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Family and football unite to bid Diogo Jota farewell



Sahel embodies digital vision

Minister reviews app development amid digital transformation of public services

NEWS IN BRIEF

OPEC+ to hike oil output

LONDON: OPEC+ agreed on Saturday to raise production by 548,000 barrels per day in August, further accelerating output increases at its first meeting since oil prices jumped – and then retreated – following Zionist and US attacks on Iran. The production boost will come from eight members of the group – Saudi Arabia, Russia, the UAE, Kuwait, Oman, Iraq, Kazakhstan and Algeria. The August increase represents a jump from monthly increases of 411,000 bpd OPEC+ had approved for May, June and July, and 138,000 bpd in April. — Reuters

Texas flash floods kill 24

HUNT, Texas: Rescuers were on Saturday searching for more than 20 girls missing from a riverside summer camp in the US state of Texas, after torrential rains caused devastating flooding that killed 24 people, including children. On Saturday, the National Weather Service warned of more extremely heavy rain and “locally catastrophic” flash flooding to come in the region, located northwest of San Antonio. In Kerrville on Saturday, the usually calm Guadalupe River was flowing fast, its murky waters filled with debris. — AFP (See Page 5)



UK reestablishes full Syria ties

DAMASCUS: The UK is re-establishing full ties with Syria following the toppling of long-time ruler Bashar Al-Assad in December, Foreign Minister David Lammy said during a visit to Damascus on Saturday. Syrian President Ahmed Al-Sharaa received Lammy alongside Syrian Foreign Minister Asaad Al-Shaibani. The talks addressed “bilateral ties... and ways of strengthening cooperation, as well as regional and international developments”, Sharaa’s office said in a statement. The Syrian foreign ministry issued a similar statement following a separate meeting between Lammy and Shaibani. — AFP

Seine reopens to swimmers

PARIS: The River Seine reopened to swimmers in Paris on Saturday morning, marking the first time since 1923 that bathers could take a dip in the iconic waterway following a years-long cleanup effort. A 95-year-old Parisian was among the first to take the plunge at a newly opened swim zone in the city’s east — one of three sites in the French capital where visitors can officially hop in the Seine for the first time in more than a century. The swimming zones are equipped with changing rooms, showers, and beach-style furniture, offering space for 150 to 300 people to relax, lay out their towels, and unwind from the city’s hustle and bustle. — AFP

KUWAIT: Minister of Communications Omar Al-Omar on Saturday emphasized the importance of ongoing efforts to update and improve the Sahel government application. He said such efforts should reflect the aspirations of the political leadership, align with the state’s digital transformation goals and meet the expectations of citizens and residents for fast, secure and user-friendly digital government services.

In a statement to KUNA, Al-Omar said the ministry held an extensive meeting on Thursday with the executive committee of the Sahel app to review the latest developments and discuss plans to enhance the digital services offered through the platform.

He noted that Sahel serves as a central national platform for e-government services and is one of

Bombers and ‘beautiful bill’: Trump celebrates US Independence Day

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump signed his flagship tax and spending bill into law Friday, capping a grandiose White House Independence Day ceremony featuring a stealth bomber fly-by. “America is winning, winning, winning like never before,” Trump said before signing the so-called “One Big Beautiful Bill” while flanked by Republican lawmakers who helped push it through Congress.

Trump also played down criticism by Democrats that the unpopular legislation will slash social welfare programs, saying: “You won’t even notice it.” With First Lady Melania Trump at his side, Trump watched from the White House balcony as two B-2 bombers — the same type that recently struck Iranian nuclear sites — roared overhead, accompanied by F-35 and F-22 fighter jets.

