher Ibrahim Duaij Al-Sabah.

In a statement made to KUNA following a meeting organized by the Ministry with civil society organizations, Sheikha Jawaher Al-Sabah highlighted Kuwait's efforts to collaborate with key stakeholders and bolster transparency and community engagement in human rights initiatives.

The session included representatives from various government agencies and civil society groups, underlining Kuwait's commitment to international human rights standards.

Sheikha Jawaher Al-Sabah stated that the

meeting reflected Kuwait's dedication to integrating civil society into the national report preparation process for human rights.

She emphasized the importance of exchanging ideas and constructive proposals to achieve common goals. The gathering focused on preparing Kuwait's fourth periodic report for the Universal Periodic Review (UPR4) and the second national periodic report for the Arab Charter on Human Rights.

Civil society representatives commended the meeting and expressed their readiness to fully cooperate with the national committee in preparing and following up on human rights recommendations.

They reviewed humanitarian activities and discussed how to best reflect these efforts in national reports.

The meeting is part of a series of consultations by the national committee to ensure the creation of comprehensive and transparent reports that highlight Kuwait's national efforts and commitment to implementing international recommendations on human rights.



Sheikha Jawaher

combating human trafficking. We are actively working to safeguard the rights of all workers and prevent any violations."

Al-Mazyad highlighted the ongoing efforts in this regard through the coordination of a permanent committee that links PAM with civil society institutions and public benefit associations.

She said, "Human trafficking and smuggling of migrants is a crime that requires concerted efforts and comprehensive coordination between government agencies, civil society organizations, and regional, Arab, and international organizations."

Al-Mazyad praised the efforts exerted by the State of Kuwait in combating this crime. She called for more commitment to implementing law No. 91/2013 regarding combating human trafficking and smuggling of migrants.

Continued on Page 5

EPA contains Ras Al-Julaia oil spill as pollution control plan activated

KUWAIT CITY, July 24, (KUNA): The Environmental Public Authority (EPA) announced Wednesday that it has contained the oil spill near Ras Al-Julaia after activating the national plan to combat marine oil pollution and notifying all relevant authorities.

Speaking to KUNA, Deputy Director General for Technical Affairs at EPA Dr. Abdullah Al-Zaidan said that following a report from the Ministry of Interior about an oil slick six kilometers off the coast of Ras Al-Julaia, EPA activated the plan to take necessary actions and prevent the spill from reaching vital coastal installations in the south.

Kuwait National Petroleum Company (KNPC) secured the oil slick and combated it at sea, preventing any patches from reaching the shores opposite the observed area, he mentioned.

Coordination was also established with the Regional Organization for the Protection of the Marine Environment (ROPME) to use satellite imagery to assess the extent and spread of the oil spill, he said, adding that the source of the spill is still unknown, and further study of the area will be conducted to identify potential sources.

Al-Zaidan expressed gratitude to all parties involved in activating the national plan to combat marine oil pollution, noting that the spill has been contained, and that KNPC, along with other relevant authorities, will continue to monitor the situation and the marine environment along the shores near Ras Al-Julaia.

Kuwait Oil Company (KOC) confirmed that the observed patches did not result from their marine exploration operations; however, since they are committed to supporting EPA and other government entities, they have assigned specialized teams to assist in containing the spill using their expertise.



A long trail of oil spill near Ras Al-Julaia.

KUNA photo

Generations Fund surges to \$980 bln

KUWAIT CITY, July 24: The International Sovereign Wealth Fund Institute has reported a significant increase in the assets of Kuwait's Future Generations Fund, which has risen by \$56.6 billion to reach \$980 billion, reports Al-Qabas daily.

This marks a substantial increase from \$923.4 billion in March of this year.

According to the institute, the Generations Fund has moved up to the fifth position globally, overtaking the Saudi Public Investment Fund, which has maintained assets at \$925 billion.

The Future Generations Fund is distinguished by its strategic investments made outside Kuwait. This strategy involves a diverse portfolio that includes traditional assets such as stocks and bonds, as well as alternative investments in private equity, real estate, and infrastructure.

Day by Day

IF WE truly seek ambitious government action, the path is wide open for the government to do so.

Kuwait is in dire need of a government of 30 efficient ministers who are aware of the shortcomings and are capable of delivering solutions.

Having trustworthy but inefficient ministers will only exacerbate the bad performance and procrastination.

Most ministers shoulder responsibilities greater than those of a public authority or a directorate.

Certain public authorities are crucial and require independence to communicate directly with the head of State. One among such authorities is the Public Authority for Investment, but it currently operates as a subsidiary of the Ministry of Finance.

In advanced countries worldwide, public institutions related to investment are managed by the most efficient officials.

... Yet tomorrow is another day.

Zahed Matar



Deputy Foreign Minister Ambassador Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah on Wednesday chaired a meeting of the borders committee, held at the Foreign Ministry headquarters. The participants at the meeting broached topics included in the session agenda.

KUNA photo

PAFN okays new list of fee hike for numerous services provided

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

KUWAIT CITY, July 24: The Board of Directors of the Public Authority for Food and Nutrition (PAFN) has approved a new list of service fees, which includes financial increases for several services provided by the Authority. The updated fees range from 250 fils to 500 dinars per service, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

This regulation, a copy of which was obtained by Al-Seyassah, implements Cabinet Resolution No. 956 of 2021. The resolution addresses the depletion of liquidity in the general reserve and seeks to find radical solutions for the state's budget deficit. Additionally, it responds to the Ministry of Finance's requirements

as outlined in their letter approving the regulation. This regulation will come into effect early next January and includes specific timelines for violations and fee due dates, as well as explanations to help beneficiaries understand the fees.

The regulation details fees for the management of imported food, covering 27 services. Proposed fees include 30 dinars for opening a transaction for a shipment of imported food items (for the first 20 items) and an additional 5 dinars for every 10 additional items. For the "imported food export" certificate, the issuance fee is 40 dinars for every 20 items and an extra 5 dinars for every 20 additional items. The fees for renewing or amending the imported food export certificate are set at 20 dinars.

Prayer Timings

Fajr 03:32 Asr 15:30
Sunrise .. 05:03 Maghrib .. 18:45
Zohr 11:54 Isha 20:13

Local

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

Expected weather for next 24 hrs:

By Day: Very hot with light to moderate northwesterly wind, with speeds of 10-35 km/h.

By Night: Hot to rather hot with light to moderate northwest-

Weather			
erly wind, with speeds of 10-30 km/h.	Abdaly	49	31
	Jahra	50	35
	Salmiyah	46	36
	Jal Aliyah	48	33
	Nuwaisib	50	34
	Wafra	50	32

Council forms national team to enhance Kuwait's rankings on global indicators

Kuwait to implement women's fingerprint consent in marriage deals

KUWAIT CITY, July 24: Dr. Maryam Al-Azmi, Acting Secretary General of the Supreme Council for Family Affairs, announced that the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, through its Fatwa Department, has legally approved a proposal requiring women's consent via fingerprint before completing their marriage contracts, reports Al-Rai daily.

This approval is now pending implementation by the Ministry of Justice, which will soon announce the procedure. Dr. Al-Azmi highlighted that this measure responds to international demands and aligns with efforts to enhance women's rights in Kuwait.

The Council is also working on a gender balance guide to increase women's representation in leadership roles and decision-making positions. Additionally, a family protection guide is being developed to provide clear information

on health, psychological, social, shelter, and legal services available to victims of violence.

In efforts to improve Kuwait's international standing on women's issues, the Council has formed a national team to enhance Kuwait's rankings on global indicators for women.

This includes collaboration with the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and the development of a national strategy for women, peace, and security.

The Council is also updating family-related strategies, preparing a special women's strategy, and working on a project to unify data on domestic violence. Furthermore, a volunteer team called "Friends of the Supreme Council for Family Affairs" is being proposed to support awareness campaigns and community volunteer work.

Divorce cases see notable increase: statistics

'Marriage rate in Kuwait during 2023 lowest in 5 years'

KUWAIT CITY, July 24: In 2023, official figures revealed that approximately 538 Kuwaitis married a second wife, 51 Kuwaitis married a third wife, and 3 Kuwaitis married a fourth wife. This data highlights the various marital practices within the country, reports Al-Qabas daily.

According to statistics from the Central Statistical Admin-

istration, the overall marriage rate in Kuwait for 2023 was the lowest in the past five years, at 21.4%.

A total of 11,166 marriages were recorded, with 9,280 (83.1%) being between Kuwaiti men and women. Marriages between Kuwaiti men and non-Kuwaiti women accounted for 1,365 cases (12.2%), while marriages

of Kuwaiti women to non-Kuwaitis reached 521 cases (4.7%).

Divorce cases also saw a notable increase, with approximately 5,932 divorces reported throughout the year. May was the peak month, recording around 629 divorce cases.

Educational background appeared to influence divorce rates, with those holding univer-

sity degrees being more likely to divorce compared to other educational levels. Specifically, about 4,239 divorces involved Kuwaiti couples with university degrees.

In terms of geographic distribution, Saad Al-Abdullah City reported the highest number of divorce cases, with a total of 291 recorded.

A hotline for reporting domestic violence and another for family consultations have been established. The Council is preparing a

policy guide for the Center for the Protection of Battered Women and has opened two protection centers in different governorates, with

plans for a third center.

The Council operates under Decree No. 401 of 2006 and the organizational structure issued in

2019, aiming to fulfill its social responsibilities and uphold local laws and international charters that protect families.



Libyan ambassador to Kuwait.



Sudanese ambassador to Kuwait.

First Deputy Premier, ambassadors of Libya & Sudan discuss developing ties

KUWAIT CITY, July 24, (KUNA): Kuwait's First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yusuf Saud Al-Sabah on Wednesday discussed with ambassadors of Sudan and Libya means of enhancing relations and developing joint work with friendly countries.

A statement by Chief of the General Staff said that Sheikh Fahad Al-Yusuf separately received Ambassadors of Sudan and Libya.

They discussed issues of mutual concern and the recent regional and international developments, it said.

Oil Ministry hosts lecture on travel safety procedures for employees

KUWAIT CITY, July 24: The Public Relations and Petroleum Media Department at the Ministry of Oil organized an informative lecture titled "Procedures and Guidelines Followed During the Travel Season" at the Oil Sector Complex Theater yesterday morning, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

This event was held in collaboration with the Ministries of Interior, Foreign Affairs, and Health. Attendees included employees from the Ministry of Oil, the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation, and media professionals.

Sheikha Tamader Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Director of Public Relations and Petroleum Media at the Ministry of Oil, opened the session by emphasizing the ministry's commitment to educating and raising awareness among employees about travel safety during the summer. She highlighted the importance of implementing specific procedures and directives to ensure the safety, health, and secure return of employees.

Sheikha Tamader commended the ongoing coordination between the Ministry of Oil and various Kuwaiti ministries and bodies. She underscored the importance of this collaboration in disseminating travel guidelines and procedures, which are crucial for the effective and comprehensive implementation of preventive measures.

Assistant Ahmed Al-Laho from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs shared essential travel tips for attendees:

- Ensure travel documents are valid and obtain tourist visas from embassies or accredited offices.
- Avoid carrying excessive cash or gold jewelry.
- Only carry authorized therapeutic medications with an official prescription.
- Secure an international driving license in addition to a Kuwaiti license.
- Purchase comprehensive travel insurance to cover medical expenses and theft.

Al-Laho also advised travelers to use emergency contact numbers provided by Kuwaiti embassies abroad, available on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs website. For additional support, travelers can contact the Consular Communication Center at +965159 (inside Kuwait), +965159 (outside Kuwait), or +96522225504 (backup number).

Dr. Ghazi Muhanna Al-Mutairi from the Ports and Borders Health Department at the Ministry of Health presented information about the "Traveler's Clinic." This service

offers preventive healthcare, including vaccinations, medications, and advice to prevent travel-related diseases. Dr. Al-Mutairi noted that there are six traveler's health clinics distributed across the country to ensure accessible health services and necessary care before traveling.

The Public Relations and Petroleum Media Department at the Ministry of Oil recently organized an enlightening lecture titled "Procedures and Guidelines Followed During the Travel Season" at the Oil Sector Complex Theater. This event, held in collaboration with the Ministries of Interior, Foreign Affairs, and Health, drew a diverse audience including employees from the Ministry of Oil, Kuwait Petroleum Corporation, and media professionals.

He emphasized the importance of assessing health risks based on the travel destination and planned activities. Dr. Al-Mutairi highlighted key health measures, including:

- Receiving routine and travel-specific vaccinations.
- Using preventive medications for malaria and treatments for travelers' diarrhea.
- Following advice on food and water safety.
- Taking precautions to prevent insect bites.

Colonel Othman Gharib Al-Mansouri from the Ministry of Interior offered valuable tips for ensuring a smooth travel experience:

- Keep your passport secure and be cautious of electronic fraud, particularly when booking travel tickets and hotels at unusually low prices.
- For those traveling abroad in their private cars, adhere to traffic regulations, maintain the vehicle, and check tires and air conditioning before departure.
- Colonel Al-Mansouri also noted that the General Department of Nationality and Travel Documents has streamlined administrative processes to assist travelers. Specifically, it now offers passport printing and renewal services at Kuwait International Airport Terminal 4 for those with imminent travel plans, ensuring they can obtain or renew their passports within 24 hours of departure.

This comprehensive lecture aimed to equip attendees with crucial information and practical advice to enhance their travel experience and ensure their safety and well-being during the travel season.

Kuwait's envoy to US calls for youth voices amid Gaza crisis

Embassy honors 54 students named as Ambassadors of Peace

KUWAIT CITY, July 24: Ambassador of the State of Kuwait to the United States of America Sheikh Al-Zein Al-Sabah has stressed the need to strengthen the voices of young people to "restore our common humanity amid the exposure of their peers in the Gaza Strip to unspeakable violence," reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Sheikha Al-Zein Al-Sabah made the statement at a ceremony hosted by the Kuwaiti Embassy in Washington to honor 54 students who were chosen among more than 77,000 qualifiers at the US level as Ambassadors of Peace for the year 2024.

Chairman of the Board of Directors of Kuwait-American Foundation (KAF) Dr. Hassan Al-Ibrahim and Vice President Fawzi Al-Sultan were present at the event.

Sheikha Al-Zain Al-Sabah stressed that "violence knows no religion, nationality or borders. The injustice that befalls young people anywhere is an injustice that befalls young people everywhere."

Horrific

She pointed out that young people in Gaza are suffering from "unspeakable violence" as a result of the horrific aggression in one of the most devastating conflicts of the 21st century.

She asserted that "there is a grave responsibility on the shoulders of young people to break the cycle of violence by uniting ranks to achieve peace. Strengthening the voices and writings of young people is one way to restore our humanity and lead us all toward a brighter and more peaceful future. It is impossible to talk about violence and injustice without mentioning the Palestinian issue, specifically what Palestinian youths are exposed to in Gaza, the West Bank and prisons in the occupied Palestinian territories."

She stressed that the widespread destruction which affected the living, educational and social infrastructure of Palestinian youths and children is "unprecedented in the 21st century."

She hopes to see more distinguished youth initiatives through the program, and that these actions will contribute to breaking the cycle of violence everywhere in the world.

On the other hand, KAF Director Hassan Al-Ibrahim pointed out that children all over the world are vulnerable to violence. He appreciated the efforts of the participants in alleviating the suffering of all those exposed to violence and injustice everywhere and the expansion of the program to include new states, the most recent of which is Hawaii.

The ceremony was aimed at showcasing the in-depth articles of distinguished students about violence and the innovative solutions, which will be included in the writings preserved in the Library of Congress. This will contribute to documenting their voices and ideas for future generations.



A group photo during the 6th Foreign Office Consultations (FoC) between India and Kuwait.

Deputy FM receives India's joint secretary for Gulf affairs

Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Ambassador Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah received Joint Secretary for Gulf Affairs at the Indian Ministry of External Affairs Aseem Mahajan on Wednesday.

Mahajan is visiting Kuwait to head India's delegation in the sixth round of political meetings.

Meanwhile, the 6th Foreign Office Consultations (FoC) between India and Kuwait co-chaired by JS (Gulf), Aseem Mahajan and AFM Asia, Ambassador Sameeh Essah Johar Hayat were held today in Kuwait. Both sides reviewed the entire gamut of multifaceted ties to further strengthen and diversify it, says

a press release issued by the Indian Embassy.

Mr Aseem Mahajan, also had a bilateral meeting with H.E. Ms Tahani Rashid Al-Naseer, Assistant Foreign Minister (Legal), Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the State of Kuwait. Both sides reviewed the progress of bilateral agreements and MoUs for early finalization.

New mechanism to help regulate civil ID addresses

PACI Kuwait implements new electronic lease system for commercial properties

KUWAIT CITY, July 24: The Public Authority for Civil Information (PACI) is working to regulate rental contracts in commercial and investment buildings, to streamline the process of renting and vacating apartments between tenants and lessors. This new mechanism will also help regulate the addresses on civil ID cards, reports Al-Rai daily.

PACI Acting Director, Mansour Al-Medhen, confirmed the authority's commitment to providing the best service to visitors efficiently.

Currently, 70 percent of the authority's services are offered electronically, and preparations are underway to launch a platform that will allow lease contracts in commercial and investment buildings to be signed electronically.

This platform will ensure that addresses are accurately recorded for both citizens and residents, eliminating the need for paper contracts except in exceptional cases.

Al-Medhen explained that while landlords can still sign paper lease contracts, tenants will only be able to prove their residence through the electronic contracts issued by the platform, which is expected to be launched early next year.

Vacating

Additionally, landlords will be required to report new tenants and those vacating the property through the platform.

Al-Medhen also mentioned that the Authority is strict about issuing civil cards to Gulf nationals and is considering issuing a "To Whom It May Concern" certificate as a temporary substitute for the civil ID for three months.

This certificate will allow the holder to complete transactions. After verifying the Gulf national's presence in the country and confirming their employment and income, a civil ID will be issued.

Al-Medhen revealed plans to increase fees for issuing, renewing, or replacing lost cards, as well as increasing fines for non-compliance. There are also plans to increase fees for services provided to the private sector.

To address the issue of delayed civil card issuance, a fine of 20 dinars will be imposed on those who fail to collect their cards. Additionally, an auction will be held to contract multiple companies for card delivery, preventing monopoly and improving efficiency.

Functionality

Regarding card delivery on holidays, Al-Medhen clarified that it is not feasible due to the need for weekly maintenance of the card delivery machines to ensure their functionality during official working days.

He also highlighted that the PACI law requires individuals to report a change of residence. If a new owner or property owner deletes the previous resident's address, the Authority will notify the individual through the "My ID" and "Sahel" applications and publish the change in the official newspaper, Kuwait Today. The individual must update their address to authenticate any operations in the "My ID" application.

Lastly, citizens can register a new address through the Sahel application or by visiting the Authority.

For investment housing contracts, proof of residence requires a rental contract and the owner's

signature on the real estate document, or approval from the Power Authority.

If the contract is under a third party's name, an acknowledgment from both the tenant and owner is required to confirm the individual's residence.

Meanwhile, the Public Authority for Civil Information (PACI) has announced on the Official Gazette (Al-Kuwait Al-Youm) about the cancellation of the residential addresses of 207 people based on the housing owners' acknowledgment or due to the demolition of the buildings.

PACI advised these individuals to register their new address with the supporting documents within 30 days from the date of the announcement; otherwise, they will be penalized as per Article 33 of Law No. 32/1982, which stipulates a fine not exceeding KD100. This amount may vary depending on the number of persons.

Earlier in June, PACI published a similar announcement, indicating that the addresses of 397 people were deleted. At the time, it confirmed the launching of a new service on the unified government application, 'Sahel', called 'Address Availability' service, which enables the user to inquire about the availability of a residential address in its records and amend the status if necessary in order to avoid paying the stipulated fine.

Moreover, PACI vehemently denied the rumor about the collection of fees for the authentication process on 'My Identity' (Kuwait Mobile ID) application. PACI stressed that it provides services through the application for free, including authentication, e-signature and sending notifications.

'Speak up ministers ... we need to listen to your visions, goals'

"IN SPITE of some stumbles and mistakes made by a few ministers, the government is performing well overall. It may not meet our high expectations as citizens, but it is doing a good job so far," columnist **Asrar Jawhar Hayat** wrote for **Al-Qabas** daily.

"Our ambition is to see Kuwait advance and lead in all fields, but we understand that progress comes gradually, and we remain optimistic.

"However, despite the government's achievements here and there, it appears hesitant to communicate. Most of our ministers remain silent, refraining from making statements, holding press conferences, or giving interviews, except in very rare cases.

"Even though the government is trying to prove its competence, the most crucial element in building trust with citizens is communication.



Asrar Hayat

"Our ministers, however, often hide behind anonymous statements attributed to 'official sources' or 'high-level sources,' or they issue statements in the name of their ministries.

"We need to hear from them directly, to listen to their visions, plans, accomplishments, and future goals. I cannot understand why most ministers avoid public appearances, especially when some are doing a commendable job and have tangible achievements.

"What harm is there in holding a press conference or a television interview to announce these accomplishments? Conversely, there are stalled projects, and there must be reasons for their delays. Why do ministers fear explaining these reasons to the public to gain their trust and keep them informed?"

"When examining ministers' public appearances in recent years, it's evident that communicating with the public often depends on the individual minister's personality rather than being a consistent governmental approach.

"For example, in some governments, we see ministers who are active and present with the public, while others in the same government are rarely seen, indicating a lack of coordination regarding ministers' media presence.

"Recently, it seems there is a governmental consensus to minimize appearances as much as possible!

"In contrast, officials and leaders in neighboring countries are constantly engaging with the public, even on social media platforms. They make it a point to share news themselves and interact with responses, something we miss in Kuwait despite the evolving media landscape that demands modernization.

"It seems that silence extends beyond the ministers, as even the government spokesperson has become notably silent. It is rare to find a statement, comment, or at least a press conference to explain the decisions of the Council of Ministers."

Also:

"Rumor or gossip is news that spreads without a reliable source, arousing people's curiosity, driven by various motives and goals, and effectively altering or falsifying public opinion," columnist **Al-Jazi Tariq Al-Sanafi** wrote for **Al-Anba** daily.

"With the rise and proliferation of applications, rumors have become widespread across most platforms, often originating from 'fake' accounts or tweeters, referred to as time bombs.

"These accounts, which incite and spread rumors, are highly active in these applications, stirring institutions, groups, and individuals against the state, society, or other groups. Personally, I have encountered many such accounts on my official account through the (X) application.

"But what is the relationship between journalists and fake tweeters or accounts? What distinguishes a rumor from spreading news?"

"It must be said that the Kuwaiti press has been distinguished by two main factors: first, its journalistic writers, and second, freedom of expression and opinion. These factors have contributed to the advancement of Kuwaiti journalism across the Arab world.

"Journalists have the right to address various topics, create news, and publish issues and events while discussing them and proposing solutions, all within the boundaries of systems, laws, and permissible limits.

"When we, as writers, address a specific topic or issue and offer solutions, this is part of 'journalistic work.' It is also part of the guaranteed freedom of expression.

"However, fake accounts began to 'fish in troubled waters,' as these groups found themselves stronger than the press and writers.

"They attacked any idea, event, or issue discussed by journalists, often inciting the public against writers or newspapers - and they often succeeded due to their manipulation and malice.

"The journalist creates or publishes news, issues, or events so that the concerned authorities can take necessary actions.

"This is not considered spreading false or rumored news, as some claim. In contrast, the goal of the fake tweeter is to destabilize, discredit newspapers, spread rumors, and undermine trust between individuals and institutions, ultimately creating chaos. They do not discuss issues or aim for reform.

"Everyone, including the government, competent authorities, and citizens, must recognize the danger of these fake accounts, which may create uncon-

trollable public opinion and future chaos that we can prevent today.

"They work tirelessly against every citizen and defender of the homeland. There is a significant difference between the journalistic writer and the fake tweeter. In red pen: Fake accounts are the real danger!"

□ □ □

"The so-called 'visit visa' allows temporary entry into the country for purposes such as visiting family or friends, attending funerals or weddings, or for short-term business visits. However, are there any standardized regulations governing its issuance? It does not seem so," columnist **M. Adel Al-Jarallah Al-Kharafi** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

"Obtaining a visit visa often depends on luck or personal connections, which can be challenging for citizens and can cause embarrassment when inviting someone to attend a wedding or a funeral.

"I personally experienced such embarrassment when friends wanted to come to Kuwait to offer condolences, but both they and I were unsuccessful in obtaining entry visas that would allow them to enter the country. This situation was embarrassing for both me and my friends.

"Recently, a friend from a brotherly Arab country obtained a visit visa for his family, including children under ten years old. When the initial visa period expired, he applied for an extension due to his children's summer vacation and his wife's teaching job in their home country. However, he was surprised when his extension applications were repeatedly rejected despite multiple attempts.

"I personally saw no valid reason for rejecting his request, and I backed his application, but I was unfortunately unsuccessful. This led me to wonder: Why would such a request be denied despite meeting all conditions and requirements?"

"In my opinion, what is needed are clear and publicly announced standards and requirements that are fair and transparent for both the visitor and the host. No one should have to rely on personal connections or luck. It is not appropriate for the process of obtaining a visit visa to be based on mood or luck. We live in a country that is beloved by many, and everyone should feel welcome to visit. Let us adopt a more inclusive approach and warmly welcome all visitors to this hospitable land.

"In conclusion, it is worth noting that Kuwaitis always welcome openness to the world, particularly our Arab brothers. Simplifying procedures and requirements for visiting the country is a commendable and desirable initiative. Kuwait is a respected nation that many admire and eagerly anticipate visiting, interacting with its people, and learning from its experiences."