Amir sends congratulations

HH the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent on Friday a cable to Trump, congratulating him on his country’s 249th Independence Day. HH the Amir praised the historic and strategic

Continued on Page 6

Hamas ready to start truce talks amid genocide

GAZA: The Zionist entity was considering its response on Saturday after Hamas said it was ready to start talks “immediately” on a US-sponsored proposal for a Gaza ceasefire. The security cabinet was expected to meet after the end of the Jewish sabbath at sundown to discuss the Zionist entity’s next steps, as Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu prepared to head to Washington for talks on Monday with US

Russia first country to recognize Taliban govt of Afghanistan

MOSCOW: Russia said on Thursday it had accepted the credentials of a new ambassador of Afghanistan, making it the first nation to recognize the Taliban government of the country. In a statement, the Russian Foreign Ministry said Moscow saw good prospects to develop ties and would continue to support Kabul in security, counterterrorism and combating drug crime. It also saw significant trade and economic opportunities, especially in energy, transport, agriculture and infrastructure.

“We believe that the act of official recognition of the

the state’s most important tools for digitizing public services. By offering access to various government agencies through a unified portal, the app helps reduce time and effort for users while increasing public satisfaction with government performance.

The next phase, Al-Omar said, will witness the rollout of new services and an increased focus on integration between government entities through data sharing and technical interconnectivity, aiming to deliver a more seamless and comprehensive digital experience for users.

“Digital transformation is not merely a technical process — it’s a fundamental shift in how services are delivered,” the minister said. “It reflects our commitment to transparency, equitable access and effi-



WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump, joined by Republican lawmakers, holds a gavel after signing the “One, Big Beautiful Bill” into law during an Independence Day military family picnic on the South Lawn of the White House on July 4, 2025. — AFP

President Donald Trump.

Trump has been making a renewed push to end nearly 21 months of war in Gaza, where the civil defense agency said 70 people were killed in Zionist military operations on Saturday. Hamas made its announcement late Friday after holding consultations with other Palestinian factions. “The movement is ready to engage immediately and seriously in a cycle of negotiations on the mechanism to put in place” the US-backed truce proposal, the group said in a statement.

Two Palestinian sources close to the discussions told AFP that the proposal included a 60-day truce, during which Hamas would release 10 living captives

Continued on Page 6

government of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan will give impetus to the development of productive bilateral cooperation between our countries in various fields,” the ministry said. Afghan Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi said in a statement: “We value this courageous step taken by Russia, and, God willing, it will serve as an example for others as well.” The announcement was made after Muttaqi met Russia’s ambassador to Afghanistan Dmitry Zhimov in Kabul on Thursday.

No other country has formally recognized the Taliban government that seized power in Aug 2021 as US-led forces staged a chaotic withdrawal from Afghanistan after 20 years of war. However, China, the United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan and Pakistan have all designated ambassadors to Kabul, in a step towards recognition. The Russian move represents a major milestone for the Taliban administration as it seeks to ease its international isolation.

Continued on Page 6



GAZA: Relatives mourn over the bodies of three young Palestinian brothers, killed in a Zionist strike, in the morgue of Al-Awda Hospital in Nuseirat refugee camp in central Gaza on July 5, 2025. — AFP



MOSCOW: Newly appointed Taliban envoy to Moscow Gul Hassan hands copies of his credentials to Deputy Foreign Minister Andrei Rudenko on July 3, 2025. — AFP

Local

Education Ministry approves new organizational structure to enhance institutional performance

Ongoing reform efforts aimed at modernizing educational environment

KUWAIT: Minister of Education Jalal Al-Tabtabaei has issued a ministerial decision approving a new organizational structure for the Ministry of Education, marking a significant step in ongoing reform efforts aimed at enhancing administrative efficiency and modernizing the educational environment.

In a press statement issued Saturday, the Ministry said the decision was based on a comprehensive technical study that assessed the ministry's structural and functional needs. The move comes in line with national efforts to reform the state's administrative apparatus and reflects His Highness the Amir's directives to strengthen institutional performance across government bodies. The first article of the ministerial decision formally approves the new organizational structure, while the second defines the responsibilities of all administrative units in alignment with the updated framework.