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"Article 8 - an article that needs to be reviewed - is related to the wives, widows, and divorcees of Kuwaitis. However, this article has been badly exploited to the extent that the expatriate wife of a Kuwaiti citizen, as soon as she receives Kuwaiti nationality that she acquired through the husband with his consent, gets rid of her husband, takes half the house, obtains licenses to bring in marginal workers, and then marries someone of her original nationality. Because of all this, the Kuwaiti husband suffers a stroke," columnist **Talal Al-Saeed** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

"This is not an exaggeration, as it has happened multiple times. It got to the point where one husband renounced his Kuwaiti citizenship due to oppression, causing the expatriate wife, who had acquired citizenship through dependence, to lose both her citizenship and her right to reside.

"The issue is straightforward. Kuwaiti citizenship should be revoked under article 8 when the relationship with the husband, through whom citizenship was acquired, ends.

"Many citizenship have been withdrawn according to article 8 by the decision of the Director of Citizenship Affairs, after proving that the recipient was not entitled to it, colloquially termed as being 'written with a pencil.' This termination can occur at any time, as article 8 lacks immunity compared to other citizenship articles that necessitate a decision from the Supreme Committee for Citizenship, approved by the Council of Ministers.

"Considering Article 8 and its implications, it is not difficult to restrict and revoke what needs to be revoked under it. Such revocation serves as adequate discipline for the rest.

"Women covered by the first article express gratitude and appreciation, eagerly anticipating the monthly bonus allocated to them by the decree of the late Amir (May Allah have mercy on him).

"In contrast, those covered by the seventh article compete with men by acquiring licenses, renting them out, and employing marginal workers, a practice commonly referred to as visa trading.

"This is our current state - the consequence of naturalizing Kuwaiti wives who hold Arab passports.

"The ongoing uprising to correct our course must be thorough, addressing all facets, not just superficial issues. The file is replete with violations that require review, decisive action, and the signature of a hand that does not tremble.

"Our challenges are numerous and our population is aging, the solutions remain within our grasp, provided we prioritize the nation's best interests."

– Compiled by **PFX Fernandes & Mahmoud Ateyieh**



Lieut-Gen Hashem Al-Rifai receiving the Undersecretary of the National Guard and Deputy Commander of the UAE National Guard.

Lieut-Gen Al-Rifai receives Emirati team

Kuwait, UAE National Guards boost co-op

KUWAIT CITY, July 24, (KUNA): Lieutenant General Hashem Al-Rifai, Undersecretary of the National Guard, met on Wednesday with a delegation from the UAE National Guard to strengthen bilateral cooperation, coordination, and the exchange of expertise between the two countries.

According to a statement by the National Guard, Lieutenant General Al-Rifai welcomed the Emirati delegation led by Brigadier General Ahmed Al-Zaabi, Deputy Commander of the National Guard, and Colonel Pilot Rashid Al-Naqbi, Director of the Search and Rescue Center. Discussions focused

on enhancing cooperation frameworks and leveraging Kuwaiti National Guard experiences in search and rescue operations, with potential plans for a joint memorandum of understanding.

During the meeting, Lieutenant General Al-Rifai conveyed greetings from His Highness Sheikh Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah, Chief of the National Guard, and his Deputy Sheikh Faisal Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. He emphasized the significance of such visits in strengthening military cooperation, aligning with the leadership visions of both countries to foster development through mutual expertise exchange.

KUNA photo

Court orders woman to return dowry, jewelry in divorce case

'Appeals' upholds acquittal in KD 2.5 million tender scandal

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

KUWAIT CITY, July 24: The Court of Appeals obligated a female citizen to return the trousseau, jewelry, gifts and half of the dowry to her ex-husband as they got divorced before consummating their marriage, because she underwent gastric sleeve operation without informing him.

The husband's lawyer, Attorney Youssef Hussein, said that his client married the defendant, but they have not consummated the marriage and the divorce was granted at a later date with the acknowledgment of the defendant and as proven by the announcement of the divorce that the marriage was for a dowry. The plaintiff asked his ex-wife to return half of the dowry and gold jewelry.

The court ruled that the woman should return the gifts and half of the dowry, considering the marriage was unconsummated and as per the opinion of the expert in this field.

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Acquittal upheld: The Court of Appeals upheld the verdict issued by a lower court, which acquitted an employee, a trader, and an engineer who were accused of facilitating the seizure of KD 2.5 million in a tender for installation and maintenance of

air conditioning units and heaters at the Amiri Diwan.

In its ruling, the court stated that the indictment papers did not adequately analyze or explain the contract. It stressed that the responsibility for signing the contract does not solely lie with the first suspect, as there is a committee comprising employees and other officials involved.

The employee was accused of approving the completion of unfinished works, specifically the installation and maintenance of heaters and air conditioning units in the halls of the Amiri Diwan, in favor of a company. This action facilitated the misappropriation of amounts exceeding KD 2.5 million.

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'Permission not taken': The Court of Cassation, headed by Judge Abdullah Al-Jassem, confirmed that it is not permissible for a father to enter his son's room and search it without the latter's permission.

Based on this principle, a citizen was acquitted of drugs consumption; since his father entered his room without permission, found the drugs in his room and reported the crime of drug use to the police.

According to the case files, the father of the accused informed the police that his son was in an abnormal state - agitated and nervous - after he refused to give him the money he needed to buy drugs.

When the police officers arrived at the house, the father directed them to the location of his son and they arrested him. However, the son violently resisted arrest, causing injuries to the officers as described in the forensic medical report.

The police officers managed to subdue the accused and referred him

to the police station, along with the suspicious green herbal substance and six capsules.

Lawyer for the accused, Attorney Abdul Mohsen Al-Qattan, pointed out the contradictions in the witnesses' statements, the maliciousness of the accusation, its fabrication and the unreasonableness of the incident.

Al-Qattan argued that the evidence which the Public Prosecution relied on in proving the accusation against the appellant is not valid as his client's father reported to the police that he committed the crime of consuming narcotic substances without strong evidence as stipulated in Article 1/54 of the Code of Criminal Procedure and Trials. He said it was merely the father's statement that may be true or false.

He added the father entering the son's private room, searching it without the son's permission, and finding the seized items in the folds of the son's clothes is considered an invalid search. The evidence that resulted from such a search, what was found in his room or the result of the analysis of his urine sample by forensics is invalidated based on the decision of the prosecution.

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Drunk driver arrested: A young man was arrested for possessing and consuming liquor, and for driving under the influence.

According to security sources, Jahra securitymen were patrolling Jahra when they noticed a man driving his vehicle in a reckless manner. They immediately stopped to check on him and noticed his disoriented behavior, and found a half-full liquor bottle in his vehicle.

He was arrested and referred with the liquor bottle to the concerned authorities for necessary legal action.

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MoE monitors teacher's case: The Ministry of Education announced that it is closely monitoring the situation regarding the detention of a teacher pending trial on charges of committing acts contrary to public morals and ethics, reports Al-Rai daily.

In a statement posted on its account on the "X" platform, the Ministry expressed strong condemnation of such immoral actions, which it views as contradictory to Islamic values and societal traditions.

The Ministry denounced the behavior of the individual involved, emphasizing that it undermines the role of teachers as virtuous educators and bearers of a noble message.

The Ministry of Education reiterated its commitment to upholding public morals, ensuring the security, safety, and psychological and social well-being of students.

It affirmed its readiness to take all necessary legal actions and enforce internal regulations in such cases, emphasizing its dedication to maintaining a safe and sound educational environment for students.

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KD 800 stolen: An expatriate filed a report at Mutlaa Police Station against a compatriot who allegedly beat and robbed him at his workplace in Mutlaa.

The expatriate told police that two brothers of the same nationality approached him; then one of them beat him and stole KD800 from his left pocket. He clarified that the brother of the accused did not assault him.

601 house licenses issued

KM dismantles all emergency, rapid response teams: official

KUWAIT CITY, July 24: Director General of Kuwait Municipality Saud Al-Dabbous has issued a decision to cease the operations of emergency and rapid response teams across all branches of Kuwait Municipality in all six governorates, reports Al-Qabas daily.

The decision also included evacuation of the buildings used by these teams and their handover to the heads of Kuwait Municipality branches to be redistributed depending on the needs of each municipality branch.

Meanwhile, Deputy Director of Capital and Jahra Affairs Eng. Nizar Al-Awadh revealed that the Engineering Licenses Department in Capital Municipality issued 601 licenses for the construction of private houses in the first six months of 2024.

He explained that, during the same period, 19 licenses were issued for the construction of investigation buildings, 117 licenses for industrial buildings, seven for branches of cooperative societies, and 28 licenses for the construction of mosques and power transformers.

In addition, 15 licenses were issued for the demolition and reconstruction of commercial buildings, 29 licenses for agricultural construction, 12 for sunshades, 217 for new buildings, eight repair and maintenance licenses, 139 demolition licenses, and 383 licenses for building renovations, during this period.

Eng. Al-Awadh said the department received 10,000 transactions from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry for the issuance of commercial licenses during the first half of 2024.

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Security campaigns: The Capital Security Directorate, in cooperation with the Emergency Police Department and the Capital Traffic Department, recently carried out a security inspection campaign in Shuwaikh Industrial Area to arrest Residency Law violators and those wanted by law, reports Al-Anba daily.

This campaign resulted in the arrest of several Residency Law violators who were referred to the concerned authority to take the necessary legal measures and then deport them.

Registration opens

Municipality issues warnings, citations

KUWAIT CITY, July 24: The Public Relations Department of Kuwait Municipality reported that the supervisory team from the Engineering Audit and Follow-up Department in Mubarak Al-Kabeer Governorate conducted its fifth field inspection tour in the Sabah Al-Salem area, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

During this tour, which covered seven properties, the team issued warnings to property owners for various violations.

As a result, four property owners responded to the warnings and took corrective actions.

For the remaining properties, where the owners did not comply with the warnings, the team issued three official citations.

This inspection aims to enforce regulations and ensure compliance with municipal standards.

The Municipality has established a central team led by Youssef Al-Fajji to address complaints and observed violations, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

This team will coordinate with the supervisory departments in the governorates to take necessary measures and enforce regulations and systems.

The goal is to ensure that violations are dealt with promptly and effectively, maintaining compliance with municipal standards.

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Volunteer registration opens: The General Staff of the Army, the Administration, and Human Resources Authority has announced the opening of volunteer registration for the military service, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

This opportunity is available for non-commissioned officers and individuals holding university degrees, diplomas, high school certificates and their equivalents, as well as the eleventh grade certificate and below.

Registration is open from today, Wednesday, until August 8th. Interested individuals can register through the website: <http://vc.kuwaitarmy.gov.kw>.

WEDDINGS, UPTO 140

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US Ambassador Karen Sasahara (3rd from right) during the enlightenment meeting.

American Ambassador Sasahara commends students at NUKS event

Over 800 Kuwaiti high school students awarded 'scholarships' to study in US

KUWAIT CITY, July 24: The US Ambassador to Kuwait Karen Sasahara revealed that more than 800 high school students in Kuwait received scholarships to continue their studies at American universities, noting this is a great achievement that the whole nation should be proud of, reports Al-Jarida daily.

Sasahara made the statement during the enlightenment meeting organized by the National Union of Kuwaiti Students (NUKS)-American branch at the Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Center for Kuwaiti students who obtained scholarship to study in American universities. She stated "I would like to thank you for choosing

to study in the United States. You could have gone to many other places and many other countries, but you chose the United States of America to seize the opportunity to learn in one of the 4,500 institutions distinguished for providing flexible and strongly supportive education for international students. We always strive to facilitate visa procedures and other matters concerning the students."

Meanwhile, President of the Union Khaled Al-Dokhi said the desire to study in American universities -- far from the land of Kuwait -- is considered a courageous and significant decision.

Addressing the students, he pointed out that "what matters is success in your choice of a coun-

try which excels scientifically and practically in various fields of life. It has the most powerful universities in the world."

He affirmed the union is ready to respond to inquiries and assist the students in everything they need from the Ministry of Higher Education, cultural units and embassies.

Moreover, Director of the Corporate Relations Department at Zain-Kuwait Hamad Al-Musaybih confirmed Zain's sponsorship of the activities of the union for a full year. He said the company is not new in this sponsorship, as it has always been the union's strategic partner since its establishment.

Kuwait's fish supply steady

Zubaidi abundant; union calls for support, regulation

By **Abdul Nasser Al-Islami**
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, July 24: The Kuwaiti Fishermen Union has confirmed that local Zubaidi and other types of fish are available in Sharq and Fahheel markets in abundant quantities and at reasonable prices.

In a press statement on Tuesday, the union explained: We are at the beginning of the opening of the fishing season. The price of Zubaidi ranges from KD50 to KD100 per basket depending on the size and quantity. We hope the Zubaidi season will herald well and stabilize prices for the consumer. The fishermen are keen on selling their daily catch in the markets as soon as they arrive from fishing trips."

The union stressed the importance of the availability of local products, because they are sustainable. It called on the authorities concerned with the fishing sector to stand with the fishermen and support them, asserting they are committed to selling their catch in Sharq and Fahheel markets.



Photo by Mohammad Morsi
A file photo of the local Zubaidi fish at the fish market.

It also voiced objection to those selling outside the markets, because those who offer their catch outside the markets are of unknown origin. It pointed out that they are fish sellers through social media. Their fish are of unknown origin and far from oversight. "We hope the consumers will not be misled by tricks in promoting their fish, because they are not reliable," the union warned.

It emphasized the need for regulatory authorities to monitor sales outside the markets, while urging consumers to buy fish from known sources and not to pay attention to tempting advertisements in which the fish may be adulterated or mixed, as there is a lot of manipulation and it is not subject to any oversight by the concerned authorities.

The union reiterated the demand of the Support Committee in the Ministry of Finance for a share of diesel and financial support for the fishing sector, especially since the shrimp season will begin in a few days -- on Aug 1. It affirmed that the Kuwaiti shrimp contributes to the decline and stability of fish prices.

It is hoping that the share of diesel would return to what it was before, particularly since there have been 248 license applications for shrimp fishing in economic waters so far.

"In addition to the other types that work with spinning and squeezing, we do not want to waste half of the shrimp season waiting for the monthly diesel quota, which runs out in about half of the month. We are hoping that the finance officials will understand the just demand for the return of the diesel quota and an increase in annual fish subsidies, similar to other sectors," the union concluded.



Jahra Governor Hamad Al-Habashi with key figures from the public transport sector.

Jahra Governor meets transport heads to tackle transit upgrades

KUWAIT CITY, July 24: The Jahra Governor Hamad Al-Habashi recently met with key figures from the public transport sector to discuss the challenges and strategies for enhancing public transportation in Jahra Governorate, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The meeting included the Executive Director of Transport Affairs at the Public Transport Company, Mohammed Al-Fuhaid, and the Director of the Public Transport Department, Walid Al-Khalaf.

Also in attendance were Mohammed Al-Otaibi, the Director of Gov-

ernment Procedures and Public Relations at City Bus Company, and Asaad Al-Anzi, the Director of Public Relations at KGL Company.

During the meeting, they discussed the problems and obstacles facing the companies in implementing a comprehensive linkage strategy for public transport in the Jahra Governorate.

They also considered the addition of new bus stations in Al-Mutlaa and Al-Abdali and the renovation of existing stations in the Jahra Governorate to transform them into smart stations that align with modern development standards.



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Promo period from 23rd June to 31st July 2024

Terms & conditions apply*

PIA required to provide summary report

Kuwait Investment Authority 'takes over' Sheikh Jaber Bridge project as PIFSS exits

KUWAIT CITY, July 24: After the Public Institution for Social Security withdrew from the Sheikh Jaber Bridge investment project due to its involvement in other ventures, the Council of Ministers has assigned the Kuwait Investment Authority (KIA) with the responsibility of launching and awarding the project, reports Al-Qabas daily.

This initiative, which includes the development of the northern and southern artificial islands of the Sheikh Jaber Bridge, aims to boost the state's non-oil revenue streams.

In a correspondence reviewed by Al-Qabas, the Council of Ministers has directed the KIA to coordinate with the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy, the Ministry of Communications, and the Kuwait Municipality to advance the infrastructure preparation for the investment sites. The PIA is required to provide a summary report on the project's progress within three months.

Previously, the Council had instructed the PIFSS to work with relevant entities to streamline the investment project study and assess its alignment with the institution's goals. However, the Institution declared its inability to participate due to its existing project commitments.

According to a study, the two artificial islands will be divided to offer multiple investment opportunities on each island. This approach aims to allow more investors to participate, increase investor interest by accommodating medium-sized financing budgets, enhance demand through diverse components and activities on the islands and present less risky investment opportunities for the private sector.

The study highlights several benefits of offering each island separately:

Investor Exclusivity -- Each investor can develop the entire island according to their vision, providing a unique and cohesive development.

Unified Studies -- Simplified traffic and environmental studies, easing licensing and

regulatory processes.

Single Management -- Investors can manage the entire site without interference from secondary parties.

Broad Participation -- Medium and large companies can participate, potentially improving investment outcomes.

Sustainable Design -- The size of the site allows for public spaces, supporting sustainable development principles.

Varied Components -- Projects can include diverse components beyond just profitable activities.

Efficient Management -- Government efforts are concentrated on managing two packages, optimizing administrative processes.

Optimal Utilization -- Effective use of government building sites and meeting agency needs.

The study also identified potential drawbacks:

Administrative Burden -- Increased coordination efforts required by the government for multiple investors.

Traffic Congestion -- Potential for traffic issues due to the volume of activity from various investors.

Environmental Pressure -- Multiple uses and components may strain the island's sensitive environment.

Space Limitations -- Limited space for parking and other requirements for each developer.

Vision Fragmentation -- Risk of inconsistent development visions impacting the bridge's prestige.

Attractiveness Variability -- Differences in site attractiveness may lead to investor preferences shifting towards more appealing locations.

Offering each island separately might affect overall investment opportunities if an investor fails. The model demands significant effort from investors to finance, implement, and manage the project, which could limit the number of capable participating companies.



Sheikh Jaber Bridge

KUNA photo

PAAET discusses vocational training for special needs with Social Affairs Minister

KUWAIT CITY, July 24: In a bid to enhance the integration of people with special needs into society, the Director General of the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training, Dahsan Al-Fajjam, met with the Minister of Social Affairs, Dr. Amthal Al-Huwailah, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

During the meeting, a visual presentation was made on a proposal to provide vocational training courses for people with spe-

cial needs.

This program is designed to equip individuals with the necessary skills to enter the labor market and secure job opportunities that are tailored to their specific needs and requirements.

The initiative aims to foster greater inclusion and support for people with special needs, helping them to contribute effectively to the workforce and society.

Revenue at KD 23.6 bln; expenditure totals KD 25.2 bln

Kuwait reports KD1.6 billion fiscal deficit for FY 2024

Closing Account Summary (KD Mil)			
	Closing 23/24 (Ending in 31 March 2024)	Closing 22/23 (Ending in 31 March 2023)	%Var to 22/23 Closing
Revenue			
Oil	21,528	26,713	(19.4%)
Non-Oil	2,117	2,089	1.3%
Total Revenue	23,645	28,802	(17.9%)
Expenditure			
Salaries and Wages	(14,548)	(12,977)	12.1%
Subsidies	(5,882)	(4,388)	(34.0%)
Capex	(1,868)	(2,050)	(8.9%)
Other	(2,908)	(2,955)	(1.6%)
Total Expenditure	(25,206)	(22,370)	12.7%
Transfer to (FGF)	0	(64)	
Fiscal Balance	(1,561)	6,368	

KUWAIT CITY, July 24: The Kuwait Ministry of Finance today announced the State of Kuwait's closing accounts for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2024. The State's accounts recorded KD 23.6 billion in revenue, KD 25.2 billion in expenditure, and closed with a fiscal deficit of KD1.6 billion. The State of Kuwait's fiscal year starts on April 1st and ends on March 31st. (By law, the Closing Accounts do not include revenue from the Future Generations Fund (FGF, also known as the Kuwait Sovereign Wealth Fund), which is managed by the Kuwait Investment Authority. All investment gains from FGF activities are reinvested into the FGF as mandated by its governing law.)

23/24 Revenue Highlights:
Total Revenue: KD 23.6 billion, down 17.9% from closing

22/23
 ■ Oil revenue: KD 21.5 billion, down 19.4% from closing 22/23
 ■ Non-oil revenue: KD 2.1 billion, up 1.3% from closing 22/23
 ■ Average Kuwaiti crude selling price for the fiscal year: USD 84.36 per barrel
 ■ Average oil production: 2.650 million barrels per day.

23/24 Expenditure Highlights:
 ■ Wages and subsidies: KD 20.4 billion, comprising 81.0% of all expenditure.
 ■ Capital Expenditure: KD 1.86 billion, comprising 8.0% of all expenditure.
 ■ Total Expenditure: KD 25.2 billion up 12.7% from last year's closing accounts.

Gov't employee allowances surge

Budget jumps 30.7% to 1.7 billion dinars

KUWAIT CITY, July 24: In the 2023/2024 budget, the total allocation for 31 different types of allowances for government employees was approximately 1.7 billion dinars, marking a 30.7% increase from the 1.3 billion dinars allocated in the 2022/2023 fiscal year, reports Al-Qabas daily.

This is a substantial rise of about 103% compared to the 834 million dinars allocated in the 2021/2022 budget.

Finance Minister Anwar Al-Mudhaf has criticized this ongoing rise in allowances, suggesting that the general budget suffers from a continuous and unjustified increase in these expenditures.

He has expressed a desire to review and potentially reduce these allowances in the near future.

The general budget has allocated substantial sums for various allowances, most of which have seen increases in recent years.

Nature of Work Allowance - 295 million dinars, up 21% from 242.6 million dinars in 2021/2022
 Danger Allowance - 168.6 million dinars, up 29.2% from 130.4

KPC to disburse performance bonuses to oil sector officials

KUWAIT CITY, July 24: Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) will disburse the excellent job performance bonus to oil sector officials within the next two weeks; including the heads, deputies and directors of the corporation and its subsidiaries, reports Al-Anba daily quoting sources from the oil sector.

Sources revealed the maximum bonus for officials is equal to six months' salary depending on their job performance rating. Sources were quick to clarify that no official has so far received this maximum amount, as the bonus usually ranges from three to four months' salary. Sources also highlighted the professionalism and commitment of the executive management to save money and that they do not abuse their power to serve personal interests.

Housing Allowance - 28.8 million dinars
 Car Allowance for senior officers - 2.4 million dinars
 In the past two years, several new allowances have been introduced such as: Cash Allowance During Service (Civil) - 485 million dinars; Reservation Allowance - 109 million dinars and Cash Allowance at End of Service (Civil) - 35 million dinars. The total spending on allowances and benefits has grown significantly, reaching 6.016 billion dinars in the 2023/2024 budget, compared to 4.647 billion dinars in the 2021/2022 budget.

Farwaniya Governor 'pledges' support for cooperatives to boost community services



Minister of Information during his visit to JPPI headquarters.

Al-Mutairi & GCCJPI chief explore enhanced joint media cooperation

KUWAIT CITY, July 24, (KUNA): Kuwait's Minister of Information and Culture Abdurrahman Al-Mutairi explored on Wednesday with Director General of the GCC Joint Program Production Institution (GCCJPI) Sheikh Mubarak Fahad Al-Sabah ways to strengthen joint

cooperating. This came during Al-Mutairi's visit to JPPI headquarters, Ministry of Information said in a press release. Both sides discussed several topics of common interest, including media, noted the release.

KUWAIT CITY, July 24: The Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Athbi Al-Nasser emphasized the importance of cooperative work and its significant role in implementing various vital projects aimed at enhancing the services provided to the residents of the region, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

He highlighted the governor's readiness to offer full support and cooperation with the heads of cooperative societies to improve their services and advance their social, health, sports, and cultural activities.

This statement was made during his reception of the heads of the boards of directors of cooperative societies in the Farwaniya Governorate to discuss the obstacles facing cooperative work and explore ways to improve service levels.

Sheikh Athbi Al-Nasser's focus on collaborative efforts underscores the commitment to fostering a supportive environment for cooperative societies to thrive and better serve the community.

Kuwait upholds

Continued from Page 1

Al-Mazyad stressed that PAM provides all types of support and assistance to the permanent committee responsible for implementing the national strategy to prevent human trafficking and smuggling of migrants.

She highlighted that PAM, in cooperation with the Kuwait Trade Union Federation and the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry, is actively engaged in implementing the national strategy to prevent human trafficking and smuggling of migrants through the participation of the permanent committee dedicated to this cause.

It is worth mentioning that the event to mark the World Day to Combat Human Trafficking and Smuggling of Migrants will be held on July 30 at The Avenues Mall, Phase 2, Entrance 9 and 10, from 10:00am to 10:00pm with the aim of reaching the largest segment of society to raise their awareness in this field.

'Upgrade e-systems,

Continued from Page 1

The Cabinet approved the drafts regarding the final financial statements of independent and attached institutions for FY 2023-2024, and referred them to His Highness the Amir.

Finally, the Cabinet reviewed the expectation pace of the 2024 tourist projects, and thanked the Touristic Enterprises Company for its sincere efforts to develop and implement these projects.

The Kuwaiti Government has issued 35 resolutions and instructions since May 19 in line with guidelines by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah that has drawn the task map for the near future.

The Cabinet decisions cover a host of issues at diverse levels including four main files; development, financial and economic reforms, national identity, and combating corruption.

At the development level, the Cabinet began with endorsing a draft decree of forming the board of the central apparatus for public tenders, guided by instructions to double efforts, facilitate procedures, and speed up the endorsement of key ventures, as outlined in the government manifesto.

The Government has tasked relevant authorities to accelerate establishment and operation of Mubarak Al-Kabir Mina (port), stressed on the necessity of speedy work-out of accords with China, ahead of submission to the ministerial economic affairs commission to prepare a report in this respect. Moreover, the Cabinet directed relevant apparatuses to speed up the

pace of the tasks to accomplish vital ventures namely the railroad in the State of Kuwait, the development of the structural plan of Al-Sulaibikhat port and face lifting the sea-side region in Al-Jahraa.

Additionally, it has decided to form a commission to draw up the government task manifesto, and asked it to set priorities and timetables.

At the investment level, instructions had been issued to the Public Investment Authority and other concerned authorities to intensify efforts to multiply domestic businesses and create jobs for the youth.