According to the statement, the revised structure adopts principles of agile and effective governance by reducing leadership roles to just three — namely, the Undersecretary and two Assistant Undersecretaries overseeing the two main sectors: Educational Affairs and Administrative and Technical Affairs. Each sector supervises eight general departments, bringing the total to 16. The restructuring also involves merging and redistributing departments to clearly define mandates, reduce overlap in responsibilities, and enhance overall efficiency. The ministry affirmed that the new structure is designed to support digital transformation and improve service quality in both administrative and educational fields.

The ministry described the shift as a qualitative transformation in institutional performance, built on a vision of specialization, integration and flexibility.

It aims to create an administrative ecosystem that responds to evolving educational challenges and national development goals. As part of the reforms, a new administrative structure has been outlined for the Minister's Office, which will now include six departments: the Minister's Office Department, Educational and Administrative Department, the National Commission for Education, Science and Culture (UNESCO) Department, Legal Affairs Department, Public Relations and Educational Media Department, as well as the Inspection and Audit Office.

A key development includes the establishment of the Office for Gifted Students under the direct supervision of the Minister. The office will serve as a dedicated platform for identifying and nurturing outstanding talent, reinforcing the ministry's commitment to promoting creativity and innovation as

national priorities. In addition, the organizational level of the National Commission for UNESCO has been elevated to a department, reflecting Kuwait's commitment to enhancing its engagement in international educational, scientific and cultural forums.

The Ministry also announced the upgrading of the Citizen Service Office to a full department — the Complaints and Citizen Service Department — aimed at improving communication with the public and ensuring more responsive, transparent, and high-quality services for citizens and residents alike. The Ministry confirmed that the Undersecretary will continue to supervise both main sectors — Educational Affairs and Administrative, Financial, and Technical Affairs — with each sector encompassing eight general departments to comprehensively cover all operational areas. — KUNA



Kuwait's Minister of Municipal Affairs and Minister of State for Housing Affairs Abdullahif Al-Meshari with Egypt's Ambassador to Kuwait Osama Shaltout. — KUNA

Kuwait-Egypt ties hailed as model of Arab cooperation

KUWAIT: Egyptian Ambassador to Kuwait Osama Shaltout on Thursday described Egyptian-Kuwaiti relations as a model of Arab cooperation rooted in mutual respect and shared interests. Speaking during a reception hosted by the Egyptian Embassy to mark the 73rd anniversary of the July 23, 1952 Revolution, Shaltout highlighted the depth of bilateral ties and ongoing efforts to strengthen cooperation across various sectors. The event was attended by Kuwait's Minister of Municipality and Minister of State for Housing Affairs Abdullahif Al-Meshari, along with senior officials and members of the diplomatic corps in Kuwait.

Shaltout pointed to the significant development witnessed in multiple areas of cooperation between the two countries, crowned by the historic state visit of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to Egypt in April 2024. He described the visit as a pivotal moment in reinforcing the strong and strategic partnership between Kuwait and Egypt.

Reflecting on the significance of the July 23 Revolution, Shaltout said the movement marked a turning point in Egypt's modern history, laying the foundations for national independence, sovereignty, and comprehensive development. He added that the revolution also inspired liberation movements throughout the Arab world and Africa.

The ambassador expressed his appreciation to the government and people of Kuwait for their warm hospitality and support during his tenure, reaffirming Egypt's commitment to advancing bilateral collaboration in ways that benefit both nations and further strengthen the bonds between the Egyptian and Kuwaiti peoples. — KUNA



Minister of Social Affairs, Family and Childhood Affairs Dr Amthal Al-Huwailah with Minister of Education Jalal Al-Tabtabaei.

Ministries coordinate to regulate nurseries

KUWAIT: Minister of Social Affairs and Minister of Family and Childhood Affairs Dr Amthal Al-Huwailah held a coordination meeting with Minister of Education Jalal Al-Tabtabaei to address regulatory issues concerning nurseries, particularly those operating without proper licensing or in violation of official standards. In a statement, the Ministry of Social Affairs said the meeting resulted in an agreement for the Ministry of Education to provide the Ministry of Social Affairs with a comprehensive database of schools and centers that include children below kindergarten age.

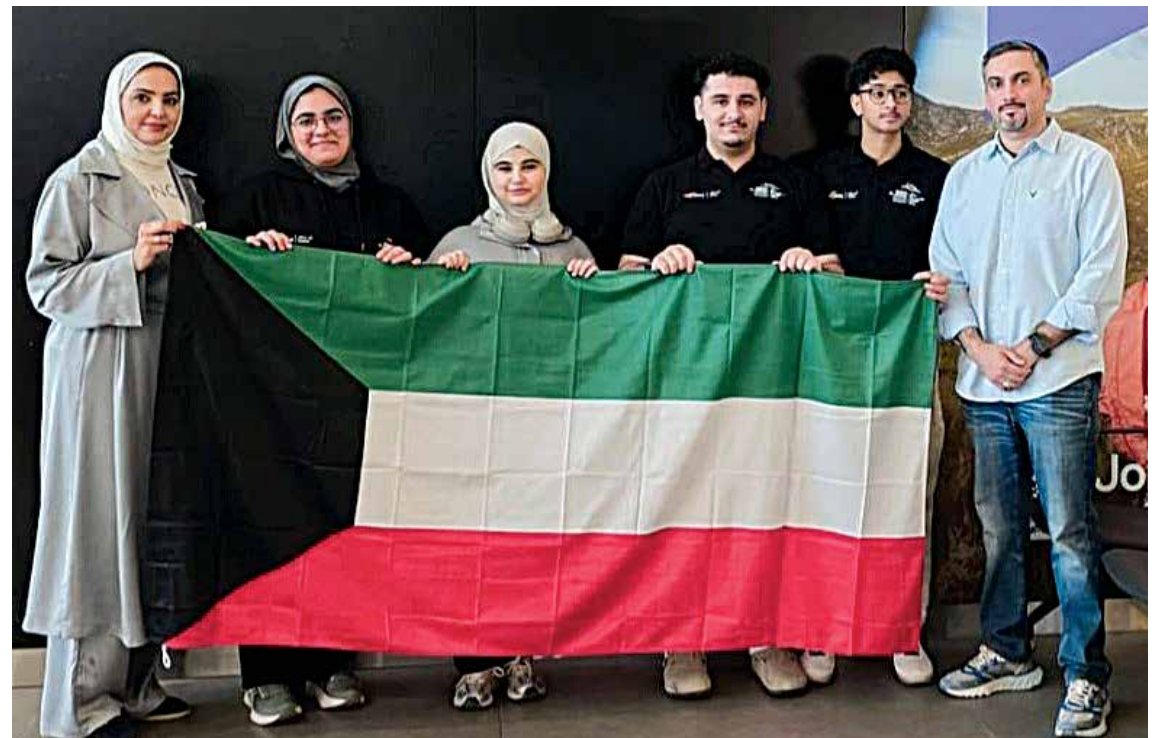
The two ministries also agreed to form joint inspection teams comprising representatives from the Ministries of Social Affairs, Education, and Health, as well as the Kuwait Municipality, the General Fire Force, and other relevant regulatory bodies. These teams will be tasked with identifying violations, ensuring compliance with legal requirements, and taking appropriate measures to guarantee a safe environment for children. The Ministry stressed the shared commitment of both ministries to protecting children's rights and upholding the quality of services provided in early childhood education institutions, in line with national child welfare policies. — KUNA

Kuwait students take part in International Chemistry Olympiad

KUWAIT: A delegation of Kuwaiti students, supported by the Sabah Al-Ahmad Center for Giftedness and Creativity (SAGC), is participating in the 2025 International Chemistry Olympiad, which began Saturday in Dubai and will run through July 14. In a statement to KUNA, the center said the participation reflects its ongoing efforts to support talented students and enhance their scientific capabilities. The initiative is the result of close cooperation between SAGC, the Ministry of Education and Kuwait University.