As to the citizenship file, it had agreed during consecutive meetings to a number of minutes by the supreme commission for acquiring citizenship, addressing various cases where a number of people had been stripped of their Kuwaiti nationality, lost their citizenship, or obtained it by deception, counterfeiting or other illegal means.

While issuing stiff instructions to maintain justice, combat corruption, and bolster the overseeing apparatuses, the Government had taken legal measures to strip farmers who used plots of land for illegal purposes.

Along with the same approach, the Cabinet tasked the ministers, departments' officials, and government apparatuses to execute recommendations included in the annual report of the government performance follow-up apparatus for 2023 and submit reports to the apparatus every three months.

To stem excessive expenditures, the council of ministers has tasked the Ministry of Finance to pinpoint the avenues of funds' misappropriations, set the measures that need to be taken to tackle it in tandem with the government directions while stressing that it is imperative to coordinate with the Audit Bureau for safeguarding the public funds.

In another vein, the Government has asked the Ministry of Health to coordinate with other public departments to carry out the national health survey.

The Government had arranged joint meetings aimed at boosting cooperation among ministries and affiliate entities as part of the approach to accelerate accomplishments and adopt flexible policies for sake of tangible accomplishments.

Furthermore, the Cabinet has adopted the "open door policy," setting specific hours to receive ordinary citizens and advising officials to communicate closer with the nationals.

Among the concrete initial accomplishments was the November declaration about the availability of 15,000 jobs, declaring tenders for road overhaul, speeding up the digital transformation and steps for addressing energy issues and challenges. "There is a huge volume of development enterprises on the path," declared His Highness Prime Minister

Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah on May 28, affirming the top-level policy to accomplish ventures and put the wheels on the development track to move forward at the highest level of speed as possible.

Setting the breadlines of the new policy, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah announced at an extraordinary Cabinet session on May 15 the kick-off of a new phase of serious and tasks, continuous giving for the homeland and the citizens for which "we have taken the oath to preserve their freedoms, interests and funds."

The National Assembly in Kuwait is undergoing significant changes. According to a source, the number of employees will be gradually reduced, and both the Abdullah Al-Salem Hall and the members' building will be closed, adds Al-Qabas daily.

The affiliation of the National Assembly has been transferred to the Ministry of State for Cabinet Affairs, a move considered routine according to constitutional provisions for such cases.

Some General Secretariat employees are still handling administrative and financial tasks related to terminated services at the Council Channel and the National Assembly News Network "Al-Dustour."

This includes transferring the residencies of expatriate employees to other entities and facilitating the return of Kuwaiti employees to the Ministry of Information. The Al-Majlis Channel building is also expected to be handed over to the Ministry of Information next week.

The presence of patrols around the National Assembly building is described as a routine protective measure, also applied to Abdullah Al-Salem Hall, which was closed following an Amiri order.

Support pledged

Continued from Page 1

Kuwait welcomed any new initiatives to establish zones free of nuclear weapon and mass destruction arms.

Ambassador Al-Hayen retreated the significance of implementing General Assembly resolution 1995 and establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East.

Kuwait welcomed the success of the conference as it called for all conference participants to engage in negotiating a comprehensive and binding treaty in this regard, to enhance regional and international security.

Ambassador Al-Hayen pointed out that while Kuwait affirmed the right of all states to use atomic energy for peaceful purposes under the Non-Proliferation Treaty, it warned against the danger of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction proliferation amid today's challenges and tensions in our world.



Group photo from the event.

'The Age of Glass' exhibition highlights glass role in sustainability, innovation

KUWAIT CITY, July 24: The Department of Electrical Engineering at the College of Engineering and Petroleum, recently organized an exhibition titled "The Age of Glass," reports Al-Seyassah daily.

This event was held under the patronage and attendance of the Spanish Deputy Ambassador Ismael Tornos Millan and supported by the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences.

The exhibition focused on the scientific and technological applications of glass, particularly its role in achieving environmental sustainability. It emphasized the importance of glass in daily life and its potential for innovation.

Dr. Khalid Al-Hazza, Acting Dean of the College of Engineering and Petroleum, remarked that "The Age of Glass" was not only a tribute to the material but also an educational opportunity.

He highlighted that the exhibition showcased the material's evolution from the past to its future potential, providing a unique chance for students and researchers to explore the wonders of glass and its contributions to sustainability and technological advancement.

وزارة التجارة والصناعة

RECALL INFORMATION

Mercedes-Benz
 Model: 167
 Model year: 2020 - 2023.
 Total Vehicles: 1576

Mercedes-Benz AG has determined that on certain GLE and GLS (167 platform) vehicles, the 48V ground connection under the passenger seat might have come loose. In this case, the cable lug of the ground line would not be secured correctly. Subsequently, the electric resistance of the connection might increase.

RECALL REASON

REMEDY

As a precautionary measure, the bolting of the ground connection will be checked on the affected vehicles and corrected. The required work certainly be fixed free.

CONTACT

Please contact Al Mulla Automobiles Co.
 Phone 1-887-888
 Mercedes-Benz Service Centre - Al Shuwaikh Industrial Area - 9 street
 Mercedes-Benz Service Centre - Al Shuwaikh Industrial Area - 13 Street
 Mercedes-Benz Service Centre for Passenger Cars- Al Ahmadi - 29 street

This Recall is run pursuant to articles (42,43,44,45,46,47 and 48) of no.27/2015 issuing the executive by laws of law no.39/2014 on Consumer Protection.

World News Roundup

Europe

UK PM faces grilling from lawmakers: Newly elected British leader **Keir Starmer** faced a House of Commons milestone on Wednesday, fielding lawmakers' queries at the boisterous weekly Prime Minister's Questions session.

It was the first such session since Starmer's Labour Party won a landslide election victory on July 4, returning to power after 14 years. The center-left party won 412 of the 650 seats in the House of Commons.

Starmer is more accustomed to asking the questions after spending four years as leader of the opposition to a Conservative government. Former prime minister Rishi Sunak now fills that role as leader of the defeated Conservative Party.

Starmer was greeted with a loud cheer by Labour lawmakers packed onto the green benches in the Commons. The often rambunctious spectacle of PMQs struck an unusually cordial note, as Sunak and Starmer stressed their mutual commitment to supporting Ukraine in its defense against Russia's invasion.

The prime minister told the opposition leader he "wholeheartedly agree" on the need to arm Ukraine and set it on the path to NATO membership - words not often heard between them.

The two politicians also sent best wishes to British athletes at the Paris Olympics, although, Sunak added, "I'm probably not the first person they want to hear advice from on how to win." (AP)



Starmer

Man arrested after British soldier stabbed: A masked attacker on a motorcycle stabbed and seriously injured a British army officer in daylight near a barracks in southeast England, witnesses and police said Wednesday.

A 24-year-old man was arrested soon after on suspicion of attempted murder, Kent police said.

Police said the assailant acted alone and the stabbing was not believed to be an act of terror. They are investigating if it was related to the suspect's mental health.

The officer, who is in his 40s, suffered serious injuries and was airlifted to a hospital for treatment, the British army said. He was in serious but stable condition, police said.

Prime Minister Keir Starmer said he was "shocked and appalled," writing on social network X. "All our thoughts are with the soldier, his family and our Armed Forces community, who serve to keep all of us safe. I wish him a swift recovery." (AP)

□ □ □

Ukraine FM seeks 'common ground' with China: Ukraine's Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba has said he is seeking "common ground" in talks this week with his Chinese counterpart on ending his country's war with Russia.

Kuleba met Wednesday with Foreign Minister Wang Yi in Guangzhou, a major commercial and manufacturing center in southern China. It is the first visit to the country by a Ukrainian foreign minister since Russia's invasion of Ukraine, which has strained Ukraine's relations with China.

"I am convinced that a just peace in Ukraine is in China's strategic interests, and China's role as a global force for peace is important," Kuleba said in opening remarks.

China has close ties with Russia and has pushed for an end to the war that would take into account the interests of both sides. That position has put it at odds not only with Ukraine but also Western European countries and the United States, which are demanding a Russian withdrawal as the basis for any settlement. (AP)

□ □ □

Russian parliament passes measure: Russia's lower house of parliament on Tuesday approved legislation expanding the reach of a law on declaring foreign-funded organizations "undesirable," a designation that blocks their work in the country.

The measure passed its final reading in the Duma. It goes next to the upper house and then to President Vladimir Putin to become law. It adds the criterion to an existing law that an organization can be declared undesirable if foreign government bodies founded it or participate in it.

The original law was passed in 2015, but its use accelerated sharply after Russia sent troops into Ukraine in February 2022 and cracked down on criticism of its military and the government. More than 175 organizations are now on the list of undesirables, including the English-language online newspaper The Moscow Times, the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and Greenpeace International, along with lesser-know groups like the Wild Salmon Center. (AP)

□ □ □

Activists glue themselves to taxiway: Climate activists glued themselves to the ground at Cologne-Bonn Airport in western Germany on Wednesday, forcing officials to suspend flights for a few hours, authorities said.

Police said five people glued themselves to a taxiway at the airport early in the morning. German news agency dpa reported. Flights were suspended at about 5:45 a.m. The protesters had been removed and flights were cleared to resume shortly after 9 a.m.

The Last Generation activist group said in a statement that supporters in several small groups cut through the perimeter fence, approached the airport and then attached themselves to the asphalt with a mixture of sand and glue.

The group is demanding that the German government negotiate and sign an international agreement on a global exit from the use of oil, gas and coal by 2030. (AP)

□ □ □

Suspected Croatia gunman faces charges: A suspected gunman in a mass shooting at a nursing home in Croatia is facing 11 criminal charges, including murder, after he was accused of killing six people, including his own mother, and wounding as many more, police said on Tuesday.

The carnage stunned Daruvar, a spa town of some 8,500 people in central Croatia and sent shock waves throughout the European Union country where such shootings have been rare despite many weapons left over from war in the 1990s.

"The 51-year-old walked into the nursing home in Daruvar where he opened fire, with the intent to kill multiple people," police said in a statement.

The statement said he "committed 11 criminal acts," including murder and attempted murder. It said the charges also include femicide, which refers to women being killed because of their gender.

Police charges are a first step in the criminal proceedings against a suspect. (AP)

□ □ □

'Stop execution of German citizen': A consortium of international human rights organizations is calling for Belarus not to execute a German citizen recently condemned to death after being convicted of terrorism, extremism and mercenary activities.

Rico Krieger, a medical worker with the German Red Cross, was convicted and sentenced in late June in a secret trial, according to the respected Belarusian human rights group Viasna. The German Foreign Ministry confirmed that a German was sentenced to death but gave no other details.

The court verdict said Krieger was involved in an explosion, Viasna said, but other information from the closed trial was not available.

Belarus is the only country in Europe that still executes prisoners. Reports say that convicts are informed on the day of the execution that it will take place. (AP)

□ □ □

Belarus frees head of banned party: The head of a banned Belarusian opposition party who had been behind bars for two years was released on Monday as the authoritarian country frees a trickle of political prisoners, according to the respected human rights group Viasna.

Mikalai Kazlou, who led the United Civic Party, was serving a 2 1/2-year sentence on allegations of organizing actions violating the public order. His arrest came amid a harsh crackdown on the opposition that began as mass demonstrations gripped the country. Those protests followed a presidential election in 2020 whose disputed results gave Alexander Lukashenko a sixth term.

Many prominent opposition figures were imprisoned in the crackdown and others fled the country, including Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, who was Lukashenko's prime challenger in the election.

The Belarusian Supreme Court banned the United Civic Party a year after Kazlou's arrest. (AP)



US Vice President Kamala Harris campaigns for president as the presumptive Democratic candidate during an event at West Allis Central High School on July 23 in West Allis, Wis. (AP)

Politics

'Nov election a choice between freedom, chaos'

Trump and Harris in tight race: poll

WASHINGTON, July 24, (Agencies): A new poll in United States showed intense competition between the Republican candidate Donald Trump and his Democratic rival Kamala Harris, who announced her candidacy on Sunday, following the withdrawal of the former candidate Joe Biden.

The poll, conducted by Marist Poll in collaboration with National Public Radio (NPR) and News Hour (PBS), indicating that 46 percent of registered voters support Trump, while 45 percent of voters support Harris.

The survey was conducted on the 22nd of this month, which was the day after Harris announced her candidacy for the Democratic Party, as it included over 1,100 voters.

Former president Trump became the official nominee for the Republican Party last week, while Harris has not yet been officially endorsed Democratic nominee, in spite of the fact that she has secured enough delegates to become the official candidate.

The Democratic National Convention (DNC 2024) will be held in Chicago on August 19, where the official nominee would be endorsed, however the party is expected to hold a virtual meeting before that to formally vote on Harris as their candidate.

Meanwhile, a roaring crowd of battleground state voters greeted Harris on Tuesday as she opened her public case against Trump by declaring November's election will be "a choice between freedom and chaos."

"In this campaign, I promise you, I will proudly put my record against his any day of the week," Harris said. "We believe in a future where every person has the opportunity not just to get by, but to get ahead."

Harris arrived in the Milwaukee area having locked up nomination support from Democratic delegates after President Joe Biden dropped his reelection bid on Sunday. It was her first campaign rally since she jumped into the race just two days ago with Biden's endorsement.

The event reflected a vibrancy that had been lacking among Democrats in recent weeks, and Harris was intent on project-

ing a sense of steady confidence about the November election. She's pulled in \$100 million in donations since Sunday afternoon and on Tuesday picked up the backing of more Democratic officials and political groups, including congressional leaders Charles Schumer and Hakeem Jeffries.

By stopping in Wisconsin, Harris was putting down a marker in one of the "blue wall" states along with Michigan and Pennsylvania that Democrats see as essential for securing a presidential victory.

The visit comes a week after the Republican National Convention wrapped up in the city and as Harris works to sharpen her message against the GOP nominee with just over 100 days until Election Day.

Harris' trip to the state was a sharp contrast to Biden's July 6 visit, when he was trying to reassure Democrats who were wary after his troubling performance in the June 27 debate against Trump. Sen. Tammy Baldwin, who is up for reelection this year, had skipped the Biden event, but she spoke before Harris on Tuesday.

Leaning

Harris is leaning into her resume as a former district attorney and California attorney general, seeking to draw a contrast with Trump who is the first former president to be convicted of felony crimes.

"She's prepared to meet this moment because she was professionally trained to prosecute a criminal, and unfortunately that's who the Republicans have put forward," said Sen. Laphonza Butler, D-Calif.

Harris strode onto the stage Tuesday to the anthem "Freedom" from Beyonce's "Lemonade" album and set about contrasting herself with Trump.

"I took on perpetrators of all kinds. Predators who abused women. Fraudsters who ripped off consumers. Cheaters who broke the rules for their own gain. So hear me when I say, I know Donald Trump's type," she said.

Harris cast her campaign as a "people first" endeavor, again aiming to draw a contrast with Trump, who she said represented special interests and corporations.

She also portrayed her rival's policies as being antiquated and backward looking. "We are not going back," she said. "And I'll tell you why we are not going back. Ours is a fight for the future." That echoed Barack Obama who frequently deployed the refrain during his 2012 reelection fight to argue against Republican ideas.

Harris' swift ascent over the past few days has required her to vet possible running mates, a process being led by Eric Holder, who was attorney general during Barack Obama's presidency. But her impact so far has been galvanizing Democrats.

Thrilled

Before the Tuesday speech, Diane Walter, 68, of South Milwaukee said she was thrilled that Harris is the candidate.

"I've been a Democrat my whole life," Walter said. "She's energizing the party again."

Tevin Humphrey, 21, came with his mother Myeisha Johnson, 41, and described the vice president as "a great figure to look up to."

"She's a better representative of the diversity we're looking for," he said.

Trump and his campaign have quickly turned most of their focus on Harris and have asserted that they were prepared for the change and it did not alter their plans.

The former president has nicknamed the vice president "Lyin' Kamala Harris," accused her of not being tough enough on crime as a prosecutor and sought to bind her to the administration's policies on the border as he seeks to make immigration a focus of his campaign.

But there are signs that Trump seems to be unhappy about facing the younger vice president rather than making his case against the aging president. Twice since Biden dropped out, Trump has said the planned second presidential debate should not be hosted by ABC News and suggested it be moved to Fox News, which has a perception of being friendlier to him.

Harris' husband, Doug Emhoff, at an appearance in Washington, said he was unimpressed by Trump's attacks, telling reporters Tuesday, "That's all he's got?"



Photo provided by Alberta Wildfire shows firefighters responding to a wildfire in Fort McMurray, northern Alberta, Canada, on July 18. Alberta and British Columbia continued to battle numerous wildfires, prompting additional evacuation orders in communities across both provinces. (Xinhua)



Rodriguez



Menendez

America

Wildfires threaten communities: Firefighters in the West are scrambling as new wildfires threaten communities in Oregon, California and Washington, with at least one Oregon fire so large that it is creating its own weather.

Interstate 84 in eastern Oregon was closed in both directions Tuesday between Ontario and Baker City as flames from the Durkee fire advanced toward the roadway in multiple locations. On Tuesday afternoon, the Oregon Department of Transportation also closed the eastbound lanes of I-84 from Pendleton to Baker City.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency on Monday night authorized the use of federal funds to help with firefighting costs for the lightning-caused blaze, which had scorched nearly 375 square miles (971 square kilometers) as of Tuesday afternoon.

The Durkee fire was threatening homes in and around the communities of Durkee, Huntington and Rye Valley, as well as the interstate, cell towers and power infrastructure in the area. (AP)

US Army worker sentenced: A Texas woman who pleaded guilty to charges of stealing nearly \$109 million from a youth development program for children of military families and using it to fund an extravagant lifestyle that included multiple mansions, a fleet of luxury cars and designer accessories was sentenced Tuesday to 15 years in federal prison.

Janet Yamanaka Mello, 57, was sentenced by US District Judge **Xavier Rodriguez** after pleading guilty in March to five counts of mail fraud and five counts of filing a false tax return.

Prosecutors say Mello, a civilian employee at Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio, stole the money and used it to purchase one lavish item after another, including \$923,000 of jewelry in a single day in 2022.

Mello was a financial manager who handled funding for a youth program at the military base and determined whether grant money was available. She created a fraudulent group called Child Health and Youth Lifelong Development, prosecutors said.

"Janet Mello betrayed the trust of the government agency she served and repeatedly lied in an effort to enrich herself," said U.S. Attorney Jaime Esparza for the Western District of Texas. (AP)

□ □ □

Whale surfaces, capsizes boat: Two occupants of a fishing vessel are safe Tuesday after a whale surfaced under their boat, capsizing it off the New Hampshire shore,

according to the U.S. Coast Guard. The incident occurred Tuesday near Odime Point State Park. The Coast Guard posted to X that they had received a mayday call

stating that a 23-foot center console boat had turned over because of a whale breach.

"The occupants were ejected from the vessel as the boat capsized," the Coast Guard posted, adding that an urgent marine information broadcast was issued and the Coast Guard Station Portsmouth Harbor was alerted. (AP)

□ □ □

Menendez resigns from office: US Sen **Bob Menendez** will resign Aug 20 following his conviction for taking bribes for corrupt acts including acting as an agent of the Egyptian government, he wrote in a letter to New Jersey's governor obtained by The Associated Press.

Menendez had insisted after the July 16 verdict that he was innocent and on Tuesday in his letter promised to appeal "all the way," including to the Supreme Court, he wrote to fellow Democrat, Gov. Phil Murphy. The roughly monthlong delay in leaving gives his staff time for an orderly transition, Menendez wrote. The date also coincides with a Senate payout.

He did not mention the federal conviction in the letter but cited his work helping Superstorm Sandy victims and getting transit funding, among other items and addressed the governor directly, reminding him that he had once praised Menendez - before calling for his resignation.

"These successes led you, Governor, to call me the 'Indispensable Senator,'" he wrote. (AP)



A man in military uniform stands beside a police cordon at the scene in Sally Port Gardens in Gillingham, Kent, England on July 24, after a soldier in uniform was stabbed on Tuesday evening, close to Brompton Barracks, the headquarters of the British Army's 1 Royal School of Military Engineering Regiment. The victim was airlifted to hospital for treatment and a 24-year-old man has been arrested on suspicion of attempted murder. (AP)

Lat/Am

Factory blast kills 5

Respect vote results in Venezuela – Lula

BRASILIA, Brazil, July 24, (AP): Brazil's President **Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva** said Monday his Venezuelan counterpart Nicolás Maduro should respect the results of the elections scheduled for Sunday, and said he was "frightened" by Maduro's reference to a possible post-election bloodbath.

The veteran leader will send a top diplomat to neighboring Venezuela as an observer of the vote.

"Maduro knows that the only chance for Venezuela to return to normality is to have an electoral process that is respected by everyone," Lula told reporters at the presidential residence in Brasilia. "He has to respect the democratic process."

Maduro has governed Venezuela since 2013, taking over after the death of predecessor and mentor Hugo Chávez. The 61-year-old has won elections that his adversaries deemed not to be free and fair. His 2018 reelection was widely considered a sham, as major opposition parties and candidates were banned from participating.

His main adversary will be Edmundo González, a former diplomat chosen by the opposition coalition to replace the fiery leader María Corina Machado on the ballot.

"If Maduro wants to contribute for growth to return to Venezuela, for people who left Venezuela to come back and to establish a state of economic growth, he needs to respect the democratic process," Lula said.

Lula, who for many years refused to openly criticize the Venezuelan leader, said he will send former foreign minister Celso Amorim to watch the elections on Sunday. Other Brazilian observers will also be present.

"I got frightened with Maduro's statement saying there will be a bloodbath if he loses. When you lose, you go home and get ready to run in another election," Lula said.

Reject

In recent weeks, Maduro and allies have increased their references to post-election violence, asserting that the opposition will carry out violent demonstrations and reject the results, which the ruling party claims will show it victorious.

"The destiny of Venezuela depends on our victory," Maduro told a rally this month. "If we want to avoid a bloodbath, or a fratricidal civil war triggered by the fascists, then we must guarantee the biggest electoral victory ever."

Lula also said he tried to speak to Nicaragua's President Daniel Ortega on behalf of Pope Francis about the leftist leader's decision to eject more than a dozen Roman Catholic clergymen from the Central American nation. But Ortega has not picked up the phone, the Brazilian president said.

"Nicaragua has become a problem for Nicaragua," said Lula, adding he is open to talk to other leaders, including Argentina's President Javier Milei.

"But he needs to apologize first," the Brazilian leader added. Milei has criticized Lula and avoided speaking to him since he took office.

The 78-year-old Brazilian leader, who is governing the South American nation for the third time, also said he deeply respects U.S. President Joe Biden for his decision to step down as the Democratic candidate for this year's elections. He said he will work with whoever wins.

"Whether it's a Democratic candidate or (Republican candidate, Donald) Trump, our relationship will be a civilized relationship between two important countries," Lula said.

Also:

AGUA CALIENTE, Venezuela: At a crossroads not far from a gas station overgrown with weeds, young men and women in faded green fatigues stop vehicles returning from a rally for opponents of Venezuelan President **Nicolás Maduro**, ask passengers for their identifications, and inspect their cars, trucks and motorcycles.

Such checkpoints have proliferated across the country's vast tropical plains, forested highlands and beachfronts in the run-up to Sunday's presidential election, aiming to intimidate and occasionally detain government critics. They often involve a request for a ride, bananas or "collaboration" – Venezuela's euphemism for a small bribe.

But the power play frequently falls flat. When their superiors slip away from the scorching sun, the grunts betray their displeasure with Maduro and openness to a new commander in chief.

"Did the lady arrive? Were there a lot people?" one giddy soldier asks about opposition leader **María Corina Machado**.

"We wanted to watch, but there is no Wi-Fi here," whispers another.

Since taking power in 2013, Maduro hasn't hesitated to deploy troops to crush protests while rewarding senior officers with lucrative government jobs and control of key industries. But days away from a hotly disputed vote that threatens Maduro's hold on power, the self-proclaimed socialist is working harder than ever to shore up the loyalty of the armed forces – the traditional arbiter of political disputes in Venezuela – and keep top commanders in line.

In recent days, the president has appeared on state TV attending a graduation ceremony for 25,000 police officers, praising them as the first line of defense against what he called attempts by rightwing hardliners to provoke a tragedy. He also promoted dozens of officers and bestowed a new title on his longtime defense minister, **Vladimir Padrino López**: "General of the Sovereign People."

"The destiny of Venezuela depends on our victory," Maduro said at a rally this month. "If we want to avoid a bloodbath, or a fratricidal civil war triggered by the fascists, then we must guarantee the biggest electoral victory ever."

MEXICO CITY: An explosion and fire erupted inside factory Tuesday, killing at least five workers and injuring two others at the site in the liquor's namesake town in Jalisco state, Mexican authorities said.

The state Civil Protection agency announced late Tuesday on the social media platform X that five people were confirmed dead and two people were injured, one of them in serious condition.

All the dead and injured worked at the factory, the agency said.

Emergency services evacuated the area around the site as a precaution, but officials said residents were allowed to return to their homes late Tuesday.



Streets flood from monsoon rains worsened by offshore typhoon Gaemi on Wednesday, July 24, 2024, in Manila, Philippines. Inset: Fishermen prepare to secure their boats in Wushi harbor before typhoon Gaemi makes landfall in northeastern Taiwan's Yilan county on Wednesday. (AP)

Taiwan prepares for typhoon that worsened monsoon rains in Philippines, killing 13

Taiwan shuttered offices, schools and tourist sites across the island on Wednesday ahead of a powerful typhoon that already worsened seasonal rains in the Philippines, killed at least 13 people and displaced 600,000.

Typhoon Gaemi's outer skirt was bringing heavy rain to much of Taiwan, where a direct landfall was expected Wednesday evening in the northern county of Yilan. Fishing boats were recalled to port amid turbulent seas, while air travelers were rushing to board overseas flights before the storm arrives,

amid numerous cancellations.

On Wednesday morning, the typhoon was east of Taiwan moving at 18 kilometers (11 miles) per hour with maximum sustained wind speeds of 183 kilometers (113 miles) per hour, the Central Weather Administration said. In the capital Taipei, heavy rain was falling, but high winds had not yet arrived.

Gaemi, which was called Carina in the Philippines, did not make landfall in the archipelago but enhanced its seasonal monsoon rains. The rains set off at least a dozen landslides and floods over five

days, killing at least eight and displacing 600,000 people, including 35,000 who went to emergency shelters, the Philippines' disaster risk mitigation agency said.

A landslide buried a rural shanty Tuesday in the mountainside town of Agoncillo in Batangas province, and the bodies of a pregnant woman and three children, aged 9 to 15, were dug out Wednesday morning. A rice porridge vendor was hit by a falling tree in another Batangas town Tuesday night, raising the toll in the country to 13 dead. (AP)



North Korean Vice Foreign Minister **Kim Jong Gyu**, (right), meets Belarusian Foreign Minister **Maxim Ryzhenkov** as he arrives at the Pyongyang airport at the invitation of the North Korean Foreign Ministry, in Pyongyang, North Korea on July 23. (AP)



Museveni



Ruto

Africa

Kenya turmoil widens: Anti-government protesters in Kenya's capital clashed with an emerging pro-government group on Tuesday, with hundreds swarming and burning a motorcycle belonging to people who expressed support for the country's president. The military made a rare deployment as the protests focused on the country's main airport.

The weeks of turmoil in East Africa's economic hub have led to dozens of deaths, the firing of most Cabinet members and calls for President **William Ruto's** resignation. Protests began with Kenyans' rejecting a proposed bill to impose more taxes as millions in the country barely get by amid rising prices.

The pro-government movement has emerged to counter the youth-led anti-government one. In Nairobi on Tuesday, the pro-government group took to the streets ahead of the latest anti-government demonstration.. (AP)

Protests break out in Uganda: Ugandan security forces on Tuesday arrested dozens of people who tried to walk to the parliament building to demonstrate against high-level corruption in protests that authorities said were illegal.

Police and the military deployed heavily in various parts of Kampala where small groups of protesters had gathered. Police roughed up some campaigners as they were forced into trucks. The police frequently use force to break up demonstrations by opposition leaders and others.

The protests were organized by Ugandans who hope to emulate efforts by people in neighboring Kenya, where demonstrations recently forced the president to dismiss almost his entire cabinet after widespread opposition to a proposal to impose new taxes.

Ugandan President **Yoweri Museveni**, an authoritarian leader in power since 1986, has called the street protests intolerable, and warned protest organizers in a televised address that they were "playing with fire." (AP)

11 found guilty of treason: A Sierra

Asia

NKorea trash balloon falls on Yoon's office

Philippines, S'pore broaden defense ties

MANILA, Philippines, July 24, (AP): The Philippines and Singapore signed a defense pact Wednesday that will allow their militaries to broaden their engagement, but few details were given about how the agreement could help address their security concerns in a region rife with conflicts.

Defense Secretary **Gilberto Teodoro Jr** signed the memorandum of understanding with his counterpart in Singapore, **Ng Eng Hen**, in a ceremony that coincided with the anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties between the two countries.

The agreement, which was not immediately made public, "serves as a framework to guide existing interactions and promote cooperation in areas of mutual interest such as military education and anti-terrorism," Singapore's Defense Ministry said in a brief statement.

It aims to "foster closer people-to-people links" and builds on an existing agreement on education, training aid and support activities for humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, the ministry added, without elaborating.

A Singaporean and two Philippine officials said the agreement is not a so-called status-of-forces agreement that the Philippines has signed with three countries, including the United States, which allows largescale joint combat exercises.

It could allow joint but limited drills such as "tabletop exercises" simulating responses to humanitarian crises and natural disasters with agreed terms of engagement, according to the officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss the matter publicly.

Also:

SEOUL, South Korea: Trash carried by at least one North Korean balloon fell on the South Korean presidential compound on Wednesday, raising

KATHMANDU, Nepal, July 24, (AP): A plane crashed Wednesday just after taking off from Nepal's capital, killing 18 people and injuring a pilot who was the lone survivor.

Police official **Basanta Rajauri** said authorities have pulled out all 18 bodies. The pilot has injuries to his eyes but his life is not in any danger, said a doctor at Kathmandu Medical College Hospital, where the pilot is being treated. The doctor spoke on condition of anonymity because she was not authorized to speak to media.

A press statement issued by the Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal said, and is surrounded by houses and neighborhoods.

worries about the security of key South Korean facilities during North Korean provocations.

The rubbish that landed on the presidential compound in central Seoul contained no dangerous material and no one was hurt, South Korea's presidential security service said. While North Korea likely lacks sophisticated technology to drop balloons on specific targets, some experts say South Korea should shoot down incoming North Korean balloons next time to protect major facilities because they might contain hazardous substances in the future.

The security service gave no further details about the rubbish found at the presidential compound. It refused to disclose whether President **Yoon Suk Yeol** was at the compound when the balloons were flying over his office, a

no-fly zone in South Korea.

SEOUL, South Korea: Belarus' foreign minister arrived in North Korea on Tuesday as experts predicted that he and North Korean officials would discuss forming a trilateral anti-Western front also involving Russia.

Belarusian Foreign Minister **Maxim Ryzhenkov** flew to Pyongyang from Beijing and was greeted by North Korean officials including Vice Foreign Minister **Kim Jong Gyu**, according to video shot by Associated Press Television News.

During his stay in North Korea, Ryzhenkov is expected to meet North Korean counterpart **Choe Son Hui** and other senior officials. South Korean officials said Ryzhenkov is Belarus' first foreign minister to travel to North Korea.

Leone court found 11 people guilty of treason and other offenses following what authorities have called an attempted coup, with their leader sentenced to almost 200 years in prison, a judiciary spokesman said Tuesday.

In November, dozens of gunmen broke into the country's army and into a prison where the majority of the more than 2,000 inmates were freed. The clashes left 18 se-



Rescuers collect debris at the site of an air crash at the Tribhuvan International Airport in Kathmandu, Nepal, July 24, 2024. Eighteen dead bodies have been recovered after a plane crashed on Wednesday at the Tribhuvan International Airport in Kathmandu, Nepal's capital, said Hansa Raj Pandey, spokesman at the Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal (CAAN). (Xinhua)

curity forces dead. Authorities at the time said they arrested around 80 suspects, and a dozen were charged in January, including former president Ernest Bai Koroma, later granted medical leave.

The man accused of leading the attack, **Amadu Koita Makalo**, was sentenced Monday to 182 years in prison on charges of treason, murder and shooting with intent to murder, the judiciary's spokesperson, **Moses Lamin Kamara**, told the Associated Press. (AP)

'Release aid worker': The family of a Portuguese-Belgian aid worker detained in the Central African Republic for allegedly being in touch with armed groups to plot a coup maintained his innocence and called for his release Tuesday, even as the African government said it had evidence to support its accusations.

The brother of **Joseph Figueira Martin** earlier told The Associated Press the aid worker had only been in touch with the rebels to help guarantee his safety and stay alive while working in dangerous parts of the Central African Republic.

"When he reaches certain areas, he has the obligation to get in contact with these people to be sure he's not gonna get shot at," **Georges Martin** said in late June. He described the consultant for a US-based aid organization as a new father with deep experience in conflict zones in Africa. (AP)

	Change	Closing pts		Change	Closing pts
DUBAI - DFMGI	+12.50	4,228.65	SAUDI - TASI	-4.33	12,101.21
PAKISTAN - KSE 100	+402.21	79,441.69	JAPAN - Nikkei 225	-439.54	39,154.85
			EGYPT - EGX 30	-104.67	29,090.57

PAHW receives 587 houses in West Sabah Al Ahmed City for second day

Modern design & eco-friendly materials highlight new residential city

By Saeed Mahmoud
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, July 24: In collaboration with the First Group Company for General Trading and Contracting, the Public Authority for Housing Welfare (PAHW) continued to receive completed constructions in the West of Sabah Al Ahmed Residential City for the second day.

In the second phase, a total of 587 houses were received by a joint committee comprising representatives from relevant government agencies. According to the Chairman of the First Group Company for General Trading and Contracting Eng. Emeel Abdallah, the project embodies an integrated model of distinguished residential cities characterized by modern design, high-quality

and eco-friendly materials, and a commitment to sustainable environments. This meets users' demands and offers a comfortable, safe, and sustainable lifestyle.

He affirmed the company's keenness to distribute the houses based on six different designs with the aim of getting the best use of the available space, and for providing comfort and privacy to the families.

Abdallah explained that the windows are designed to allow natural daylight into every room, with the aim of ensuring customer satisfaction, and promoting efficiency in energy usage. The unique design provides ideal use of interior space and the shared spaces to meet the needs of families effectively.

Abdallah emphasised that the First Group Company prioritizes using the highest quality construction materials and premium equipment, including ground tiles, ceiling decorations, wall paints, kitchen and bathroom fixtures, as well as top-grade wooden and aluminum doors and windows, along with fine marble and glass that enhance aesthetics and facilitate easy maintenance and cleaning.

He said the project is established on an area of 582 thousand square meters located in the East Sabah Al-Ahmad City, adding that the construction space of every house is 300 square meters out of a total space of 414 square meters.

Abdallah praised the cooperation and support of the concerned public institutions, and wished this cooperation to continue, considering the over 30 years of experience of First Group Company.

Meanwhile, the Construction Manager and representative of the First Group Company for General Trading and Contracting Eng. Hesham Roshdy explained that each house consists of a ground floor, a first floor and a roof.

The ground floor consists of a diwaniya, dining room, kitchen, bathroom, a laundry room, and a room allocated for the driver and another room with an attached bathroom for the domestic maid. The first floor consists of four bedrooms, four toilets and a hall.

He stressed that the houses are built according to six different designs, ensuring that these designs, materials, and luxurious equipment guarantee safety and comfort for families.

In addition, Eng. Sayyed Al-Mallah, the Manager of Roads, Services and Infrastructures in the First Group Company, said the project includes the construction of public facilities and infrastructures such as the water, drainage, rainwater, power, and telephone networks.

He stressed that all constructions have been executed to meet the requirements stipulated in the contracts and in line with the demands of the Public Authority for Housing Welfare.

It is worth mentioning that the first phase included receiving the infrastructure works on Tuesday, and the second phase involved receiving the houses on Wednesday. The third phase, which includes the reception of public facilities, is scheduled for Thursday, July 25.

Bursa Kuwait indices close higher with gains in 6 sectors

KUWAIT CITY, July 24: The main indices of the Bursa Kuwait closed higher on Tuesday with support from gains in six sectors. Both the first and general market indexes rose by 0.21%, the "main" index increased by 0.19%, and the main 50 Index saw a 0.31% rise compared to the previous session, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Trading value on the Bursa Kuwait

amounted to 43.83 million dinars, with 184.64 million shares traded through 14,280 transactions.

The session was bolstered by advances in six sectors, led by the energy sector, which rose by 0.63%. In contrast, six sectors declined, with the technology sector experiencing the largest drop of 0.89%, while the healthcare sector remained stable.

Bank focuses on core markets

S&P affirms Burgan Bank's ratings at 'BBB+/A-2' with stable outlook

KUWAIT CITY, July 24: Burgan Bank announced that Standard & Poor's Global Ratings (S&P) has affirmed its long-term and short-term issuer credit ratings at "BBB+/A-2" with a "stable" outlook, reflecting its expectations that the Bank's financial profile will remain broadly solid.

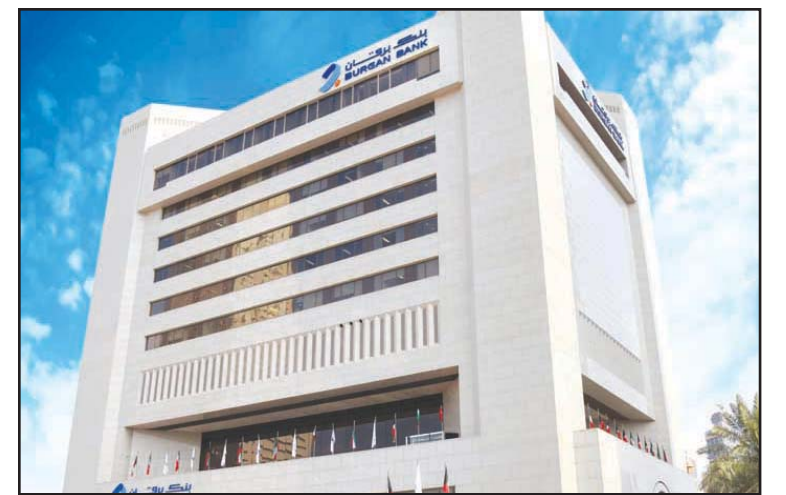
The global agency assessed Burgan's Standalone Credit profile (SACP) at "bb+", Anchor at "bbb-", Support at "+3", and Additional Factors at "0". The agency stated that the released credit ratings bear no impact on the Bank's status, confirming its creditworthiness, solid financial core, and vigilant risk strategy.

The S&P rating disclosure highlighted Burgan Bank's strategic asset reallocation, which aimed at reducing its exposure to risky jurisdictions while refocusing the business on core markets in Kuwait and across the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries. The report further noted that some of these reallocations improved the Bank's capitalization, which S&P foresees to remain adequate over the upcoming 12-24 months.

Commenting on S&P's credit rating

report, Mr. Khalid Al Zouman, Chief Financial Officer at Burgan Bank, said: "We strive every day to ensure that Burgan Bank's financial core remains strong, resilient and poised for constant growth, through meticulous and forward-looking business decisions. The success of our efforts is evident in the latest S&P ratings, which confirm the strength of the Bank's financial standing and the soundness of its risk management strategies. To continue to be recognized by esteemed rating agencies such as S&P is the ultimate testament to our creditworthiness and our long-term growth potential, and we look forward to further expansion that add to Burgan Bank's already robust financial base."

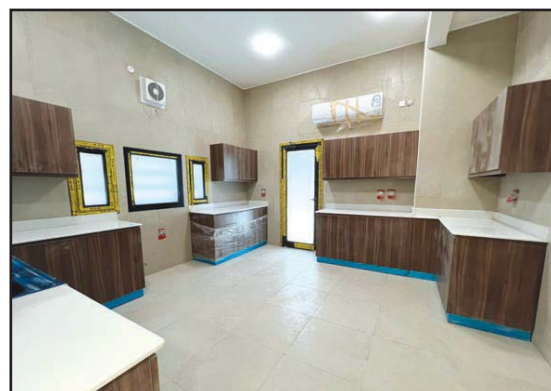
Al Zouman asserted that Burgan Bank's consistent growth and confident expansions are driven by its vision to become the most modern and progressive bank in Kuwait, resting its efforts on the strategic pillars of asset re-allocation, digital transformation, human capital development, and adopting ESG principles in order to deliver an outstanding banking experience that meets its customers' needs and fulfills their aspirations.



Burgan Bank Headquarters.



Officials of First Group Co. meeting with representatives of Public Authority for Housing Welfare and the concerned public institutions.



Photos by Samer Shaqair

Left: Modern designs of the houses. Right: Interior design of part of the houses showing fine equipment.

Central Bank of Egypt likely to cut rates in H2 2024

Egypt's new cabinet boosts economic optimism amid recovery signs

By National Bank of Kuwait

It did not take long for the Egyptian authorities to capitalize on the economic reforms that took place in March, with the appointment in July of a new cabinet welcomed locally and regionally and injecting fresh optimism for the first time in years. We see in particular scope for greater coherence on economic policy with three key economy-focused ministries (Finance, Investment and the newly-merged Planning, Economic Development & International Cooperation) headed by a young generation (aged 50 on average) of officials with backgrounds in international institutions such as the IMF and World Bank helping to drive policy forward, albeit based on a medium-term plan that we are yet to see.

Meanwhile, the economy has started to show early signs of recovery with inflation cooling, growth indicators ticking up, the currency stable and the external finances correcting sharply. Likely subsidy cuts over coming months should not disrupt the trend of lower inflation, providing space for interest rates to fall from September.

Major economic challenges still lie ahead. Egypt is now emerging from its crisis stage thanks to critical one-off policy moves and deals including the currency devaluation and mega-investment from the UAE in Ras El Hekma that helped secure large capital inflows. Markets, investors and rating agencies will now be looking at what comes next – and in particular for the government to embark on the second stage of the reform process relating to enhancing the business environment and strong communication of the new agenda.

Growth may have bottomed out in Jan-March

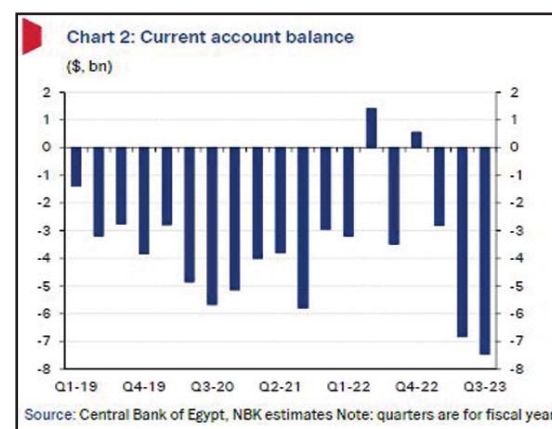
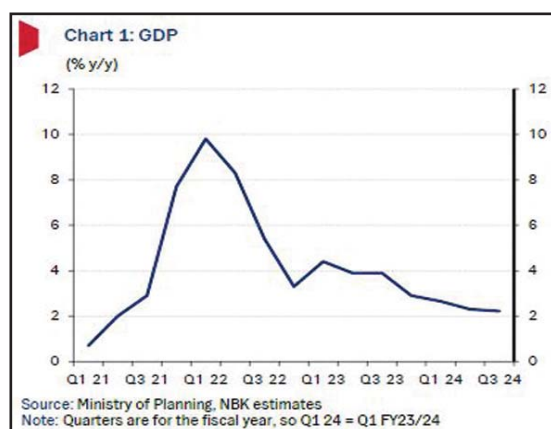
Latest data show economic growth continuing its downward path, slowing for the fifth consecutive quarter to 2.2% y/y in Q3 FY23/24 (Jan-March 2024) from 2.3% in the previous quarter. We expect Q4 growth to come in close to 2.5% with the full year at 2.4% versus 3.5% the previous year.

The period January to March 2024 was possibly the toughest on both businesses and households as it saw extreme volatility in the EGP on the parallel market, where it reached as low as EGP70/\$1 on (versus the EGP31/\$1 official rate) before the government devalued the pound in early March. This along with an 8% cumulative interest rate hike during the quarter took a toll on businesses and retail. Detailed data has not yet been released, but we expect a slowdown in consumption due to eroded purchasing power (inflation peaked at 35.7% in February) and major shortages of goods that affected both the manufacturing and the services sectors.

Supporting this view, the PMI activity gauge picked up in April-June to 48.5 versus 47.6 the previous quarter and ended the year at 49.6, close to the 50 neutral level which we expect to be surpassed in the coming months. This was the highest level for the PMI since September 2021. Several sub-indicators already exceeded the 50 mark including the employment, future output, and new export orders indices. In our opinion, this reflects the improvement in overall macro stability including lower inflation, the stable exchange rate, and better availability of foreign currency. We expect further improvement in the coming period as inflation falls further and interest rates start to fall. We forecast growth accelerating in the coming year (FY24/25) to 3.5-4.0%.

Current account deficit widens on lower gas production

The current account deficit widened in 9M FY23/24 (July to March) to \$17.1bn from \$5.3bn in the same period in FY22/23 mainly on the back of a significant drop in Egypt's natural gas production, which pushed the oil trade balance



- Economic growth slowed to 2.2% in Q3 FY23/24 from 2.3% in Q2 but PMI levels, real credit growth, and cooling inflation signal that activity may have bottomed out.
- The current account deficit as expected deteriorated tremendously in 9M FY23/24 on lower gas production and falling remittances. However, we should see a narrower deficit in FY24/25.

- We see scope for sovereign credit rating upgrades on the back of a sustained flexible exchange rate regime, banking system NFAs moving back to positive territory, and post-election political stability.
- The new government can embark on major business reforms to ensure sustained FX inflows and that the economy can thrive beyond the one-off impact of the Ras El Hekma deal.

into a \$5.1bn deficit. On the other hand, the non-oil trade deficit improved by \$1.5bn to \$23.7bn mainly on the back of a 3% drop in imports due to import restrictions. Remittances from Egyptians living abroad also slowed to \$14.5bn (-17% y/y). On a positive note, tourism revenues remained strong, growing by 5.3% y/y even amid all the regional tensions.

The situation was positive on the capital account front as the EGP devaluation in March allowed for the release of the \$15bn first tranche of the Ras El Hekma deal along with significant inflows from carry trade investments. This was reflected in FDI reaching \$23.7bn (from \$7.9bn) and a net inflow of \$14.6bn in portfolio investments (versus a net outflow of \$3.4bn). The overall balance of payments saw a surplus of \$4.1bn (from a \$0.3bn deficit).

We expect the current account deficit to shrink in the final quarter of FY23/24 (April-June) to around \$1.2bn (from \$8.2bn in Q3) on the back of a rise in tourism receipts and recovery in remittances. On a full-year basis, the deficit could be \$19-21bn, the largest deficit in Egypt's history, but should correct once again in FY24/25 to \$10bn as a 10-15% import recovery is offset by a higher remittances, continued strong tourism receipts, and the maintenance of a more flexible exchange rate that keeps the pound in line with its fair value. We see limited scope for a natural gas production recovery over the coming 2 years.

A credit rating upgrade could be on the way

The authorities received the final tranche of the Ras El Hekma investment deal from the UAE in May worth \$14bn (and \$1bn in the form of UAE deposits to be converted into EGP) pushing FX reserves to an all-time high of \$46.3bn as of June 2024. Net foreign assets at banks (both central and commercial banks) has turned into a positive position of \$14bn as of May, from a negative position of -\$3.7bn in April. The authorities clearly delivered on their promise to utilize majority of the Ras El Hekma proceeds to rebuild

FX buffers, however we think that that improvement is now mostly behind us. Our outlook of BoP dynamics shows that it will be difficult to sustain ongoing rises in foreign reserves due to a net cumulative financing gap of \$10bn over the coming 2 years until the end of FY25/26. Additionally, we see no official urge for even higher foreign reserves as they are already more than satisfactory covering close to 7 months of imports.

Yields on Egypt's 5yr-Eurobond have maintained their compression from the past months standing at 9.5% as of mid-July from 15% pre-devaluation in February, while 5-yr CDS levels (a measure of default risk) have narrowed to around 570bps from 1100 bps and above. The risk compression could be followed soon by upgrades to Egypt's credit rating from the current B-/Caal by at least two notches to B+/B2 by S&P and Moody's. Key factors needed to earn this upgrade have been ticked, including sustaining a more flexible EGP exchange rate, strong external support, and a significant improvement in the NFA position.

Energy subsidy cuts should not hinder inflation slow-down

Inflation has continued its clear downward trend over the past quarter, averaging 29.4% y/y in Q2 (CY) down from 34.0% in Q1 as the EGP devaluation impact fades and smoother FX availability allows for improved supply of goods. Average monthly price rises have slowed sharply to 0.7% m/m for Q2 from 4.7% for Q1. In early June, the government cut bread subsidies resulting in a 300% increase in the price of a loaf from EGP0.05 to EGP0.20. This added around 1.2% to June's CPI which rose 1.6% overall as subsidized bread represents less than 0.5% of the CPI basket. Next in line could be changes in fixed/subsidized electricity and fuel prices, though we expect the inflation impact to be limited (fuel and electricity represent around 4% of the CPI basket and a 20% increase adds about 0.8% to the CPI).

We expect inflation to average 25% in H2 (July to December) of 2024 down from 31% in the first half with a strong possibility that inflation ends the year below 24%. We forecast inflation to average 19% for FY24/25 (much lower than previously on the back of softer than expected inflation post-March devaluation) down from 34% in FY23/24. We continue to wait for the CBE to amend the inflation target timeline to Q4 25 (from Q4 24); a target of around 10% would be met based on current dynamics, in our view.

CBE to cut rates in H2

The central bank kept rates unchanged throughout Q2 (April to June) at 27.75% on the discount rate, while average 1-year treasury bills have dropped by 2% since March to 26%, which implies that markets are looking at 1-2% in rate cuts in the coming period. As inflation has decelerated over the past months (27.5% as of June), real interest rates have turned positive for the first time since January 2022. As inflation falls further through 2024, we expect the CBE to commence the monetary easing cycle in the coming period starting potentially in September, with cuts of a cumulative 400 bps rate cuts by year-end.

Private business credit boosted by currency effect

The latest available data for bank credit are as of May, so capture the initial impact of the early March rate hike and other policy changes that took place in the March to May period. Credit to private businesses showed strong growth of 29% y/y for the 3 months to May from 18.8% for the previous 3 months. However, adjusting for the March EGP devaluation, credit would have grown by 16.8%.

Household credit growth remained in strong growth territory but unlike business credit there was no strong adjustment to the devaluation with growth at 24% y/y in the 3 months to May versus 23% for the previous 3 months. On a real-terms basis, credit to private firms recorded -2% y/y, improving hugely from -14% for the period Dec 23 – Feb 24. As for households, it stood at -7.2%, improving from -10.3%.

The improvement in real credit growth in both the private and household segments are early signs of economic recovery and proof of the heavy burden on economic activity well before the official devaluation took place in March. As inflation cools in the coming period so will credit growth in EGP terms but possible interest rate cuts in FY24/25 should encourage firms to take on longer-term loans targeted towards CAPEX, not only OPEX spending. We expect credit to grow by 25% in FY24/25 down from 31.5% in FY23/24, but it will grow on a real basis by +6% from -2%.