SAGC, which operates under the umbrella of the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS), stated that the delegation's involvement is part of a broader plan to prepare students through a year-long intensive training program. The program includes both theoretical and practical components under the guidance of a distinguished team of international experts and trainers in the field of chemistry. The center noted that the goal of Kuwait's participation is to showcase the capabilities of national talents and elevate the country's presence in international scientific arenas. This initiative aligns with KFAS' vision to promote scientific research, innovation and youth empowerment.

The center extended its best wishes for success to the participating students — Ali Behbe-



Group photo of the team. — KUNA

hani, Ali Yousef, Manal Al-Kandari and Ghazal Al-Mutairi — expressing hope that they will achieve distinguished results and raise Kuwait's flag proudly at global scientific forums. SAGC reaffirmed its commitment to investing in promising national minds, nurturing their skills, and foster-

ing an environment that encourages excellence and scientific creativity.

The center underscored its leading role in empowering national competencies and preparing future generations to represent Kuwait with distinction in international scientific competitions. — KUNA

wait's sustainable future.

Al-Sheikh explained that PAY offers young people numerous opportunities to engage in diverse programs held across youth centers, and is preparing to launch a comprehensive summer activities program tailored to youth interests and needs. He noted that the authority has recently intensified efforts to support youth entrepreneurship, particularly in the technological and technical sectors. In this regard, the "Kuwait Technical Complex for Entrepreneurship" was launched in partnership with Boeing Airlines. As part of this initiative, the "Pre-Accelerator" program was introduced to guide aspiring entrepreneurs in launching their own ventures.



Nasser Al-Sheikh

Minister praises National Guard



KUWAIT: First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef Saud Al-Sabah praised the Kuwait National Guard (KNG) for its prominent and unwavering role in supporting the Ministry of Interior's efforts to

safeguard national security. During an inspection tour of the KNG taskforce, Sheikh Fahad commended the leadership and personnel of the National Guard for their sense of duty, professionalism and dedication in backing the country's



security apparatus. He expressed his appreciation to all KNG members for their close cooperation with security agencies, underscoring their vital contribution to protecting the homeland and preserving public safety. — KUNA

Kuwait and Tunisia discuss human rights, social development

TUNIS: Assistant Foreign Minister for Human Rights Affairs Ambassador Sheikha Jawaher Ibrahim Duaij Al-Sabah held talks with Tunisian Minister of Family, Women, Children and the Elderly Asma Al-Jabri on ways to bolster cooperation between Kuwait and Tunisia in various social and human rights fields. The meeting took place on the sidelines of the high-level Arab regional gathering convened in the Tunisian capital in preparation for the Second World Summit for Social Development, set to be held in Doha this November.

Discussions focused on exchanging expertise and best practices in issues related to women, children, family welfare and elderly care. As part of her visit, Ambassador Sheikha Jawaher toured the Center for Research, Studies, Documentation and Information on Women (CREDIF), which chronicles the historical and contemporary contributions of Tunisian women.

She also visited the National Observatory for Combating Violence against Women, where she was briefed on the institution's methodologies for addressing reported abuse cases and the mechanisms in place for data collection and analysis used to inform national strategies. Ambassador Sheikha Jawaher commended the observatory's role in protecting women and praised CREDIF's efforts in preserving the legacy of Tunisian women and highlighting their significant achievements throughout history. — KUNA



Local

Kuwait urges mutual respect, impartiality at UNHRC session

Gulf state calls for avoidance of politicization and selectivity

GENEVA: Kuwait reaffirmed its commitment to mutual respect and constructive engagement in the field of human rights, calling for the avoidance of politicization and selectivity in the provision of technical cooperation and capacity-building. This came during a statement delivered by Diplomatic Attaché Asmaa Abdullah Al-Hajji at a panel discussion on capacity-building and technical cooperation, held within the framework of the 59th session of the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) in Geneva.

Al-Hajji stressed the importance of ensuring that technical cooperation efforts are guided by the specific requests of countries and aligned with

their national priorities and development strategies. She reiterated Kuwait's belief that such cooperation should support sustainable and inclusive progress, in line with the goals of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. She further highlighted Kuwait's emphasis on the value of experience-sharing and best practices among countries, grounded in principles of partnership, mutual understanding, and respect for the cultural and social particularities of each state. This, she said, is vital to creating an environment that promotes and protects rights and freedoms.