Ras El Hekma deal a game-changer for fiscal dynamics

The government utilized 50% of the Ras El Hekma deal proceeds (\$12bn once UAE bank deposits – which was not 'fresh' money – are excluded/EGP580bn) to reduce the fiscal deficit evident in the July-May FY23/24 deficit which came in at 3.6% of GDP (versus 7.7% without the Ras El Hekma proceeds) and a ballooning primary balance of 5.9% (1.7% ex Ras El Hekma). We expect a deficit of 4% of GDP and a primary balance of 6.2% of GDP for the full year. In FY24/25, we expect a normalized deficit close to 8.0% (7.3% for the government target), mainly on the absence of another big one-off revenue boost in FY24/25 (at least for now). The government is allocating EGP154bn for the energy subsidy which entails a 20% price hike (gasoline, diesel, and butane cylinders) in each quarter in FY24/25. However, we think the government might opt to go for a lower price hike (10-15%) which means the final subsidy could be in the range of EGP210bn, adding EGP60bn (0.6%) to the fiscal deficit.

Gulf Bank records KD 28.2 million in net profit for the first half of '24

Operating income of KD 96.9 million reported

KUWAIT CITY, July 24: Gulf Bank K.S.C.P. announced its financial results for the first half ending 30 June, 2024. The Bank reported a net profit of KD 28.2 million, a decline of KD 7.6 million or 21.3% compared to 2023 first half net profit of KD 35.8 million.

In addition, Gulf Bank recorded an operating income of KD 96.9 million for the first half of 2024, representing an increase of 5% compared to the same period of last year. Moreover, operating profit before provisions and impairments has increased to KD 52.6 million, representing a healthy growth of 6.6% compared to the first half of 2023.

The decline in net profit for the first half of 2024 is attributed to an increase in total provisions and impairments of KD 11.3 million compared to the same period of last year. Although this rise in total provisions and impairments has impacted short-term results, the Bank is diligently implementing sound risk management strategies to ensure long-term sustainable growth.

As for asset quality, the non-performing loans (NPL) ratio was 1.2% as of 30 June, 2024, compared to the prior year level of 1.0%. Additionally, the Bank continues to have significant non-performing loans coverage ratio of 390% including total provisions and collaterals.

Total credit provisions as of 30 June, 2024 reached KD 274 million whereas IFRS 9 accounting requirements (i.e., ECL or expected credit losses) were KD 161 million. As a result, the Bank has a very healthy excess provision level of KD 114 million, above and beyond what is required by the IFRS 9 accounting requirements.

Compared to 31 December, 2023, total assets increased by 3.6% to KD 7.4 billion, net loans and advances increased by 6.9% to KD 5.6 billion, while customer deposits increased by 9.5% to KD 4.6 billion and total Shareholders' equity reached KD 802 million.

The Bank's regulatory Tier 1 ratio of 14.23% was 2.23% above the regulatory minimum of 12% and the Capital Adequacy Ratio (CAR) of 16.35% was 2.35% above the regulatory minimum of 14%.

Financial Performance and Growth

Commenting on Gulf Bank's first half 2024 financial results, Mr. Bader Nasser Al-Kharafi, Gulf Bank's Chairman said: "For the second quar-



Bader Al-Kharafi, Gulf Bank's Chairman

Bader Nasser Al-Kharafi:

- Gulf Bank consistently exhibits robust operational performance, reinforced by strong top-line growth and sound financial position metrics.
- Despite the higher than usual credit costs, we remain confident in the Bank's future potential.
- The significant loan book expansion during the first half reflects the success of our strategic initiatives in meeting our clients' evolving needs.
- The enhancement in operational profitability highlights our focus on growth and financial discipline, reflecting our dedication on expanding strategically and maintaining fiscal stability.

ter of the year 2024, Gulf Bank consistently exhibits robust operational performance, reinforced by strong top-line growth and sound financial position metrics. We faced higher than usual credit costs which resulted in a decline in our net profit growth during the first half of the year compared to the same period of last year, however, we remain confident in the Bank's future potential." He added: "Having said that, we have seen our loan book significantly expand during the first half of 2024, reflecting the success of our strategic initiatives in meeting our clients' evolving needs. This growth in loans displays our capacity to navigate and excel in dynamic market conditions, reinforcing our prominent position in the Kuwaiti banking sector." On the improvement of the Bank's operational profitability, Mr. Al-Kharafi stated: "I am pleased with the continuous improvement in our operating profitability, especially in net interest income, operating income, and operating profit. This operational enhancement highlights our focus on strategic growth and financial discipline, reflecting our dedication to expanding strategically and maintaining financial stability."

Operational Efficiency

Following the completion of phase II of the new core banking system during the first half of 2024, Mr. Waleed Khaled Mandani, Gulf Bank Acting CEO commented: "We are pleased to announce the successful completion of Phase II of our core banking system, a significant milestone in our journey towards advancing customer centricity. This achievement strengthens our operational capabilities and reaffirms our focus to meet the evolving needs of our clients in a digitally driven era." He added: "In partnership with Fintech providers, Gulf Bank is ready to leverage these technological foundational changes to drive operational efficiencies and transform our branches into relationship and experience centers aiming to provide a personalized and seamless banking experiences to our clients."

Customer Excellence

Gulf Bank continues its strategic journey towards customer service excellence. On this front, Mr. Mandani stated: "Gulf Bank is committed to enhancing and developing customer services and implementing the latest and best technological applications,



Waleed Mandani, Gulf Bank Acting CEO

Waleed Khaled Mandani:

- The successful completion of Phase II of our core banking system is a significant milestone in our journey towards advancing customer centricity.
- We aim to provide our clients with a personalized and seamless banking experiences by transforming our branches into relationship and experience centers.
- Gulf Bank plays a significant role in Kuwait's economic development through direct funding and partnerships with other financial institutions.
- Gulf Bank is recognized for its social responsibility and fostering a workplace environment that promotes diversity and inclusion.

which are rapidly progressing us towards banking industry leadership." He added: "Our most recent customer offerings included a revamped mobile application, partnerships with local providers to offer our SME customers with advanced payment solutions, and a digital financial market trading platform, catering for our clients' financial and investment needs."

Moreover, Mr. Mandani also stressed on the Bank's readiness to support Kuwait's developmental projects in line with the principles of transparency, achievement, and sustainability by stating: "We are dedicated to providing diverse financing plans that meet the evolving needs of this phase. Gulf Bank plays a significant role in Kuwait's urban and economic development and our contribution varies between direct funding and partnerships with other financial institutions. We have already financed multiple initiatives crucial to Kuwait's Vision 2035, particularly in sectors such as oil, construction, and infrastructure, emphasizing our essential role in Kuwait's ongoing progress and prosperity."

Islamic Sharia'a Compliance

During the second quarter of 2024,

Gulf Bank's announced that the Board of Directors request for the engagement of an international consultant to undertake a feasibility study regarding the potential conversion of Gulf Bank to operate in accordance with Islamic Shariaa principles. The Central Bank of Kuwait has granted approval for the commencement of this study.

ESG Recognition

Gulf Bank has recently unveiled its 2030 ESG strategy defining its commitment across key pillars: Responsible Governance, Fair Work Environment, Community Engagement, and Banking Responsibility. This strategic initiative reinforces the Bank's operational integrity and illustrate its profound impact in the domain of sustainability. Celebrating these achievements, Gulf Bank has been honored with two esteemed awards: one acknowledging its exceptional efforts in social responsibility and community engagement from Euromoney, and the other for fostering the best workplace environment that promotes diversity and inclusion from the Gulf International CSR Conference. These awards emphasize the Bank's proactive approach in shaping a future where ESG principles complements its

mission and success. Moreover, Gulf Bank was recognized by MEED magazine with two prestigious awards: the "Best Implementation of Diversity and Inclusion Initiatives" and the "Best Initiative for Women in Business" award for the Middle East and North Africa region. These awards were received in recognition of Gulf Bank's appreciation for women role in economic growth and upholding sustainability principles at the workplace and the community.

Credit Worthiness

Gulf Bank continues to be well recognized internationally in terms of its credit worthiness and financial strength by international credit rating agencies for its sound capitalization, improving profitability and strong asset quality. As of 30 June, 2024, Gulf Bank has an affirmed 'A3' Long-Term Deposit Rating and 'Positive' outlook from Moody's Investor Services. In addition, The Bank has an affirmed Long-Term Issuer Default Rating at 'A' with a 'Stable' Outlook and a Viability Rating of 'bbb-' by Fitch Ratings. Moreover, Gulf Bank has also an affirmed Long-Term Foreign Currency Rating of 'A+' with a 'Stable' Outlook from Capital Intelligence Ratings.

Appreciation

Mr. Al-Kharafi concluded his remarks by stating: "Moving forward, we anticipate sustainable growth in the years ahead, supported by our efforts towards innovation, solid financial performance, and customer-focused approach." He added: "On behalf of the Board of Directors, I would like to thank our shareholders for their ongoing trust, and our employees for their commitment and dedication. I would also like to thank the Regulatory Authorities for their continuous support. Finally, I want to thank our customers for their loyalty, and reiterate our commitment to offering them the best banking experience."

Key Financial indicators for the first half:

- First Half 2024 net profit of KD 28.2 million.
- First Half 2024 operating income of KD 96.9 million, an increase of 5% compared to same period of last year.
- Operating profit before provisions impairments reached KD 52.6 million, an increase of 6.6% compared to same period of last year.
- Net loans and advances grew by 6.9% year-to-date to reach KD 5.6 billion.
- Non-performing loan ratio as of 30 June, 2024 was 1.2%, with a strong non-performance loan coverage ratio of 390%.
- Capital ratios as of 30 June 2024, Tier 1 ratio was 14.23% and Capital Adequacy Ratio (CAR) was 16.35%.

Price cuts & low-interest loans didn't help much

Tesla's 2Q profit falls 45% to \$1.48 billion as sales drop

DETROIT, July 24, (AP): Tesla's second-quarter net income fell 45% compared with a year ago as the company's global electric vehicle sales tumbled despite price cuts and low-interest financing.

The Austin, Texas, company said Tuesday that it made \$1.48 billion from April through June, less than the \$2.7 billion it made in the same period of 2023. It was Tesla's second-straight quarterly net income decline.

Second quarter revenue rose 2% to \$25.5 billion, beating Wall Street estimates of \$24.54 billion, according to FactSet. Excluding one time items, Tesla made 52 cents per share, below analyst expectations of 61 cents.

Shares of Tesla fell about 8% in trading after Tuesday's closing bell. The shares had been down more than 40% earlier in the year, but have since recovered most of the losses.

Earlier this month Tesla said it sold 443,956 vehicles from April through June, down 4.8% from 466,140 sold the same period a year ago. Although the sales were better than the 436,000 that analysts had expected, they still were a sign of weakening demand for the company's aging product lineup.

For the first half of the year, Tesla has sold about 831,000 vehicles worldwide, far short of the more than 1.8 million for the full year that CEO Elon Musk has predicted.

The company's widely watched gross profit margin, the percentage of revenue it gets to keep after expenses, fell once again to 18%. A year ago it was 18.2%, and it peaked at 29.1% in the first quarter of 2022.

Tesla said it posted record quarterly revenue "despite a difficult operating environment." The company's energy-storage business took in just over \$3 billion in revenue, double the amount in the same period last year.

CEO Elon Musk, who has tried to portray Tesla as an autonomous vehicle, robotics and artificial-intelligence company, told analysts on a conference call that the company's "Full Self Driving" system should be able to run without human supervision by the end of this year, although he acknowledged that his predictions "have been overly optimistic in the past."

At present, "Full Self Driving" is

being tested on public roads by some Tesla owners. The company says it cannot drive itself and human drivers must be ready to intervene at all times.

For many years Musk has said the system will allow a fleet of robotaxis to generate income for the company and Tesla owners, making use of the electric vehicles when they would have been parked. Musk has been touting self-driving vehicles as a growth catalyst for Tesla since "Full Self Driving" hardware went on sale late in 2015.

But in investigative documents, the U.S. National Highway Traffic Safety Administration said it found 75 crashes and one death involving "Full Self Driving." It's not clear whether the system was at fault.

Later, Musk said he did not think approval by government regulators would be a limiting factor in deploying robotaxis. "If you've got billions of miles that show that in the future, unsupervised FSD is safer than humans, what regulator could really stand in the way of that?" he asked.

Musk told analysts he postponed the company's August robotaxi unveil until Oct. 10 to make changes to improve the vehicle. He also said Tesla will show off a "couple of other things" at the event.

Musk said he expects Tesla to begin limited production of the Optimus humanoid robot early next year for use by Tesla. The robot already is doing work at a factory. In 2026, production would ramp up more to send robots to outside customers, he said.

Musk also said the company is on track to deliver its new more affordable vehicle in the first half of next year.

The company, he said, wants to wait until after the U.S. presidential election before deciding whether to build a new factory in Mexico. Republican nominee Donald Trump has threatened to slap tariffs on autos made in Mexico, so it wouldn't make sense to build there in that case, Musk said. Musk has endorsed Trump.

Morningstar analyst Seth Goldstein attributed the large stock drop to Tesla giving little new specific information on vehicles or tangible financial targets. "Maybe some investors are saying 'you know, we didn't get more details from management,'" Goldstein said.

Modi focuses on jobs creation in 1st budget after polls

NEW DELHI, July 24, (AP): Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's newly formed government presented an annual budget to Parliament that raises spending to generate more jobs and spur economic growth, while aiming to appease coalition partners it needs to stay in power.

In her budget speech Tuesday, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said the government is focused on driving domestic growth through jobs, training and small businesses.

India's inflation rate is stable and moving toward the government's 4% target, she said, while the economy grew at a sizzling 8.2% rate in the last fiscal year.

"India's economic growth continues to be the shining exception and will remain so in the years ahead," Sitharaman said.

More than a decade after he first took office as prime minister, Modi is under pressure to generate more jobs to help sustain growth.

The proposed budget includes a \$24 billion package for job creation over the next five years and raises spending on loans for small and medium-size businesses. It allocates \$18 billion to support agriculture and farm technology, such as climate-resilient seed varieties.

It also would raise spending, to \$133 billion, on construction of thirty million homes for the poor, schools, airports, highways and other infrastructure. The budget would cut taxes on big corporations and allocate more funds to two states, Andhra Pradesh and Bihar, that are governed by the Modi government's biggest coalition partners.

The government plans to build new airports, medical colleges and sports and tourism facilities in eastern India's Bihar state, which is ruled by the Janata Dal (United) party.

Sitharaman also announced special financial support for southern India's Andhra Pradesh state, ruled by the Telugu Desam party.

Modi's governing Bharatiya Janata Party is relying on those two regional parties to keep its coalition government in power after it failed to win a majority on its own in recent national elections.

Modi said the budget will lead India toward "better growth and a bright future."

India's inflation rate is stable and moving

Union Budget '24 balances today's 'needs' and tomorrow's priorities

KUWAIT CITY, July 24: "The Union Budget 2024 is a thought-provoking plan that balances the needs of today while setting priorities for the future. However, some may argue it could have done more to address immediate concerns," commented Adeeb Ahamed, MD of LuLu Financial Holdings, on India's 2024 budget.

"The focus on promoting entrepreneurship, skilling, and MSMEs is commendable. The scheme offering internship opportunities in the top 500 companies will enable students to effectively translate their academic knowledge into practical professional skills, facilitating a smoother transition into the workforce," said Adeeb Ahamed.

The MD of LuLu Financial Holdings further said, "MSMEs have a vital role to play in the country's development going forward, and the moves taken in this budget to increase credit access and financial support will help these companies to scale and modernize. The initiatives to ensure credit access to MSMEs during their stress period and to increase the limit in MUDRA loans are welcome ones."

"I am also happy to see the initiative to bring out a Financial Sector Vision and Strategy Document. This will provide a clear agenda for all stakeholders over the next five years, ensuring that the efforts of the government, regula-

tors, financial institutions, and market participants are aligned towards common goals," he said.

"At the same time, there could have been more incentives for the tourism and hospitality industry. Rethinking the lending norms and envisioning hospitality development as a vital part of infrastructure development were necessary. With the growing use of AI in other sectors, tourism and hospitality are poised to become major drivers of job creation, and the sector needs more support," said Adeeb Ahamed.

"Today's budget will act as a catalyst in making India the world's third largest economy," he said in a speech, reiterating his pledge to make India one of the top three economies during his third term in office.

India's economy - the fifth largest in the world - is projected to grow at an annual rate of between 6.5% to 7% in the fiscal year ending in March 2025. But experts say the benefits of its rapid growth are shared unequally, as wealth of already affluent Indians has risen



Adeeb Ahamed

steadily without reaching the majority of Indians who toil in the country's large informal sector, where the quality of jobs is poor and precarious.

Billions of dollars worth of subsidies to manufacturing have not led to creation of enough jobs. To mitigate rising unemployment, the government said it will provide 12-month paid internship opportunities to 10 million young people in India's top 500 companies for a five-year period. Sitharaman said the training cost will be borne

by the companies.

According to the Center for Monitoring the Indian Economy, youth unemployment was at 9.2% in early July, underscoring the challenge of delivering jobs in the world's most populous country, where millions graduate every year.

Inequality has surged in India in the last decade. According to a report by World Inequality Lab, wealth concentrated in the richest 1% of India's population is at its highest in six decades.

Adeeb Ahamed

- The focus on promoting entrepreneurship, skilling, and MSMEs is commendable. The scheme offering internship opportunities in the top 500 companies will enable students to effectively translate their academic knowledge into practical professional skills, facilitating a smoother transition into the workforce.

"There could also have been more in terms of measures to attract NRI investments to the country. Reducing corporate tax for foreign companies to 35 percent is a welcome development, and the move to abolish the Angel Tax for startups is indeed commendable. But the NRI community was expecting more policies and reforms to boost NRI investment in India," he said.

"Overall, while this budget is a balanced one and will stand the country in good stead over the long run, one could always argue that there are missed opportunities," added Adeeb Ahamed.



The IN Camp booth at Assima Mall.



126 engaging workshops held for 7-14 year olds throughout a week.



Sessions covered digital skills, AR, robotics, coding, and electronics.

In partnership between Zain, SACGC and in collaboration with Assima Mall

Innovation Nation 2nd summer camp empowers over 1,600 tech-passionate youth

KUWAIT CITY, July 24: The second edition of the Innovation Nation (IN) summer camp concluded successfully, engaging over 1,600 young tech enthusiasts. This initiative, a strategic partnership between Zain and Sabah Al Ahmad Center for Giftedness and Creativity (SACGC) – a KFAS center, and in collaboration with Assima Mall, aimed to enhance tech skills and inspire digital innovation.

The camp, which was aimed at 7-14 year olds, featured 126 engaging workshops and hands-on sessions from 15-21 July. It was widely received by parents, children, and youth who took the opportunity to learn new tech skills that inspired their passion for technology.

The IN Camp covered a variety of topics related to new technologies, like digital doodling and 3D printing, augmented reality (AR), robotics and programming, electronics, mechanical and software engineering, and more.

The workshops were facilitated by experts and certified trainers from Sabah Al Ahmad Center for Giftedness and Creativity. The content was presented in an innovative and engaging manner that appealed to young people.

The workshops were organized and supervised by members of Zain's FUN program and SACGC's Talmatha initiative, both of which provide university students with a real-world, part-time work experience, fostering skills like project management, public relations, customer service, teamwork, problem-solving, and critical thinking.

This partnership between Zain, SACGC, and Assima Mall is part of the broader Innovation Nation initiative, which encompasses all of Zain's innovation and entrepreneurship programs. The initiative focuses on science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) and primarily targets young people and entrepreneurs, aiming to foster a digitally capable generation.

The Conversation

Surgeon general calls for warning labels

Study finds restrictive monitoring linked to negative effects in teens

By Linda Charmaraman
Wellesley College

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

A national conversation about potential links between smartphones and digital media and the ongoing teen mental health crisis has reached a fever pitch.

Research does not definitively show that excessive screen time causes teen anxiety or depression, though research is ongoing. Still, in June 2024, the U.S. surgeon general called for warning labels to be placed on social media, stating that "the mental health crisis among young people is an emergency - and social media has emerged as an important contributor."

But some researchers are expressing concerns that these warnings are too broad. Still, it's no wonder that parents feel pressured to do something - anything - to reduce the risks.

Setting strict limits on how preteen and teen children use the internet is a popular strategy. But our research suggests that achieving a healthy media environment at home may require a more complex and nuanced approach.

We are a group of research scientists who have backgrounds in psychology, human development, social ecology, pediatrics and community psychology and education.

Recently we collaborated on a mixed-method study of how parents monitor their middle school-aged kids' internet use. We found that more restrictive parental monitoring was significantly associated with problematic internet use, while some forms of less restrictive monitoring were not.

There are no hard and fast rules about the maximum number of screen hours before it's deemed unhealthy. But many parents understandably seek guidance on what should be socially acceptable and healthy use.

Developmentally appropriate use entails any use - including content consumed and for a certain amount of time - that does not interfere with daily functioning such as completing homework, having social relationships in real life, eating meals and getting enough sleep.

"Problematic internet use," on the other hand, is a catch-all phrase for use that is excessive or

risky, such as engaging in secretive behaviors or impulsive ones, like spending a lot of money. Among tweens and teens, it is associated with negative effects on physical, social or emotional well-being, such as depression, loneliness and spending less time with family and friends. This is the kind of internet use that parents want to avoid.

The word "associated" is important here; when two things are associated, that doesn't mean that one necessarily causes the other. In this situation, researchers like us don't know which is the chicken and which is the egg. It may be that parents of middle schoolers who struggle with problematic internet use are more likely to implement restrictions. Or it may be that implementing restrictions leads to problematic internet use. Our study simply shows that the two are associated with each other. Much more research is needed to show whether one causes the other.

For this study, we sent online surveys - available in English, Spanish and Portuguese - to parents of middle schoolers in the Northeast U.S. via school-based newsletters and email lists.

Of the 248 parents who completed the survey, most reported using multiple strategies. Nearly 85% reported regularly using a restrictive strategy of placing one- to six-hour time limits on internet use. About 62% reported using "active monitoring" - in other words, encouraging their children to converse with them about their ongoing digital media use and to think critically about its effects on them now and in the future.

Approximately 29% of parents also mentioned using "deference monitoring" strategies. This means not relying on internet restrictions because they believed their children already knew enough or were mature enough to avoid problematic use of digital media, or to showcase trust in their children's decision-making skills, often as they get older.

Next, we recorded in-depth interviews with a smaller and demographically diverse group of these parents.

We asked about their children's use of internet-based technologies such as smartphones, social media and gaming. We also asked how they were dealing with potentially or actively problematic internet use, and what informed their monitoring styles - such as advice from other parents, school staff or websites. (AP)

Bank hosts Al-Wazzan under Diraya campaign

KFH promotes banking awareness through KFH Talk podcast

KUWAIT CITY, July 24: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) continues its efforts to support Diraya financial and banking awareness campaign launched by the Central Bank of Kuwait in collaboration with Kuwait Banking Association.

Demonstrating its commitment, KFH hosted Lieutenant Colonel of the Electronic and Cyber Crime Combating Department at the Ministry of Interior, Saud Al-Wazzan on its podcast, KFH Talk. Al-Wazzan shed light on the latest tactics employed by fraudsters to deceive customers and emphasized the importance of financial awareness as a means of protection.

Al-Wazzan said: "Fraudsters use various programs and websites to provide services to customers and send them authentications through Kuwait Mobile ID application. Their goal is to obtain customers' banking information thus stealing their funds. Therefore, customers remain the first



Presenter Saud Al-Wazzan in conversation on the KFH Talk podcast.

line of defense. By staying informed about financial fraud tactics, they can significantly reduce the risk of falling victim to these crime".

He reaffirmed the importance of not rushing in providing personal and financial information to any party, whether online, or through SMS,

a phone call or the OTP.

He elaborated on a method of theft that utilizes fraudulent investment schemes. These schemes lure individuals with the promise of quick profits, pressuring them into hasty decisions without properly verifying the investment's legitimacy. This

ultimately leads victims to divulge confidential information, which then allows fraudsters to steal their rights and funds.

Before clicking on online links, he urged everyone to verify their legitimacy. These links could be from anonymous sources or sent using stolen phone numbers.

The campaign sheds light on customers' rights, rules and regulations of dealing with banks, information safety and security against intrusion, combating financial fraud, in addition to other warnings and regulations. This campaign comes as part of the bank's obligation to keep the customers informed about their rights and duties regarding banking and financial transactions and cybersecurity.

By supporting the campaign objectives, KFH aims to strengthen its pioneering role in banking awareness and provide customers with the maximum-security standards when using the banking products and services.

'Best account of its kind'

KIB announces winners of Al Dirwaza account's draw

KUWAIT CITY, July 24: Kuwait International Bank (KIB) announced the winners of the weekly draw held under the Al Dirwaza account's 2024 campaign, which is distinguished by the highest number of winners throughout the year. The fourth weekly draw, based on customers' June deposits, recently took place in the presence of representatives from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, as well as representatives from the Bank. The KD 1,000 prize was awarded to Majeed Abdulsamad Mohammad Alsaleh, Naser Khlaif Nuhaiter Alsulaili, Mohammad Salem Kuredi Aldousari, Eissa Mohammad Barrak Al-rasheedi, and Sahar Nayef Khudhair Dahham, whilst the KD 500 prize was awarded Fayeza Mohammad Jraidi Alrasheedi, Mohammad Mansour Abdulhussain Hussain, Moath Saad Mohammad Alghadhouri, Irshad Ul Haq Muhammad Shafi, Mohammad Humoud Mhaimed Alotaibi, Hussain Ahmad Khairallah Bo Taleb, and Anwar Qeaid Hashash Alotaibi.

It serves to note that AlDirwaza account is a savings account for individual customers, based on the Wakala investment principle, launched by KIB as one of its banking products for individuals. The account is currently the best of its kind in the sector, with annual expected profits of up to 2% disbursed on a monthly basis, where the cus-



Al Dirwaza account.

tomers get an expected profit of 2% for the first 3 months from the account opening date and up to 1% expected rate onward. The expected profits are automatically deposited into the customer's account within the first day of the beginning of each month.