Al-Hajji also affirmed Kuwait's readiness to

maintain its engagement with UN human rights mechanisms and to support initiatives aimed at building the capacities of countries in protecting human rights within a framework of solidarity and respect. The panel discussion explored the role of technical cooperation in supporting the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in its efforts to assist countries in enhancing their national human rights institutions. It also underscored the significance of national mechanisms for implementation, reporting, and follow-up, as part of a holistic approach to safeguarding fundamental rights and freedoms. — KUNA



Asmaa Abdullah Al-Hajji

Dusty winds and high temperatures expected

KUWAIT: Director of the Meteorological Department Dharar Al-Ali announced that Kuwait will be affected by moderate to active northwesterly winds, with conditions expected to persist through Sunday before gradually subsiding on Monday. Speaking to KUNA, Al-Ali explained that the latest weather maps and numerical models indicate the country is under the influence of an extension of the Indian monsoon depression, accompanied by a hot, dry air mass. The resulting winds may exceed 60 km/h, stirring up dust and significantly reducing horizontal visibility to less than 1,000 meters in some areas, particularly open and desert regions. The winds are also expected to lead to high sea waves at times.

Al-Ali added that the winds will remain moderate to active on Sunday, ranging between 15 and 55 km/h, continuing to cause dusty conditions and rough sea states with waves occasionally rising above six feet. He noted that conditions will begin to improve gradually from Monday, with wind speeds decreasing and temperatures starting to rise steadily toward the end of the week. "The



KUWAIT: A motorist drives during a heavy dust storm in Kuwait. — KUNA

weather from today until Sunday evening will be generally hot and dusty during the day and tend to be hot at night, with dust expected to gradually settle in the evening hours," Al-Ali said.

Maximum temperatures are forecast to range between 44°C and 46°C, while minimum temperatures are expected between 30°C and 33°C. Al-Ali urged motorists, especially those driving on highways, to exercise caution due to sudden drop in visibility caused by blowing dust. He also advised beachgoers to avoid the sea during periods of high waves. He called on the public to stay informed by following updates through the Meteorological Department's official website, mobile application and social media platforms. — KUNA

KEPS launches region's first women-focused climate action guide

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Environment Protection Society (KEPS) on Saturday launched a groundbreaking publication titled "Women's Guide to Climate Action and Shared Responsibility," marking a significant step by civil society to empower women and strengthen their role in addressing the climate crisis. KEPS Secretary General and book supervisor Jenan Behzad said in a press statement that the guide is the first of its kind in the region. It offers a comprehensive look into women's contributions to environmental efforts, combining scientific insight, social analysis, and real-life experiences of pioneering Arab women in the fields of climate action and sustainable development.

Behzad noted that the guide was prepared with contributions from 11 Arab female writers rep-



Jenan Behzad

resenting Kuwait, Egypt, Bahrain, the UAE, Tunisia, Lebanon and Iraq. The book is divided into five chapters, tackling key themes such as the impact of climate change on women, environmental and social responsibility, Arab women's leadership in climate initiatives, and a practical guide for applying sustainability principles at home. She emphasized that KEPS aims, through this publication, to enrich the Kuwaiti and Arab environmental library with knowledge resources that reflect climate challenges from a gender-based perspective.