Al Dirwaza account holders are eligible to enter the weekly, monthly and annual draws on

the condition of maintaining at least KD 100 in their account. For the weekly and monthly draws, each KD 1 that has completed a full month's cycle in the account will count for one chance, and chances are calculated based on the lowest monthly balance preceding the draw. As for the mega draw, chances are calculated for each KD 1 that completes a two-month cycle in the account - based on the lowest two monthly balances prior to the draw.

Al Dirwaza account is also in compliance with the provisions of Islamic Sharia and approved by the KIB's Sharia Supervisory Board. Furthermore, the account comes with a wide range of benefits, including the ease of opening the account, which does not require a salary transfer, and the customer's ability to open it remotely without visiting a branch through KIB Online on the Bank's website or KIB Mobile application on smartphones.

Additionally, Al Dirwaza account automatically grants customers instant issuance of an ATM card, with a KD 2,000 ATM daily withdrawal limit, as well as the ability to issue credit cards against the cash collateral in the account. To open the account and participate in its draws, a minimum of KD 100 is required and can only be withdrawn upon account closure.

Group contributes 5% of profit to ESG initiatives

Malabar Gold & Diamonds launches Golden Summer offers

KUWAIT CITY, July 24: Malabar Gold & Diamonds, the 6th largest jewellery retailer globally with over 350 showrooms across 13 countries, has just launched their Golden Summer offers. The offers, which will run until the 3rd of August across all of brand's showrooms in Kuwait, will give customers the chance to get free gold coins on their diamond & precious gem jewellery purchases.

As part of the Golden Summer offers, customers shopping for Diamond or Precious Gem jewellery worth KWD420 will get a free 1gm Gold Coin and customers purchasing diamonds or precious gem jewellery worth KWD 250 will get a 1/2gm Gold Coin.

"We have introduced the Golden Summer offers to enhance the jewellery purchase experience of our customers, who are entering the last leg of their summer shopping. With diamond jewellery increasingly becoming the most preferred gifting article amongst individuals and families, the exquisite collection of Diamond jewellery that Malabar Gold & Diamonds offers makes it the perfect destination for jewellery shopping. Additionally, with the opportunity to get free gold coins along with their favourite jewellery, our customers are getting added value for money",



Golden Summer offer from Malabar Gold & Diamonds.

commented Mr. Shamlal Ahmed, MD - International Operations, Malabar Gold & Diamonds.

With a jewellery array comprising thousands of designs from numerous exclusive brands & collections such as Mine, Era, Viraa, Ethnix, Nuwa, Precia & Divine, Malabar Gold & Diamonds has been constantly updating their jewellery portfolio to cater to the refined tastes & preferences of its immense customer base. The brand's latest diamond jewellery collection, 'Nuwa', has been making waves amongst jewellery lovers worldwide. The Nuwa collection is a celebration of nature's intricate designs,

waves, forms, folds and textures, masterfully crafted into luxurious pieces of diamond jewellery. With all purchases covered under the Malabar Promise of 100% Value on Diamond & Gold exchange as well as Free lifetime maintenance, Malabar Gold & Diamonds guarantees its customers unmatched value & service assurance on their purchase.

Malabar Gold & Diamonds was established in 1993 and is the flagship company of Malabar Group, a leading diversified Indian business conglomerate.

With an annual turnover of \$6.2 billion, the company currently ranks as the 6th largest jewellery retailer

globally and today has a strong retail network of over 350 outlets spread across 13 countries in addition to multiple offices, design centres, wholesale units, and factories spread across India, Middle East, Far East, the USA, the UK, Canada & Australia. The group, owned by more than 4,000 shareholders, has more than 21,000 professionals from over 26 countries working towards its continued success.

Malabar Gold & Diamonds also features an online store www.malabargoldanddiamonds.com providing customers the opportunity to purchase their favorite jewellery at any time and on any day from the comfort of their homes.

ESG (Environmental, Social & Governance) has been the primary commitment of the group since its inception. The key ESG focus areas of Malabar Group are Health, Housing, Hunger Free World, Education, Environment and Women empowerment. Integrating the principles of responsibility and sustainability into its core business, Malabar Group periodically strengthens its ESG goals to remain a socially conscious and responsible organization. The group contributes 5% of its profit to such initiatives in the same country of operation.

What do you do when you're home, sick in bed?

DRAW!

Raúl Colón

DAI StoryTime
Saturday, 27 July at 3:30
Amricani Cultural Centre
No registration required; just come and enjoy!

DAI July poster

Venice Fest lineup features 'Joker 2' and Pitt, Jolie films

VENICE, July 24, (AP) — Five years after “Joker” won the top prize at the Venice Film Festival, filmmaker Todd Phillips is returning with the sequel. “Joker: Folie à Deux” will play in competition with 20 other titles, festival organizers said Tuesday.

The highly anticipated follow-up to the blockbuster comic book film stars Joaquin Phoenix as the mentally ill Arthur Fleck and Lady Gaga as Harley Quinn.

The lineup for the 81st edition of the festival, unveiled early Tuesday, also includes new films starring Brad Pitt, George Clooney, Angelina Jolie, Nicole Kidman, Daniel Craig and Jude Law.

Among the films playing alongside “Joker 2” in competition are Pablo Larraín’s Maria Callas film “Maria,” starring Jolie; Walter Salles’ “I’m Still Here”; the erotic thriller “Babygirl” starring Kidman and Harris Dickinson from filmmaker Halina Reijn; Luca Guadagnino’s William S. Burroughs’ adaptation “Queer,” with Craig and Jason Schwartzman; and Pedro Almodóvar’s first English-language film, “The Room Next Door,” starring Julianne Moore and Tilda Swinton. Set in New England, the filmmaker has said it’s about an imperfect mother and a resentful daughter.

“The Order,” Justin Kurzel’s 80s-set crime thriller about the white supremacist group starring Law as an FBI agent, Nicholas Hoult and Junee Smollett, will also be in competition, as will Brady Corbet’s “The Brutalist,” with Adrien Brody, Guy Pearce, Felicity Jones and

Joe Alwyn. Shot on 70mm, the 215-minute epic is about a Hungarian Auschwitz survivor who goes to the United States.

Pitt and Clooney will reunite in Jon Watts’ “Wolfs,” an adrenaline-packed action-comedy about a few fixers that will screen out of competition.

Several interesting films playing in the horizons extra section include “September 5,” about the live television coverage of the Munich Olympics, starring Peter Sarsgaard; John Swab’s “King Ivory,” with Ben Foster and James Badge Dale; and Alex Ross Perry’s film about Stephen Malkmus’ California rock band Pavement.

Award

Venice will also screen Peter Weir’s 2003 epic “Master and Commander: The Far Side of the World,” in conjunction with his lifetime achievement award.

Seven episodes of Alfonso Cuarón’s psychological thriller series “Disclaimer” will also premiere at the festival. The AppleTV+ show is based on a novel about a documentary journalist and a secret she’s been keeping. It stars Cate Blanchett and Kevin Kline and will debut on the streamer in October.

Among the nonfiction titles playing out of competition are Kevin Macdonald and Sam Rice-Edwards’ “One to One: John & Yoko,”

which reconstructs the New York years of the Beatle and his wife; Errol Morris’ “Separated,” about the separation of immigrant children from their parents in the US; Anastasia Trofimova’s “Russians at War”; Göran Hugo Olsson’s “Israel Palestine on Swedish TV 1958-1989”; “Riefenstahl,” about the German propagandist; And another Beatles-focused doc, “The Things We Said Today,” a time capsule of their arrival in New York and first concert at Shea Stadium.

Last year’s festival took place amid the actors’ strike. Although some attended under interim agreements, like Adam Driver and Penelope Cruz for “Ferrari” and “Priscilla” stars Cailee Spaeny and Jacob Elordi, the festival was lacking its usual, consistent supply of star power. But its awards season influence remained strong: Seven Venice world premieres went on to get 24 Oscar nominations and five wins: Four for “Poor Things” and one for Wes Anderson’s “The Wonderful Story of Henry Sugar.”

Venice is a significant launching ground for awards hopefuls and the first major stop of a busy fall film festival season, with Toronto, Telluride and the New York Film Festivals close behind.

The 81st edition kicks off on August 28, with the world premiere of Tim Burton’s “Beetlejuice, Beetlejuice.” All of the main cast, including Michael Keaton, are expected to grace the red carpet. The Venice Film Festival runs through Sept. 7.

Variety



This image released by Focus Features shows Izaak Wang in a scene from 'Didi.' (AP)

Film

Sean Wang’s film mirrors his own journey

A skater’s artistic coming-of-age in ‘Didi’

NEW YORK, July 24, (AP) — Within the span of five days in January, Sean Wang’s life changed about as dramatically as is possible for a young filmmaker.

On Jan. 19, Wang’s “Nai Nai & Wai Po,” a documentary short about his two grandmothers, was nominated for an Academy Award. On Jan. 23rd, his feature film debut, “Didi,” a coming-of-age tale drawn from Wang’s life growing up as the son of Taiwanese immigrants in Fremont, California, premiered at the Sundance Film Festival.

“Didi” was immediately hailed as the exciting debut of a new filmmaking voice. The film, a comic and sensitive tale about awkwardly finding yourself in the early digital days of MySpace and AOL-messenger, went on to win an audience award and a prize for its ensemble cast at Sundance. In “Didi,” a portrait of an artist as a young skater kid, Chris Wang (Izaak Wang) hesitantly becomes a “filmer” of his friends’ skating tricks, a path that mirrors Wang’s own first steps behind the camera.

In one scene, someone jokes that Chris, nicknamed “Wang Wang,” will later thank them in his Oscar speech — a prophecy that very nearly came true before “Didi” even opened in theaters. “Nai Nai & Wai Po” ultimately didn’t win at the Oscars, though Wang’s grandmothers did earn “best dressed” from GQ.

“I’m sure people who saw the movie pre-Oscars and after Sundance were like ‘Oh my god,’” Wang says. “Now they’re like, ‘Well, it didn’t happen. Better luck next time, Wang Wang.’”

For the 30-year-old Wang, though, luck has had little to do with his swift rise, nor is he any kind of overnight sensation. “Didi,” which Focus Features releases Friday, is what Wang has been steadily building toward, in skateboarding videos, YouTube uploads and short films since he first started filming himself attempting ollies in the garage.

“There was something about it that I loved,” said Wang in a recent interview. “It felt like Legos, in a way. You start with nothing and by the end of it, you have something. And then you get to show your friends.”

Wang has carried on that mindset as a filmmaker, making collage-like movies both with and about his friends and family. His short “3,000 Miles” chronicled a year away from his parents with a soundtrack

of voicemails left by his mom. In “H.A.G.S (Have a Good Summer),” Wang, then in his mid-20s, called up old middle school classmates who had written in his yearbook to reflect on their past while pondering their unfolding adult lives.

“Didi,” similar in spirit to those shorts but more ambitiously narrative, is an effervescent amalgamation of fact and fiction. It was shot in Wang’s childhood home and old neighborhood. Chris’ mother is played in the film by Joan Chen, but the live-in grandmother is played by one of Wang’s real, GQ-certified grandmothers, Zhang Li Hua. On most days, Wang’s real mother was on set, too.

“The hope,” Wang says, “was always to keep it feeling very familial and homegrown and to have my real family become part of the process with my film family.”

Experience

In some ways, “Didi,” which is Mandarin for little brother, doesn’t differ radically from other coming-of-age films before it. “Stand By Me” is a touchstone for Wang. There are memorable, foul-mouthed fights with his older sister (Shirley Chen), shy encounters with girls and disappointments with best friends.

But Chris’ adolescence is also uniquely his. His quarrels with his mom stem in part from unsettled feelings about his still-forming identity. Wanting to fit in with a new group of skaters, Chris lies that he’s “half Asian.” He’s also told by a crush that he’s pretty cute “for an Asian.” With a light touch, “Didi” captures the experience of a first-generation kid navigating two worlds, plus one in between.

“I was really cognizant of not making a capital-I Identity movie,” says Wang. “A lot of what I wanted to capture was the feeling this kid goes through about being a kid in America with immigrant parents. The hope was that all the themes in the movie about identity and race and adolescence are just felt and not necessarily commented on.”

For Chen, the actress-director of “The Last Emperor” and “Lust, Caution,” “Didi” hit home. Speaking from Atlanta, where she was shooting a Michael Showalter comedy, Chen said she deeply related to the film as a Chinese American mother who raised two daughters in

San Francisco.

“That kind of confusion — and the complex, fraught relationship with the mother-in-law — that is something that all Chinese daughters-in-law understand,” said Chen. “The immigrant experience was something I was very familiar with.”

One of Chen’s two daughters helped on set throughout the production. For them, “Didi” took on their own personal meaning.

“To have her see me play this mother, it was almost like telling her that I love her,” says Chen, “that I want to do it all over again, that I wanted to redeem myself.”

To entice Chen to take the role, Wang sent her the script and a personal letter. “Both impressed me,” Chen says. Now, the 63-year-old actress finds herself getting more acclaim than she ever expected for a small indie film from a first-time filmmaker.

“Looking back, having done ‘The Last Emperor,’ such an epic film that won nine Oscars, I didn’t get attention like I’m getting right now,” Chen says, laughing.

When Wang was making skate videos, he wasn’t just shooting tricks. He was drawn to making portraits of skaters and in-between moments. He was inspired by Spike Jonze’s skating videos and the atmospheric flavor of videos on the skating website the Berries.

“It was just fun. I liked the feeling of shooting stuff, putting it in a timeline and putting music underneath and going: Are we capturing the feeling of what that day was like?”

The tools of filmmaking — a decent camera, the ability to post videos online — was making moviemaking more accessible, even if Wang didn’t start thinking about narrative films until film school at the University of Southern California. He’d later participate in several Sundance Institute labs.

By then, films like Ryan Coogler’s “Fruitvale Station,” Destin Daniel Cretton’s “Short Term 12” and Barry Jenkins’ “Medicine for Melancholy” were expanding Wang’s sense of cinematic possibilities.

For Izaak Wang, 16, making “Didi” was a way to channel his own adolescent hardships growing up while experiencing a coming of age of his own. Wang became friends with the actors who play Chris’ friends in the movie; they stayed together at Sundance.

Features

ARABIC TIMES

THURSDAY, JULY 25, 2024

WASHINGTON: Comedian Jon Stewart is pressing the Biden administration to fix a loophole in a massive veterans aid bill that left out some of the first US troops who responded after the Sept. 11 attacks and got sick after deploying to a base contaminated with dangerous levels of uranium.

Special operations forces deployed to Karshi-Khanabad, or “K2,” in Uzbekistan about three weeks after the 2001 attacks. K2 was a former Soviet air base that US forces used to strike Taliban targets inside Afghanistan in the earliest days of the war. The base was a former chemical weapons processing site and littered with Soviet-era debris, including demolished bunkers, missile parts and highly radioactive uranium powder, according to documents obtained by The Associated Press.

It’s not clear why uranium powder was on the ground or how it got there. But it’s worrying those who served at K2. Thousands of K2 veterans in the years since have reported complex medical conditions, some of which are known to be connected to radiation exposure.

“Imagine you’re stationed inside the meth lab on ‘Breaking Bad,’” Stewart said in an interview with the AP. “These guys were exposed to a toxic soup of basically an exploded chemicals and nuclear weapon facility.”

A massive veterans aid bill called the PACT Act that was signed into law by President Joe Biden in 2022 addressed many of the health issues facing K2 veterans. But it didn’t include coverage for radiation exposure at K2.

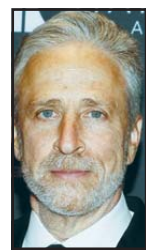
K2 veterans have pressed the Department of Veterans Affairs for help for years, but so far the VA has not acted. The agency has said it is still studying the issue and looking to the Pentagon for additional information before it determines whether to add radiation exposure as a condition K2 service members can get coverage for.

“All presumptive conditions established by the VA, rather than by legislation, require a factual rationale,” said VA spokesman Terrence Hayes.

It’s been more than 20 years since troops first deployed to K2 and almost two years since Biden celebrated the PACT Act’s passage. But K2 veterans are still

facing the claim denials the PACT Act was supposed to fix.

Data obtained by the AP shows the soil at K2 recorded uranium radiation levels up to 40,000 times higher than what would have been expected if it were natural uranium, according to Arjun Makhijani, a nuclear fusion specialist and president of the Institute for Energy



Stewart



Biden

and Environmental Research, who reviewed the data.

Even if it were in its least radioactive form, depleted uranium, the soil was up to 24,000 times above what would have been found in nature. Air samples were more than 30 to 100 times the levels that would have been found in normal air

samples, Makhijani said.

The radiation levels the health team recorded were significant enough that anyone not wearing protective gear would have breathed in high levels of contamination when the dust was kicked up, especially during activities such as earth moving, Makhijani said.

The radiation data was captured

in November 2001 by former Army Sgt. Matthew Nicholls, who was part of an Army environmental health team quickly deployed to collect air, water and soil samples from K2 after local Uzbek workers who were preparing the site for arriving U.S. forces fell ill with headaches, nausea and vomiting. (AP)

People & Places

Obit

Rock stars' mentor

John Mayall, British blues pioneer, dies

LONDON, July 24, (AP) — **John Mayall**, the British blues musician whose influential band the Bluesbreakers was a training ground for Eric Clapton, Mick Fleetwood and many other superstars, has died. He was 90.

A statement on Mayall's Instagram page announced his death Tuesday, saying the musician died Monday at his home in California. "Health issues that forced John to end his epic touring career have finally led to peace for one of this world's greatest road warriors," the post said.

He is credited with helping develop the English take on urban, Chicago-style rhythm and blues that played an important role in the blues revival of the late 1960s. At various times, the Bluesbreakers included Eric Clapton and Jack Bruce, later of Cream; Mick Fleetwood, John McVie and Peter Green of Fleetwood Mac; Mick Taylor, who played five years with the Rolling Stones; Harvey Mandel and Larry Taylor of Canned Heat; and Jon Mark and John Almond, who went on to form the Mark-Almond Band.



Mayall

Mayall protested in interviews that he was not a talent scout, but played for the love of the music he had first heard on his father's 78-rpm records.

"I'm a band leader and I know what I want to play in my band - who can be good friends of mine," Mayall said in an interview with the Southern Vermont Review. "It's definitely a family. It's a small kind of thing really."

A small but enduring thing. Though Mayall never approached the fame of some of his illustrious alumni, he was still performing in his late 80s, pounding out his version of Chicago blues. The lack of recognition rankled a bit, and he wasn't shy about saying so.

"I've never had a hit record, I never won a Grammy Award, and Rolling Stone has never done a piece about me," he said in an interview with the Santa Barbara Independent in 2013. "I'm still an underground performer."

Recognition

Known for his blues harmonica and keyboard playing, Mayall had a Grammy nomination, for "Wake Up Call" which featured guest artists Buddy Guy, Mavis Staples, Mick Taylor and Albert Collins. He received a second nomination in 2022 for his album "The Sun Is Shining Down." He also won official recognition in Britain with the award of an OBE (Officer of the Order of the British Empire) in 2005.

He was selected for the 2024 Rock & Roll Hall of Fame class and his 1966 album "Blues Breakers With Eric Clapton," is considered one of the best British blues albums.

Mayall once was asked if he kept playing to meet a demand, or simply to show he could still do it.

"Well, the demand is there, fortunately. But it's really for neither of those two things, it's just for the love of the music," he said in an interview with Hawaii Public Radio. "I just get together with these guys and we have a workout."

Mayall was born on Nov. 29, 1933 in Macclesfield, near Manchester in central England.

Sounding a note of the hard-luck bluesman, Mayall once said, "The only reason I was born in Macclesfield was because my father was a drinker, and that's where his favorite pub was."

His father also played guitar and banjo, and his records of boogie-woogie piano captivated his teenage son.

Mayall said he learned to play the piano one hand at a time - a year on the left hand, a year on the right, "so I wouldn't get all tangled up."

The piano was his main instrument, though he also performed on guitar and harmonica, as well as singing in a distinctive, strained-sounding voice. Aided only by drummer Keef Hartley, Mayall played all the other instruments for his 1967 album, "Blues Alone."

Passion

Mayall was often called the "father of British blues," but when he moved to London in 1962 his aim was to soak up the nascent blues scene led by Alexis Korner and Cyril Davies. Mick Jagger, Keith Richards and Eric Burdon were among others drawn to the sound.

The Bluesbreakers drew on a fluid community of musicians who drifted in and out of various bands. Mayall's biggest catch was Clapton, who had quit the Yardbirds and joined he Bluesbreakers in 1965 because he was unhappy with the Yardbirds' commercial direction.

Mayall and Clapton shared a passion for Chicago blues, and the guitarist later remembered that Mayall had "the most incredible collection of records I had ever seen."

Mayall tolerated Clapton's waywardness: He disappeared a few months after joining the band, then reappeared later the same year, sidelining the newly arrived Peter Green, then left for good in 1966 with Bruce to form Cream, which rocketed to commercial success, leaving Mayall far behind.

Clapton, interviewed for a BBC documentary on Mayall in 2003, confessed that "to a certain extent I have used his hospitality, used his band and his reputation to launch my own career."

"I think he is a great musician. I just admire and respect his steadfastness," Clapton added.

Mayall encouraged Clapton to sing and urged Green to develop his song-writing abilities.

Mick Taylor, who succeeded Green as a Bluesbreaker in the late 1960s, valued the wide latitude which Mayall allowed his soloists.

"You'd have complete freedom to do whatever you wanted," Taylor said in a 1979 interview with writer Jas Obrecht. "You could make as many mistakes as you wanted, too."

Mayall's 1968 album "Blues from Laurel Canyon" signaled a permanent move to the United States and a change in direction. He disbanded the Bluesbreakers and worked with two guitars and drums.

The following year he released "The Turning Point," arguably his most successful release, with an atypical four-man acoustic lineup including Mark and Almond. "Room to Move," a song from that album, was a frequent audience favorite in Mayall's later career.

The 1970s found Mayall at low ebb personally, but still touring and doing more than 100 shows a year.

"Throughout the '70s, I performed most of my shows drunk," Mayall said in an interview with Dan Ouellette for Down Beat magazine in 1990. One consequence was an attempt to jump from a balcony into a swimming pool that missed - shattering one of Mayall's heels and leaving him with a limp.



This image released by Sony Pictures shows Brad Pitt, (left), and George Clooney in a scene from 'Wolfs.' 'Wolfs' is one of the films among Venice Film Festival lineup. (AP) — Details Page 11

Music

Docu celebrates Blues' enduring legacy

Aykroyd reflects on Blues Brothers

NEW YORK, July 24, (AP) — The shades are on, the skinny tie is knotted and the fedora is perched just so - Dan Aykroyd is ready to look back.

The actor-comedian is revving up the Bluesmobile to reminisce about the years he teamed up with John Belushi as the Blues Brothers, taking Hollywood and the Billboard charts by storm.

Aykroyd writes and narrates the Audible Original "Blues Brothers: The Arc of Gratitude," which starts with him meeting Belushi one freezing night in Toronto in 1973 and takes us to today, with gigs still lining up. The documentary drops Thursday.

"It's cool to keep doing it after 40-some years," Aykroyd says from his summer home in Canada. "It's because it's based on the honesty of African American culture and the music and two white guys who just loved it so much that we had to emulate it and do it in this way."

The documentary traces their appearances on "SNL" and their breakthrough album "Briefcase Full of Blues" to the 1980 movie and its hit soundtrack, the death of Belushi and Aykroyd's commitment to carry on the tradition with a new partner - Belushi's brother, Jim - with the creation of House of Blues nightclubs and the "Blues Brothers 2000" movie sequel.

The two-hour lookback includes interviews with Jim Belushi, band leader Paul Shaffer, singer Curtis Salgado, director John Landis, drummer Steve Jordan, widow Judy Belushi Pisano, saxophonist Lou Marini and more, as well as a previously unheard interview with John Belushi himself.

"I provided the structural skeleton to a lot of really strong organic material there," says Aykroyd. "I think it really brought back the time vividly."

Listeners will learn that "SNL" creator and producer Lorne Michaels wasn't a fan of the fictional brothers' act and that their rise was something of a disruption for record labels and movie studios. Key moments came when Willie Nelson and then Steve Martin invited them as opening acts.

The concept was admittedly a little odd: Two white comedians fronting a first-rate blues band with the express

purpose of celebrating a musical form that had grown dusty.

The Blues Brothers - Aykroyd's Elwood and Belushi's "Joliet" Jake - wore black suits and black string ties inspired by comedian Lenny Bruce and snap-brim fedora hats and shades borrowed from the album cover of John Lee Hooker's "House of the Blues."

Aykroyd says in the audio documentary that the pair saw an opportunity for something fresh, fun and classic "in that tiny orbital skip of an electron during the seconds between disco and New Wave."

After successful turns on "SNL" - first as a warm-up act then as performers - they released an album "Briefcase Full of Blues" - with the hit cover "Soul Man" - and then a cult movie as the pair lead police, some Nazis and a furious country act on spectacular chases through Illinois to raise \$5,000 to save their childhood home. It had cameos by Carrie Fisher, Chaka Khan, Twiggy, Joe Walsh, Paul Reubens and Frank Oz.

Collaboration

Listeners will learn that one of the most memorable lines was a collaboration. Aykroyd wrote "It's 106 miles to Chicago. We've got a full tank of gas, half a pack of cigarettes." Landis added: "It's dark and we're wearing sunglasses. Hit it."

The movie was also filled to the brim with blues stars - like Donald "Duck" Dunn, Steve Cropper, Matt Murphy - and performances by Aretha Franklin, James Brown and Ray Charles, who were struggling through fallow periods.

"You may say appropriation. We did, yes, but we preserved as well," says Aykroyd. "That is what we were always about. We wanted, forever on film, to show you what these artists could do and what they sounded like."

But exhibitors in the South - particularly Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Florida and Georgia - balked. "The consensus was, by these guys, 'This is a Black movie and no white people would see it,'" Landis recalls. "I remember going, 'It has Princess Leia in it!'"

Ultimately, the Blues Brothers - the films, records, skits and music venues - helped fill jukeboxes across the globe with classics and revived the careers of Franklin, Brown and Charles, creating a new love for the blues.

"I'm happy that, we were able to re-stimulate interest in these people that we loved," says Aykroyd, who cites dancing with Brown, singing with Little Richard and acting with Franklin as career highlights.

He and Jim Belushi still tour - including an upcoming gig this August at Blues Brothers Con at the historic Joliet Prison in Illinois - and Aykroyd sees the venture as like a law firm.

"Jake and Elwood founded it. And now it's got new partners and new associates. It has great endurance. The reason is because the music is real. The songs are real."

Also:

NEW YORK: Bob Dylan fans who want to relive his 1974 concert tour with The Band will soon have opportunity to do that - ample opportunity.

He is releasing a staggering 27-disc box set that includes full recordings of 27 of the 40 shows of that tour, Dylan's theatrical return to the stage with backing of the group with whom he made some his most memorable music. Columbia Records/Legacy Recordings announced Tuesday that the set will be released on Sept. 20, and will retail for \$129.98.

The box includes some 417 previously unreleased performances, the record company said. Fans who want a slightly smaller bite can buy a three-album highlights box on vinyl.

It's definitely for completists: The set will contain 21 different versions of "Lay Lady Lay" alone. There was already a live album of songs from that tour, "Before the Flood," that came out in the 1970s.

Dylan has never been shy about giving fans the chance to hear him. "The 1974 Live Recordings" will only be his third-largest box set - following the 47-CD complete album collection released in 2013 and the 36-CD set chronicling Dylan and the Band's 1966 tour.



Dan Aykroyd attends the world premiere of 'Get On Up' in New York on July 21, 2014. Aykroyd writes and narrates the Audible Original 'Blues Brothers: The Arc of Gratitude,' which starts with him meeting John Belushi in 1973. (AP)



Chen



Wu

Variety

DOHA: The famous Qatari Souq Waqif launched on Wednesday its ninth annual dates festival with aim to enhance efforts to promote local date production.

More than 100 farms participate in the 12-day festival that is located at the eastern yard of Souq Waqif.

The festival witnesses significant demand from citizens, residents and visitors for dates and its various types at attractive prices. (KUNA)

BUDAPEST: The Guangzhou Symphony Youth Orchestra (GSYO) held a concert at the Hungarian State Opera here on Tuesday as part of the celebration of the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Hungary.

The concert opened with Franz Liszt's "Hungarian Rhapsody No. 2," immersing the audience in a rich depiction of Hungarian folk life, followed by Zhao Lin's "A Happy Excursion," a cello and pipa concerto, and then Chen Qigang's "Moments from a Peking Opera," a symphonic overture, and concluded with Igor Stravinsky's "The Firebird" suite (1919).

The audience enjoyed the concert, directed by the conductor Jing Huan, with great enthusiasm and gave warm applause to the wonderful performance.

The concert was part of the activities to celebrate the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries in October 1949. (Xinhua)

FLORENCE, Italy: A middle-aged man sits upright on horseback, gazing firmly into the distance. His bushy beard and distinctive headgear hint at his Western origin.

This small sculpture, exuding a bronze sheen with simplistic yet expressive Chinese aesthetics, is at an exhibition that is currently being held at the Academy of the Arts of Drawing (Accademia delle Arti del Disegno) in Florence, Italy, and the sculpture depicts none other than the famous Italian explorer Marco Polo.

Titled "Marco Polo in China," the exhibition commemorates the 700th anniversary of the famous Italian explorer's death through sculptures and paintings by Wu Weishan, the renowned international artist and curator of the National Art Museum of China, showcasing Marco Polo's journey to China centuries ago and engaging audiences worldwide.

As Wu's first solo exhibition in Florence, the exhibition features about 50 pieces by the artist, including well-known works, unfinished sculptures, and his latest paintings.

The Academy, with a history dating back to 1563, is known for its focus on art research and creation, regularly hosting exhibitions and seminars to promote artists

and their works.

According to Cristina Acidini, the director of the academy, through this exhibition, the academy hopes to honor Marco

Polo, a great emissary of cultural exchange between East and West. She told Xinhua in an interview that Marco Polo is an eternal symbol of global exploration.



US singer Patti Smith and her son guitarist Jackson Smith perform on the main stage, during the 46th edition of the Paleo Festival in Nyon, Switzerland, Tuesday, July 23. (AP)

"Today, we can travel more conveniently, but that doesn't mean we truly understand others. Marco Polo is a model for us to continue learning and staying open," she said.

At the exhibition, a series of Wu's latest Chinese landscape paintings were displayed on one side of the gallery, with Italian scenery in Chinese ink paintings on the opposite side. The gallery also features portraits of many ancient Chinese and Italian figures such as Laozi, Qu Yuan, and Leonardo Da Vinci.

Maria, a visitor from Spain, told Xinhua that the exhibited works impressed her with a simple yet expressive style. "Seeing these artworks imbued with ancient Chinese charm allowed me to imagine Marco Polo's experiences in China," she said.

Acidini said that through the sculptures, Marco Polo is placed in the same space with famous Chinese philosophers and poets, creating a dialogue that transcends time and space.

Many visitors shared their thoughts in a guestbook at the venue. One, signing as "S.H.," wrote: "What a surprising variety of forms and styles, all of them are beautiful."

The exhibition, which runs from July 9 to 28, is organized by the Academy and hosted by the China-Italy Contemporary Art Association. (Xinhua)

Seasonal foods, lifestyle changes and healthy habits vital

Boost your immune defenses: Tips from immunology expert

KUWAIT CITY, July 24: Boosting your immune system involves making lifestyle changes, including dietary adjustments, maintaining sleep, and engaging in regular physical activity, reports Al-Qabas daily.

Some natural products, vitamins, and essential oils can also stimulate the immune system. Here are essential tips to protect your body from diseases throughout the year, as advised by Dr. Louis Toulrier, a specialist in immunology, in a report published by the French magazine Santé.

Dr. Toulrier advises against abrupt dietary changes and recommends eating seasonal products while reducing sugar and fat intake.

He emphasizes stopping the consumption of sugary soft drinks, which can disrupt the immune system.

To enhance serotonin production and support immune cells, nerves, and intestines, choose slow-digesting carbohydrates like bread, pasta, grains, and rice over fast-digesting ones found in sweets, biscuits, and pastries.

Dr. Toulrier recommends sleeping 7 to 8 hours at night. During the day, allow as much natural light as possible into your home or workplace and strategically place mirrors to reflect daylight.

WELLINGTON, July 24, (Xinhua): House mice are a critical yet underestimated source of the bacterial disease leptospirosis in New Zealand, which means anyone in contact with mice could be at risk of infection, not just farmers, according to a study released on Tuesday.

Leptospirosis is a disease caused by bacteria that affects people and animals. It is spread in the urine of infected animals.

The study jointly conducted by New Zealand researchers from the Massey University, ecologists from the University of Auckland, and Brazilian wildlife veterinarians, found that two-thirds of reported leptospirosis cases result in hospitalization, with half experiencing long-lasting symptoms.

Cases have usually been linked back to livestock, creating the misconception it is a farmer's disease. However, the team's modeling data found the risk of getting leptospirosis

from house mice remains significant regardless of how dense mice populations are, with nine out of 10 mice found to be infected even when there are not many mice around.

The study, published in the Journal of Applied Ecology, aims to assess the density of infected mice within populations and understand their implications for disease transmission on a broader scale.

Lead researcher Marie Moinet said infected mice tend to roam more extensively, potentially spreading the disease further, calling for increased awareness of mice as a source of leptospirosis.

By integrating ecological and epidemiological methodologies, the research provides new insights into wildlife disease dynamics, with mice being underemphasized as disease carriers within New Zealand, Moinet said, adding given the ubiquitous presence of mice across the country, their population sizes often go un-

noticed until they reach outbreak level.

"Contact with infected mammal urine or contaminated water poses a significant transmission risk, with house mice harboring the prominent Ballum strain in recent cases," she said.

Professor Jackie Benschop of the Massey University said the research marks the need for greater attention to rodent control to safeguard public health.

Also:

PHNOM PENH: Cambodia's Ministry of Health on Wednesday appealed to people not to consume unknown mushrooms after 17 people have been hospitalized in northeastern Ratana-kiri province.

The patients, who live in Ou Ya Dav district's Loum village, were admitted to a local health center and a hospital on Sunday after eating a locally foraged wild mushroom.

"The patients, including four women, have the symptoms of abdominal pain, diarrhea, and vomiting," the ministry said in a news release. "They have been receiving intensive care from our medical team."

Health authorities have looked into the incident and educated the villagers to avoid eating unidentified mushrooms, the ministry said.

The ministry called on people to avoid eating unfamiliar mushrooms, saying that "mushroom poisoning can cost lives".

The symptoms that occur from two to six hours after eating poisonous mushrooms include abdominal cramps, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, dilated iris and dyspnea, the ministry said, adding that poisonous levels depend on kinds of mushrooms.

People should seek medical care at their nearest health centers if they have mushroom poisoning, the ministry said.

Engaging in regular physical activity, such as walking for 30 minutes a day, im-

proves blood circulation, increases immune cells, and reduces the risk of respiratory

infections by 40%. However, overtraining can negatively impact lymphocyte levels,

leading to fewer potential antibodies during infections.

Serious health risks

US aims to protect children from harmful online content

WASHINGTON, July 24, (AP): The Senate will consider legislation this week that aims to protect children from dangerous online content, moving forward with what could become the first sweeping new regulation of the tech industry in decades.

Majority Leader Chuck Schumer announced Tuesday that he will bring the bipartisan bill up in the Senate, with hopes of passing it before the chamber leaves for its August recess. The legislation had stalled for months even as more than two-thirds of the Senate signed on to support it and families of children who have suffered online bullying and harm advocated for its passage.

Schumer said on the Senate floor that the bill is "personal" for him after meeting in recent months with parents of children who died by suicide after they were harassed online, targeted by predators or had their information stolen. The parent advocates say social media and other tech companies need to do more to try to help prevent trauma endured by children and teenagers who inevitably spend a lot of their time online.

"Social media has helped hundreds of millions of people connect in new ways over the last two decades," Schumer said. "But there are also new and sometimes serious health risks that come along with those benefits. We cannot set these risks aside. On this issue, we desperately need to catch up."

Scrutiny

The online safety bill, which the Senate will consider along with a separate bill to update child online privacy laws, would be the first major tech regulation package to move in years. While there has long been bipartisan support for the idea that the biggest technology companies should face more government scrutiny, there has been little consensus on how it should be done. Congress passed legislation earlier this year that would force Chinese-owned social media company TikTok to sell or face a ban, but that law only targets one company.

The bill's prospects in the House are so far unclear. But if it passes the Senate with an overwhelming bipartisan vote - as it is expected to - advocates hope it will put pressure on House Speaker Mike Johnson, R-La., to bring it up before the November election or the end of the session in January.

"I think a strong vote in the Senate helps to move it quickly in the House," said Tennessee Sen. Marsha Blackburn, a Republican who wrote the bill with Democratic Sen. Richard Blumenthal of Connecticut.

The child safety bill came together as Blumenthal and Blackburn have worked together

and with advocacy groups for several years on compromise legislation that is designed to hold companies more responsible for what children see online while also ensuring that Congress does not go too far in regulating what individuals post.

The legislation would create what is called a "duty of care" - a legal term that requires companies to take reasonable steps to prevent harm on online platforms minors will likely use. The companies would be required to mitigate and even prevent harms to children, including bullying and violence, the promotion of suicide, eating disorders, substance abuse, sexual exploitation and advertisements for illegal products such as narcotics, tobacco or alcohol.

Information

To achieve that goal, social media platforms would have to provide minors with options to protect their information, disable addictive product features and opt out of personalized algorithmic recommendations. They would also be required to limit other users from communicating with children and limit features that "increase, sustain, or extend the use" of the platform - such as autoplay for videos or platform rewards.

In general, online platforms would have to default to the safest settings possible for accounts they believe belong to minors. The idea, Blumenthal and Blackburn have said, is for the platforms to be "safe by design."

The senators have worked closely with the parents of children who have died by suicide after cyberbullying or otherwise been harmed by social media, including dangerous social media challenges, extortion attempts, eating disorders and drug deals. Schumer appeared with some of them Tuesday at a tearful news conference, choking up a bit himself as some of the mothers held up photos of their children.

Maurine Molak, the mother of a 16-year-old who died by suicide after "months of relentless and threatening cyberbullying," said at the news conference that she believes the bill can save lives. She urged every senator to vote for it.

"Anyone who believes that children's well-being and safety should come before big tech's greed ought to put their mark on this historic legislation," Molak said.

Some tech companies, like Microsoft, X and Snap, are supporting the bill. Opponents, however, fear it would violate the First Amendment and harm vulnerable kids who wouldn't be able to access information on reproductive rights - although the bill has been revised to address many of those concerns.

Experts call breakthrough HIV shot 'stunning'

Twice-yearly injection offers 100% protection against HIV in women

CAPE TOWN, South Africa, July 24, (AP): Twice-yearly shots used to treat AIDS were 100% effective in preventing new infections in women, according to study results published Wednesday.

There were no infections in the young women and girls that got the shots in a study of about 5,000 in South Africa and Uganda, researchers reported. In a group given daily prevention pills, roughly 2% ended up catching HIV from infected sex partners.

"To see this level of protection is stunning," said Salim Abdool Karim of the injections. He is director of an AIDS research center in Durban, South Africa, who was not part of the research.

The shots made by U.S. drugmaker Gilead and sold as Sunlenca are approved in the U.S., Canada, Europe and elsewhere, but only as a treatment for HIV. The company said it is waiting for results of testing in men before seeking permission to use it to protect against infection.

The results in women were published Wednesday in the New England Journal of Medicine and discussed at an AIDS conference in Munich. Gilead paid for the study and some of the researchers are company employees. Because of the surprisingly encouraging results, the study was stopped early and all participants were offered the shots, also known as lenacapavir.

While there are other ways to prevent HIV infection, like condoms or daily pills, consistent use has been a problem in Africa. In the new study, only about 30% of participants given Gilead's Truvada or Descovy prevention pills actually took them - and that figure dropped over time.

Revolutionary

The prospect of a twice-a-year shot is "quite revolutionary news" for our patients, said Thandeka Nkosi, who helped run the Gilead research at the Desmond Tutu Health Foundation in Maphumelele, South Africa. "It gives participants a choice and it just eliminates the whole stigma around taking pills" to prevent HIV.

Experts working to stop the spread of AIDS are excited about the Sunlenca shots but are concerned Gilead hasn't yet agreed on an affordable price for those who need them the most. The company said it would pursue a "voluntary licensing program," suggesting that only a select number of generic producers would be allowed to make them.

"Gilead has a tool that could change the trajectory of the HIV epidemic," said Winnie Byanyima, executive director of the Geneva-based

Lack of treatments blamed

UN says 40m had HIV in 2023 and 1 AIDS death per minute

UNITED NATIONS, July 24, (AP): Nearly 40 million people were living with the HIV virus that causes AIDS last year, over 9 million weren't getting any treatment, and the result was that every minute someone died of AIDS-related causes, the U.N. said in a new report launched Monday.

While advances are being made to end the global AIDS pandemic, the report said progress has slowed, funding is shrinking, and new infections are rising in three regions: the Middle East and North Africa, Eastern Europe and Central Asia, and Latin America.

In 2023, around 630,000 people died from AIDS-related illnesses, a significant decline from the 2.1 million deaths in 2004. But the latest figure is more than double the target for 2025 of fewer than 250,000 deaths, according to the report by UNAIDS, the U.N. agency leading the global effort to end the pandemic.

Gender inequality is exacerbating the risks for girls and women, the report said, citing the extraordinarily high incidence of HIV among adolescents and young women in parts of Africa.

The proportion of new infections globally among marginalized communities that face stigma and discrimination - sex workers, men who have sex with men, and people who inject drugs also increased to 55% in 2023 from 45%

in 2010, it said.

UNAIDS Executive Director Winnie Byanyima said: "World leaders pledged to end the AIDS pandemic as a public health threat by 2030, and they can uphold their promise, but only if they ensure that the HIV response has the resources it needs, and that the human rights of everyone are protected."

As part of that pledge, leaders vowed to reduce annual new HIV infections to below 370,000 by 2025, but the report said in 2023 new infections were more than three times higher at 1.3 million.

Last year, among the 39.9 million people globally living with HIV, 86% knew they were infected, 77% were accessing treatment, and for 72% the virus was suppressed, the report said.

César Núñez, director of the UNAIDS New York office, told a news conference there has been progress in HIV treatments - injections that can stay in the body for six months, but the two doses cost \$40,000 yearly, out of reach for all but the richest people with the virus.

He said UNAIDS has been asking the manufacturer to make it available at lower cost to low and middle-income countries.

Núñez said there have also been seven cases where people with HIV who were treated for leukemia emerged with no sign of the HIV virus in their system.

the countries with the highest rate of new infections." She urged Gilead to publish a price for Sunlenca that would be affordable for all countries.

In a statement last month, Gilead said it was too early to say how much Sunlenca would cost for prevention in poorer countries. Dr. Jared Baeten, Gilead's senior vice president of clinical development, said the company was already talking to generics manufacturers and understood how "deeply important it is that we move at speed."

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Coco is seeded No. 2 in singles

Gauff will be US female flag bearer at opening ceremony

PARIS, July 24, (AP): Tennis star Coco Gauff will join LeBron James as a flag bearer for the U.S. Olympic team at Friday's opening ceremony.

Gauff, the reigning U.S. Open champion, is set to make her Olympic debut at the Paris

OLYMPICS

Games and will be the first tennis athlete to carry the U.S. flag. She and James were chosen by Team USA athletes.

"I mean, for me, the Olympics is a top priority. I would say equal to the Grand Slams. I wouldn't put it above or below, just be-

cause I've never played before. This is my first time," Gauff said earlier this year. "Obviously, I always want to do well, try to get a medal."

Gauff and James, the 39-year-old leading scorer in NBA history, both compete in sports that are outside the traditional Olympic world and get attention year-round, not just every four years.

The 20-year-old Gauff made the American team for the Tokyo Games three years ago as a teenager but had to sit out those Olympics because she tested positive for COVID-19 right before she was supposed to fly to Japan.



Asher Hong of the United States practices the parallel bars during a gymnastic training session at Bercy Arena at the 2024 Summer Olympics, Wednesday, July 24, 2024, in Paris, France. (AP)

Now Gauff, who is based in Florida, is a Grand Slam title winner in singles and doubles.

She won her first major championship in New York in September, defeating Aryna Sabalenka in the singles final of the U.S. Open, then added her first Grand Slam doubles trophy at the French Open this June alongside Katerina Siniakova of the Czech Republic.

The same clay courts at Roland Garros used for the French Open will be where matches are going to be held for the Paris Olympics. The draw to set the brackets is Thursday, and play begins on Friday.

Gauff is seeded No. 2 in sin-

gles, matching her current WTA ranking behind No. 1 Iga Swiatek of Poland, and will be among the medal favorites.

She and her usual doubles partner, Jessica Pegula, are seeded No. 1 in women's doubles. It's possible Gauff could also be entered in mixed doubles, but those pairings have not been announced yet.

"I'm not putting too much pressure on it, because I really want to fully indulge in the experience," Gauff said about her Olympics debut. "Hopefully I can have the experience multiple times in my lifetime, (but) I'll treat it as a once-in-a-lifetime experience."

U.S. women's team rebounds from rare exhibition loss to top Germany



United States' Breanna Stewart (left), drives around Germany's Leonie Fiebich during a women's exhibition basketball game between the United States and Germany at the O2 Arena in London. (AP)

Earlier loss was to a team of WNBA

LONDON, July 24, (AP): A'ja Wilson had 19 points and 14 rebounds to help the U.S. women's basketball Olympic team rebound from a rare exhibition loss to beat Germany 84-57 on Tuesday night.

The Americans lost to a team of WNBA All-Stars on Saturday before traveling over to London for the exhibition contest against Germany. These two teams are in the same pool in the Olympics and will play again in the Paris Games on Aug. 4.

"It was a breath of fresh air to get out of All-Star and come here, there's one goal and it's to win," U.S. guard Sabrina Ionescu said.

BASKETBALL

The U.S. raced out to a 22-9 lead, scoring the first seven points of the game. By the end of the first 10 minutes, the Americans had built that 13-point lead.

The Germans, who will be making their first appearance in the Olympics, closed within 27-20 midway through the second quarter, but could get no closer as the Americans led 44-32 at the half.

The U.S. scored the first seven points of the third quarter and Germany never threatened in the second half.

"We need to continue to make sure our starts in the third get better every single game," said U.S. forward Breanna Stewart. "It's a

Jayasuriya says Sri Lanka should take advantage of India stars' retirements in 3-match T20 series

COLOMBO, Sri Lanka, July 24, (AP): Sri Lanka should take maximum advantage of the absence of three India stars in their upcoming three-match Twenty20 series, interim coach Sanath Jayasuriya said on Wednesday.

Rohit Sharma, Virat Kohli and Ravindra Jadeja retired from the shortest format after India won the Twenty20 World Cup last month.

The T20s in the compact series are on Saturday, Sunday and Tuesday, all in Pallekele.

"Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli are the best players in the world. Looking at their talent and the kind

of cricket they have played, we all know where they belong, along with Jadeja," Jayasuriya said. "Their absence will be a loss to the Indian team and we have to take maximum advantage out of that."

Jayasuriya took over as interim

CRICKET

coach after Chris Silverwood quit after Sri Lanka's group-stage exit from the T20 World Cup.

Wanindu Hasaranga, who captained Sri Lanka in the tournament, has been replaced by Charith Asalanka.

Sri Lanka has called up Kusal Perera and Avishka Fernando, who were not part of the World Cup squad, along with uncapped all-rounder Chamindu Wickramasinghe, who performed well in the Lanka Premier League.

Sri Lanka chief selector Upul Tharanga said fast bowler Dushmantha Chameera, originally named in the 16-member squad, was ruled out of the T20 and one-day international series against India because of injury and a replacement will be named soon.

The three-match ODI series will be played on Aug. 2, 4 and 7, all in Colombo.



United States' Jackie Young catches the ball during a women's exhibition basketball game between the United States and Germany at the O2 Arena in London. (AP)

tune-up game. We don't want to peak too soon."

Luisa Geiselsoder scored 13 points to lead Germany.

The Americans were without Brittney Griner, who rested. It was her first trip overseas since she was arrested in 2022 in Russia and sentenced to nine years in jail for drug possession and smuggling. Ten months later, she was free after a high-profile prisoner exchange.

Now the two-time Olympic gold medalist was back suiting up for the U.S.

Members of the U.S. men's Olympic team sat courtside to watch the game. The Americans edged the Germans 92-88 in an exhibition game on Monday night.

he experienced as a youngster.

The Spaniard will compete in singles and doubles where he is partnered with Carlos Alcaraz, who is seen as his natural successor after a brilliant start to his career. "I'm especially excited by the doubles as I am playing with who I think is the best player in the world." "If injuries respect him, he will be one of the best in history," he said of Alcaraz.

Regardless of reduced categories

China aiming to remain dominant

PARIS, July 24, (Xinhua): In contrast to the Tokyo Olympics, the weightlifting events at Paris 2024 will be reduced from 14 to 10 categories, and each team will be limited to a maximum of six participants (three men and three women).

China won a total of 62 medals in weightlifting over the past 10 editions of Olympic Games, including 38 golds. With four Olympic champions in its Paris 2024 line-up, the Chinese weightlifting team remains a force to be reckoned with.

Competitors from Eastern Europe and South America will continue to vie for gold in their dominant categories.

In the men's events, super-heavyweight Lasha Talakhadze of Georgia

WEIGHTLIFTING

and China's Shi Zhiyong (73kg) are both aiming for their third Olympic titles in their respective categories.

Li Fabin's previous achievements make him the top contender in the men's 61kg. The 31-year-old claimed gold in Tokyo and set a snatch world record at the International Weightlifting Federation (IWF) World Cup in Phuket, Thailand.

22-year-old Liu Huanhua, participating in the Olympic Games for the first time, will be China's main hope in the men's 102kg.

"Li is stronger than his opponents. The most important thing is to make sure he can perform steadily in the Olympic Games. Liu needs to improve a bit more to help China achieve a good result in the 102kg

event," said Yu Jie, head coach of China's men's team.

Karlos Nasar of Bulgaria and Colombia's Yeison Lopez will compete in the men's 89kg. 20-year-old Nasar, who claimed his first world record at only 17, broke the 89kg world records in snatch, clean and jerk, and total, making him a stand-out in Paris.

On the women's side, super-heavyweight Li Wenwen is the top favorite for gold, after having performed excellently at the recent World Cup.

Li is likely to make the last lift in Paris, where five days of the competition will conclude on August 11, the final day of the Olympic Games.

"I think more clearly now, I always talk to the coach about anything I don't understand, and now I know exactly what I should and should not do," said Li. "My goal has always been the same: to help China win the gold medal." Hou Zhihui in the women's 49kg and first-time Olympian Luo Shifang in the women's 59kg also have the potential to secure gold medals for China.

In the women's 71kg event, American weightlifter Olivia Reeves has emerged as a top contender in Paris, thanks to her outstanding performance in winning three golds at the World Cup.

Meanwhile, Tokyo Olympic champion Neisi Dajomes of Ecuador is the top favorite in the women's 81kg event.

The Olympic weightlifting competition, featuring 120 athletes, will run from August 7 to 11 at the South Paris Arena.

Russian among those arrested

French authorities foil several plots on the Olympics in Paris

PARIS, July 24, (AP): French authorities have foiled several plots to disrupt the 2024 Olympics, including arresting a Russian man in one of them, officials said Wednesday, just days before the opening ceremony of the Summer Games in Paris.

France has been on high alert over the past few weeks as preparations to host the Olympics hit the final stretch. The Games officially kick off with a lavish and high-security opening ceremony on the River Seine on Friday.

Paris prosecutors said Wednesday that they had arrested a 40-year-old Russian man Tuesday at his Paris apartment on suspicion of planning to "destabilize the Olympic Games."

He was charged with "conducting intelligence work on behalf of a foreign power" with an aim to "provoke hostilities in France," crimes punishable with 30-year sentence in France, according to a statement from the Paris prosecutor's office.

During an official search of the suspect's home in Paris, police agents found items that "raised fears of his intention to organize events likely to lead to destabilization of the Olympic Games," prosecutors said.

The Russian Embassy in Paris said it had not received any notification from French authorities about the arrest and has asked French officials for an explanation after seeing reports about it. It did not comment further.

The Games' organizers are facing major security challenges, including cyberattack concerns, amid high international tensions because of the Russia's war in Ukraine and the Israel-Hamas conflict in Gaza.

There are also elaborate disinformation campaigns orchestrated out of Russia, targeting the Olympics and France's recent elections, according to French officials and cybersecurity experts in Europe and the United States.

In an example this week, French intelligence found that a video on social media supposedly showing a Hamas threat against the Olympics was fake, generated by AI and appeared to have links to Russia, according to a French security official. The official was not authorized to be publicly named discussing intelligence matters.

A Hamas official on Telegram also denied the militant group was behind the video.

Earlier Wednesday in a separate plot, Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin said in an interview with French broadcaster BFMTV that a young



United States' Aaron Cummings (left), and Antoine Zeghdar of France leap for a loose ball during the men's Rugby Sevens Pool C match between France and the United States at the 2024 Summer Olympics, in the Stade de France, Saint-Denis, France. (AP)

man was arrested in Gironde, a region in southwest France, on suspicion of "planning a violent action against the Olympic Games."

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Police arrested the 18-year-old man Tuesday on accusations that he was planning to target the "organization of the Games," Darmanin said.

He did not give details on the suspect's potential targets or whether they were in Paris or in other French cities hosting Olympic events that run through Aug. 11.

"We are still working on this case ... (we) avoid giving details ... but we think there is a link," Darmanin said. "It's been established that this person wanted to attack the Olympic Games."

Paris has deployed 35,000 police officers each day for the Olympics, with a peak of 45,000 for the opening ceremony. In addition, 10,000 soldiers are taking part in security operations in the Paris region. A 10,000-strong military force is patrolling streets and sites in the Paris region and carrying out other security missions. France also is getting help from more than 40 countries that together have sent at least 1,900 police reinforcements.

Nadal 'rejuvenated' by Olympic experience

PARIS, July 24, (Xinhua): Spanish veteran tennis player Rafael Nadal said he is "excited and prepared" to take part in his last Olympic Games, with the fact that injuries have stopped him from performing in London and Tokyo spurring him to one last effort.

The 38-year-old has won 14 French Open titles at Roland Garros and what is arguably his favorite venue is the site

for the tennis tournament at the Paris Games, although Nadal insisted it would be a totally different experience.

"Even though they are the same facilities at Roland Garros, the experience is different. The feel is different," explained the Spaniard, who is playing his last season before retiring.

"Of course, these are the last Games," he told Spanish TV network

RTVE adding that missing Tokyo 2021 and London 2012 "hurt me more than missing any Grand Slams because they are unique experiences", while Grand Slams are played every year.

Nadal admitted that his injury problems over the last two years had almost ended his career and that being in Paris was a "reward" for all of his work, even if it meant stepping back to what

SPORTS

Exciting debuts and legendary performances on the horizon

Veterans eye on more glories

PARIS, July 24, (Xinhua): As around 10,500 athletes gather by the River Seine for the Paris Olympic Games, the world will again witness the immortal incarnation of the Olympic motto — "Faster, Higher, Stronger — Together." While the charm of sports lies in uncertainty, some stars are set to shine at Paris 2024.

The first Olympic appearance is always special, even for the most experienced athletes. US basketball superstar Stephen Curry finally brings his three-point skill to the Olympic Games at the age of 36 and tries to add an Olympic gold medal to his four NBA titles and two NBA MVP awards. Curry and fellow basketball legends LeBron James and Kevin Durant will seek to carry on the US dominance in basketball. One of the potential spoilers may be the hosts France with the towering Victor Wembanyama making his Olympic debut on home turf.

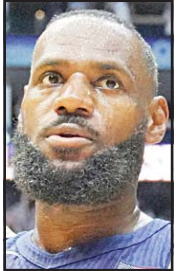
Spain's Carlos Alcaraz is no stranger to Roland-Garros, the Olympic tennis venue where he clinched the French Open title in June. The 21-year-old is setting his eyes on the top of the podium in his first Olympic Games.

He could thwart what is likely to be the last opportunity for Novak Djokovic to achieve a Golden Slam with an Olympic gold medal for Serbia to go with a record-high 24 Grand Slam titles. Alcaraz could also help two-time Olympic gold medalist Rafael Nadal for another as the two team up for the men's doubles.

Sha'Carri Richardson's Olympic debut was delayed by three years after missing the Tokyo Olympics due to a positive drug test. The reigning world champion from the United States is looking to consolidate her position in the women's 100m on the purple track in Paris. Still, she would need to outpace others like Jamaica's veteran Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce, who is expected to make the last dance of her magnificent career at Paris 2024.

Breaking is making its Olympic debut in Paris, joining sport climbing, skateboarding, and surfing as additional sports that are set to catch the attention of the youth with the combination of creativity and athletic skills.

The experience at the Olympic Games is like no other. Veterans strive to step onto the Paris Olympic stage for another taste of the glory.



James

Kenya's two-time Olympic champion Eliud Kipchoge may not be the first ever to complete a sub-two-hour marathon. However, in Paris, he will still have the opportunity to achieve something singular — winning the Olympic marathon on three consecutive occasions, hence distinguishing himself as the greatest of all time with a victory in Paris.

Armand Duplantis of Sweden vaulted into the spotlight at Tokyo 2020, clearing 6.02 meters to win the gold

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medal in the men's pole vault. Now, as a two-time indoor and two-time outdoor world champion, Duplantis could go beyond defending his title and set another world record at the Olympic Games, something he failed to do in Tokyo three years ago.

U.S. swimmer Katie Ledecky remains a force to be reckoned with in women's distance freestyle events in her fourth Olympic Games appearance, as the 27-year-old could well leave the pool with more tally in her collection of Olympic gold medals.

At the same age, American gymnast Simone Biles is staging a comeback in Paris, after suffering maybe the greatest setback of her career following a failed vault in Tokyo. She would try to reclaim the women's individual all-around champion.

China is sending 405 athletes, in-

cluding 42 Olympic champions, to the Paris Games. Among the 236 disciplines in which it will compete, Chinese athletes are expected to win multiple golds in traditional sports like gymnastics, diving, shooting, table tennis, badminton and weightlifting.

Reigning world champion Sun Yingsha is favored to continue China's perfect record in the table tennis women's singles event, while teenage diver Quan Hongchan will again demonstrate her "splash disappearing technique".

Since returning to the Olympics at Los Angeles 1984, Chinese athletes have made constant breakthroughs. In Paris, some may come from the post-2000s athletes.

At just 17, Liu Qingyi, better known as B-Girl 671, is among China's brightest hopes in breakdancing. In 2022, she won Outbreak Europe in Slovakia and PortoBattle in Portugal, both prestigious international breakdancing competitions. In 2023, Liu continued her success with another world silver and a triumph at the WDSF Breaking for Gold World Series in Montpellier, France, defeating both the reigning European champion and the world number one.

15-year-old Yang Siqi will take on the great waves in Teahupo'o, Tahiti as China's first-ever Olympic surfer, while 22-year-old Weightlifter Liu Huanhua has a chance to capture China's first-ever gold medal in categories above 100kg.



A file photo of Sergio Vitor in action.

Vitor suffers injury

Kuwait Club faces setback

By Hassan Musa

Al-Seayssah/Arab Times Staff

ISTANBUL, July 24: Kuwait Club has been dealt a significant blow during its training camp in Turkey as Argentine professional Sergio Vitor has suffered a cruciate ligament rupture. The club announced on its social media that tests conducted in Turkey revealed the tear, necessitating surgery in Barcelona, Spain.

Vitor's absence, expected to last at least four months, presents a challenge for "Al-Abyad" as the team prepares for the new season. The club must seek a replacement before the summer transfer window closes in September. Kuwait Club will face Al-Ahly of Bahrain in a crucial AFC Champions League qualifying play-off match on August 14, and will open the Zain Premier League against Al-Qadisiyah on August 8.

Vitor, who joined Kuwait Club after a season with Al-Qadisiyah, has received an outpouring of support from his former teammates, including Libyan player Muhammad

Sula, Eid Al-Rashidi, and Abdulaziz Wadi, as well as from Al-Qadisiyah coach Dr. Muhammad Al-Mashaan, all wishing him a swift recovery.

Despite the injury setback, Kuwait Club continued to excel in its

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friendly matches during the Turkish camp. The team secured a 4-1 victory against Turkmenistan's Sakadam, with goals from Mohammed Marhoon (two), Youssef Nasser, and Mohammed Dahham. This win adds to their previous friendly victories against Uzbekistan's Lokomotiv (2-1) and Turkey's Amed FK (2-0).

Under the guidance of Montenegro's Nebosha, the Kuwaiti coaching staff is using these friendlies to assess the team's readiness for the upcoming season. The team is set to play one final friendly match in Turkey before returning home next week to resume local training and prepare for their league title defense starting with the match against Al-Qadisiyah.

China striving for podium

Netherlands likely to dominate

PARIS, July 24, (Xinhua): The hockey events at the Paris Olympics will take place from July 27 to August 9, with 12 men's and 12 women's teams set to take part. The Netherlands' women and Belgium's men will strive to defend their Olympic titles.

The hockey competitions will be held at the Yves-du-Manoir Stadium in northwest Paris, which hosted the opening ceremony and several competitions at the 1924 Olympic Games.

At the 2012 London Olympics, more than 630,000 hockey tickets

HOCKEY

were sold, the third most among all events. According to the International Hockey Federation, the Olympic Games is the ultimate hockey competition, with the Olympic gold medal being the sport's most coveted prize.

In the preliminary round, 12 teams each are divided into two pools. The top four teams in each pool will proceed to the quarterfinals.

The Netherlands women's hockey team is by far the most consistent force and is very likely to continue their dominance in Paris. They have played in every final since they claimed their first silver medal in the competition at Athens in 2004.

Were it not for the heroics of British goalkeeper Maddie Hinch in the shootout of the 2016 Rio Olympic final between Britain and the Netherlands, the latter would have won four gold medals in a row since Beijing 2008.

Both the Netherlands' women's and men's team now lead their respective world rankings, making it possible that the Netherlands may become the first country at an

Olympic Games to win both men's and women's competitions.

The inaugural Olympic hockey competition for men was held in 1908 in London. India is the most successful team, winning eight gold medals between 1928 and 1980. After a 41-year Olympic medal drought, India returned to the podium three years ago in Tokyo, taking a bronze.

In the men's competition, reigning Olympic champions Belgium and silver medalists Australia will also challenge the Netherlands on their road to make history.

At Beijing 2008, China was defeated by the Netherlands in the women's final to take silver, the best record for China in Olympic hockey.

China's team has gone through turbulent times in recent years, ranking ninth at the last two Olympic Games. However, since Australia's two-time Olympic gold medalist Alyson Annan took charge in May 2022, China's women have been making progress, winning gold at the Hangzhou Asian Games last year.

According to Annan, the entire team has set their sights on the podium. "We have nothing to lose. Teams are watching us now. They are thinking 'Okay, China's very good now.' Two years ago, they didn't think that. That is also a big step that other teams are paying attention to us, analyzing us, and watching the way we play," said the head coach.

The hockey event will kick off on July 27 with Britain facing Spain in the men's Pool A. The men's final and the women's final will be played on August 8 and 9 respectively.



Kuwait U-17 and Sri Lanka's Vodlaski Club players challenge for the ball.

Kuwait U-17 team tops Sri Lanka club

The Kuwait U-17 national team secured a 3-1 victory over Sri Lanka's Vodlaski Club in a friendly match held in Serbia, as part of its preparations for the Asian Cup qualifiers. Misfer Al-Adwani and Hamad Al-Saeed each scoring two goals for the Kuwaiti side.

The team has been in its Serbian training camp since the beginning of July and is scheduled to remain there until next week, continuing its preparations for the upcoming qualifiers.

2034 Winter Games awarded to Utah

IOC approves French Alps' bid to host 2030 Winter Oly

PARIS, July 24, (AP): The French Alps were named as the 2030 Winter Games host by the International Olympic Committee on Wednesday, though with conditions attached and signoff required from whoever is the next prime minister of France.

French President Emmanuel Macron helped present the bid to IOC members and gave assurances that the new prime minister and government he intends to install after the Summer Games in Paris will underwrite all the organizational guarantees that must still be signed.

IOC members accepted his guarantees and gave their approval in an

political situation," said David Lappartient, the French Olympic Committee president who also is an IOC member.

"The president of the Republic himself, he has a lot of power, but not the one to sign financial guarantees," Lappartient said. "He will instruct the new prime minister, when he will be known, to sign."

The IOC set an Oct. 1 deadline for that. The National Assembly elected this month must then ratify that document by March 1, 2025, IOC President Thomas Bach said.

Because the legislative elections produced a hung parliament, Macron so far has been unable to appoint a new prime minister. He says the current caretaker administration will remain in place through the Paris Olympics that end Aug. 11.

But France's political uncertainty could last for weeks or even months after the Games if the new parliament's divided minority groupings fail to coalesce behind a prime ministerial candidate.

"It's quite difficult to find a majority to appoint a prime minister, but there is no doubt that there is a majority behind the Olympic Games," Lappartient said.

"So we have no doubt that this will be delivered."

The caretaker sports minister, Amélie Oudéa-Castéra, said she has never faced forceful opposition from

parliamentarians to the French Alps' project.

"I never got any hostile questions on 2030," she said.

The French bid was the only candidate - preferred by the IOC with exclusive negotiating rights since November - and is a project centered on ski resorts in the French Alps and ice sports venues in the coastal city Nice.

What was expected to be a simple coronation of Salt Lake City as the 2034 Winter Olympic host turned into complicated Olympic politics Wednesday, as the IOC pushed Utah officials to end an FBI investigation into a suspected doping coverup.

The International Olympic Committee is angry about an ongoing U.S. federal investigation of suspected doping by Chinese swimmers who were allowed to compete at the Tokyo Games despite positive drug tests. The World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) accepted Chinese explanations for the tests, and U.S. officials are now investigating that decision under an anti-conspiracy law passed after the Russian doping scandal at the Sochi Winter Games.

President Thomas Bach wants to make sure WADA is the sole authority on Olympic doping cases, especially with the Summer Olympics headed to Los Angeles in 2028. The IOC added a clause to Salt Lake's host contract, demanding that local organizers - including Utah Gov. Spencer Cox - push to shut down the federal investigation or risk losing the Olympics.

Cox and others promised to lobby the U.S. president and Congress.

"We agree that if the United States does not support or violates the World Anti-Doping Federation's rules, that

they can withdraw the Games from from us and from the United States," Cox said after the announcement. "That was the only way that that we could we could guarantee that we would get the Games."

Even in the world Olympic diplomacy, it was a stunning power move to force government officials to publicly agree to do the IOC's lobbying.

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84-4 vote, with seven abstaining.

"We would like to thank you for your confidence and trust," Macron said in a brief acceptance speech. "We will be there and we will respect our commitments."

National governments in Olympic host countries need to formally underwrite financial and security promises that are essential to organize and run the Games.

But France currently only has a caretaker government after legislative elections this month failed to deliver a governing majority for any political bloc or party.

Still, French organizers of the 2030 project expressed no doubts that they'd secure the necessary guarantees from whichever political bloc eventually proves able to propose a prime minister for Macron's approval and form the next government.

"There is ... a political problem, a



Macron



Spain's Eric Garcia and Uzbekistan's Eldor Shomurodov (right), battle for the ball during the men's group C match between Uzbekistan and Spain at the Parc des Princes during the 2024 Summer Olympics, in Paris, France. (AP)



Dr. AMth Al-Huwaila, Minister of Social Affairs, Family and Childhood Affairs and Minister of State for Youth Affairs chairs the meeting.

Sports

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Dr. Al-Huwaila leads key meeting on Kuwait's Gulf 26 preparations

KUWAIT CITY, July 24: Dr. AMth Al-Huwaila, Minister of Social Affairs, Family and Childhood Affairs and Minister of State for Youth Affairs, led a meeting with the inspection committee of the Arabian Gulf Cup Federation to discuss Kuwait's preparations for hosting the "Gulf 26" competition, scheduled for December. The meeting was attended by Bashar Abdullah, Deputy Director General for the Competitive Sports Sector, and Hayef Al-Mutairi, Acting President of the Football Association.

The inspection committee, chaired by Jassem Al-Rumaihi, Secretary-General of the Arabian Gulf Cup

Federation, recently visited Sulaybiqhat Stadium and Jaber International Stadium to assess progress and address observations from their previous visit. Dr. Al-Huwaila, Al-

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Mutairi, and Abdullah were present during the inspection to review the feedback and ensure all necessary arrangements are completed for the event.

The visit aimed to evaluate Kuwait's readiness for the "Gulf 26" competitions, set to take place from December 21 to January 3.

Haido (CAN) win title as Academy Cup wraps up

KUWAIT CITY, July 24: The Academy Cup tournament, sponsored by the General Sports Authority and the National Cancer Awareness Campaign (CAN), concluded with the Haido (CAN) team, wearing blue, taking first place by defeating the Inspire team, in black, which secured

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second place. Abdullah Al-Saleh, Chairman of the Organizing Committee, and Yousef Al-Hindi, representative of the General Sports Authority, honored the winning teams.

Abdullah Al-Saleh remarked that

the tournament, held for its sixth season at the Public Sports Authority grounds in the Mushrif area, spanned a month and featured approximately 240 Kuwaiti amateur players.

Al-Saleh highlighted the tournament's role in helping Kuwaiti youth maintain their general health and preventing diseases and obesity. He expressed confidence that the tournament would continue to improve in the coming years, serving as a vital platform for discovering promising football talents in Kuwait's future. He also extended his gratitude to the General Sports Authority for its ongoing support of sports activities in Kuwait.

Al-Faqaan, Shah set to make history in sailing and rowing

Al-Otaibi expresses hope for new shooting achievements

PARIS, July 24, (Agencies): The role of women in the Kuwaiti sports delegation is being prominently showcased at the Paris 2024 Olympic Games, which start tomorrow, Friday, and run until August 11. This edition marks a historic moment with four female athletes participating out of a total of nine Kuwaiti competitors, representing the largest female contingent in Kuwait's Olympic history. Alongside Lara Dashti (swimming) and Amal Al-Roumi (athletics), rower Suad Al-Faqaan and sailing athlete Amina Shah are making their mark in marine sports, a first for Kuwaiti women in the Olympics.



Amina Shah

Amina Shah, a member of the national sailing team, will compete in the ILCA 6 category at Paris 2024. She is the first Kuwaiti Gulf athlete



Suad Al-Faqaan

to participate in Olympic sailing. Shah described this achievement as a "historic milestone," expressing her pride and determination to perform at her best. She aims to make every effort to achieve her goals and represent Kuwait proudly on this global stage.

Wajidi Al-Dari, coach of the Kuwaiti national rowing team, shared that Suad Al-Faqaan's preparation began in January with a training camp in Hong Kong for the Asian qualifiers in South Korea. Following this, Al-Faqaan continued rigorous daily training. She also underwent a 21-day external training camp in Uzbekistan, focusing on physical conditioning and technical skill enhancement. The final stage of preparation included a ten-day training camp in Paris to refine technical skills and ensure mental readiness.

The rowing events at the Paris 2024 Olympics will commence on July 27 and conclude on August 3. Al-Dari noted that Al-Faqaan, who will be competing in the final rounds, has been meticulously preparing, including testing her boat in the Olympic Village. The coach emphasized the importance of these final days for mental and technical readiness to maintain focus during the competition.

Al-Dari concluded that Al-Faqaan is aiming for a distinguished performance at the Paris 2024 Games, reflecting Kuwait's commitment to advancing women's sports, particularly in rowing.

The Kuwaiti team comprises: Yaqoub Al-Youha and Amal Al-Roumi (athletics), Khaled Al-Mudhaf and

Mohammad Al-Daihani (shooting), Yousef Al-Shamlan (fencing), Amina Shah (sailing), Suad Al-Faqaan (rowing), and Lara Dashti and Mohammad Zubaid (swimming).

Duaj Al-Otaibi, Chairman of the Kuwait Shooting Federation, praised the strong support from the political leadership for Kuwaiti shooting sports. He highlighted the international championships named after His Highness the Amir and His Highness the Crown Prince as symbols of this

OLYMPICS

support. Despite facing challenges, Al-Otaibi is confident that Kuwaiti shooters will perform strongly. He recalled that shooting is the only sport in Kuwait to have won four Olympic medals, including a bronze by Abdullah Al-Rasheed at the Tokyo 2020 Games. Al-Otaibi expressed hope for new achievements to add to Kuwait's Olympic history.

Khaled Al-Foudari, Secretary-General of the Kuwait Sea Sports Club, expressed pride in the qualification of Al-Faqaan in rowing and Amina Shah in sailing. He noted that these accomplishments reflect the progress in Kuwaiti sea sports and the club's collaborative efforts with national sports authorities to support Kuwaiti athletes.

Faisal Al-Dasem, Treasurer of the Kuwait Athletes Association, highlighted the qualifications of Yaqoub Al-Youha and Amal Al-Roumi in athletics, achieved through three training camps starting in May. Al-Roumi will compete in the 800-meter event on August 2, and Al-Youha in the 110-meter hurdles on August 4. Al-Dasem wished them the best of luck.

Abdulkareem Al-Shamlan, Chairman of the Kuwait Fencing Association, reported that Yousef Al-Shamlan has been training in Italy for the Olympics. Al-Shamlan advanced to the Games after a strong performance at the world fencing championship in Hungary, where he defeated a competitor from Hong Kong. Al-Shamlan is ranked 24th in the latest international fencing tournament and 28th globally, reflecting his dedicated effort over the past four years.

Lastly, Kuwaiti swimming coach Ayman Al-Enezi noted that preparations for Dashti and Mohammad Zubaid are underway in Turkey. Zubaid will compete in the 100-meter freestyle, while Dashti will compete in the 100-meter breaststroke during the Paris Games.

Al-Arabi Club begins bid for '33 Club World Cup hosting

KUWAIT CITY, July 24: Adnan Abel, a member of Al-Arabi Club's Board of Directors, announced that the club has initiated the process of preparing a bid to host the 2033 Club World Cup. The club formed a dedicated committee to handle the application, which started its

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work the day before yesterday. Abel stated that the initial concept of the bid is expected to be finalized early next year.

In an interview with Al Arabiya's

sports news bulletin, Abel emphasized that the committee is working on the application and coordinating with relevant authorities. He also noted that Kuwait is currently undertaking several major infrastructure projects, including the construction of new stadiums, the development of the new Kuwait International Airport, and the completion of new hotels.

Abel concluded by mentioning that the committee has reviewed previous hosting requests that were rejected by FIFA to ensure that all potential issues are addressed and avoided in their current bid.



Adnan Abel



Academy Cup champions Haido (CAN).

'This is truly a new era for the IOC'

Saudi Arabia to host 2025 Olympic Esports Games

PARIS, July 24, (Xinhua): The creation of the Olympic Esports Games has been confirmed during the ongoing 142nd Session of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), scheduled for 2025 in Saudi Arabia.

"This is truly a new era for the IOC," said IOC president Thomas Bach. "With the confirmation by the IOC Session of the creation of the Olympic Esports Games, we are keeping up with the pace of the digital revolution." The IOC announced on July 12 that it has partnered with the National Olympic Committee (NOC) of Saudi Arabia to host the inaugural Olympic Esports Games in the country in 2025, which has been endorsed by the IOC executive board unanimously.

"The esports community, represented in our Esports Commission, has enthusiastically engaged with this initiative. This is further proof of the attractiveness of the Olympic brand and the values it stands for among young people," said Bach. "The NOC of Saudi Arabia will bring great - if not unique - experience in the field of esports to this



project. This partnership is based on the Olympic Charter and the Olympic values," he added.

HRH Prince Abdulaziz bin Turki Al Faisal, Minister of Sport and President of the Saudi Arabian Olympic and Paralympic Committee, emphasized the significance of the initiative.

"Our commitment to esports is simply a reflection of the world our young people live in. We now all have the chance to write new Olympic history together," he said.

"The story of sport in Saudi Arabia is a story of transformation," added IOC member HRH Princess Reema Bandar Al-Saud, who is also a board member of the Saudi Arabian Olympic and Paralympic Committee.

"With over 23.5 million gamers, many of whom are women, hosting the Olympic Esports Games in 2025 is a natural progression in our journey to open up Saudi Arabia to the world and the world to Saudi Arabia," she said.

Saudi Arabia has quickly become a hub for esports, hosting numerous international tournaments with significant participation and global viewership in the last two years.

According to the IOC, the planning for the Olympic Esports Games will commence immediately, focusing on the selection of a city and venue, game titles, and the qualification process for participants.

Additionally, the IOC will establish a dedicated structure for the Games, distinct from the traditional Olympic model, to better address the unique nature of esports.

Bach again addressed the Olympic Esports Games at a press conference later on Tuesday, saying that "It is clearly a milestone because we are entering a new ground, but we are entering this new ground on a very firm base." The IOC held the Esports Forum in July 2018 following the sixth Olympic Summit in Lausanne the previous year, during which the development of Esports was brought up as a main topic.

In 2023, the Olympic Esports Week was held in Singapore, after which Bach asked the IOC Esports Commission at the 141st IOC Session in Mumbai, India to study the creation of the Olympic Esports Games.