The guide also seeks to encourage women to take on active roles as essential partners in environmental protection. "Women are vital actors in crafting solutions and driving transformations toward a sustainable future, drawing on their leading roles within families and across social and political spheres," Behzad said. She added that the book was produced in response to the recommendations of a workshop titled "Women between Climate Change and Sustainable Development," held in cooperation with the National Association for Family Security. — KUNA



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Kuwait eyes cultural revival as Capital of Arab Culture 2025

Balancing heritage and modernity, Kuwait aims to strengthen regional cultural role

By Khaled Al-Abdulhadi

KUWAIT: As Kuwait assumes the title of Capital of Arab Culture 2025, attention turns to its evolving cultural policy, which straddles the line between preserving national identity and expanding international cultural influence. Melissa Tedafi, a contemporary history specialist in Franco-Arabic cultural diplomacy and policies at Nantes Université, outlined Kuwait's cultural ambitions during a roundtable at the University of Strasbourg's Middle East and Muslim World Studies Congress. She highlighted how these ambitions are shaped by the country's historical legacy, institutional challenges and modern aspirations within a competitive Gulf context.

"Cultural policies in Kuwait constitute an area of public intervention at the crossroads of national identity, social development, and international openness," Tedafi explained. "They are part of a dynamic that is both conservative and modernizing." This duality is a defining feature of Kuwait's cultural landscape. On one hand, the state works to preserve its traditional roots and heritage; on the other, it seeks to become a regional hub for intellectual and artistic exchange.

A legacy of cultural pioneering

Tedafi noted that Kuwait's cultural influence predates its independence in 1961. In the mid-20th century, it became a haven for Arab intellectuals fleeing authoritarian regimes, establishing itself early on as a center for artistic and intellectual life. "Even before independence, Kuwait positioned itself as a major intellectual and artistic center, welcoming Arab thinkers



Melissa Tedafi

and writers fleeing nationalist or Islamist dictatorships," she said.

This pioneering role was driven by two key forces: An educated Kuwaiti elite committed to modernist values and openness, and a desire to carve out a distinct national identity amidst regional giants such as Saudi Arabia and Iraq. Today, the government continues to reinforce this identity through institutions like the Department of Antiquities and Museums and the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters (NCCAL). Strategies include educational outreach, youth engagement and the training of tourist guides and cultural mediators.

Gulf War trauma and institutional fragmentation

Kuwait's cultural momentum suffered a major setback during the 1990 Iraqi invasion, a trauma that still echoes in national memory. "The Iraqi soldiers looted and burned the national museum to erase all traces of national identity. Only part of the objects were recovered by the state," Tedafi said. Beyond this historical trauma, structural challenges persist. While the NCCAL remains the main institution safeguarding Kuwait's heritage, Tedafi noted that weak inter-in-

stitutional coordination hampers cohesive cultural development. "Cultural policies are often dependent on one-off initiatives, poorly articulated with global foreign policy. This fragmentation harms any coherent soft power strategy."

Constraints of conservatism

Despite enjoying relatively greater press freedom than some Gulf states, cultural expression in Kuwait is constrained by conservative laws and social norms. "Kuwaiti culture is governed by restrictive legislation: Censorship of artistic works deemed 'immoral' or 'blasphemous', publication bans, legal sanctions against critical authors," Tedafi said. "This control considerably limits cultural vitality, and consequently the country's ability to project an image of openness and intellectual freedom." These limitations present a challenge to Kuwait's efforts to present itself as a tolerant and diverse cultural space — a key objective in light of the 2025 designation.

A strategic soft power shift

Despite these constraints, Kuwait views culture as a pillar of both national cohesion and international diplomacy. "The designation of Kuwait as Capital of Arab Culture 2025 represents a major opportunity to consolidate the country's position as a leading cultural center in the Arab world," Tedafi emphasized. "It allows the country to reveal its commitment to creativity, tolerance, and cultural diversity, while providing a platform to showcase achievements in the arts and strengthen intercultural dialogue internationally." The year ahead offers Kuwait a unique chance to align its cultural am-

bitions with tangible execution — if it can overcome institutional fragmentation and ideological barriers.

A modest yet strategic regional model

Unlike Gulf neighbors such as Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, which pursue cultural dominance through lavish investments in projects like the Louvre Abu Dhabi and Education City, Kuwait follows a more restrained path. "Since the 2000s, Kuwait has been part of a regional trend where culture becomes a tool for soft power," Tedafi observed. "However, unlike Qatar or the United Arab Emirates, which rely on massive investments, Kuwait adopts a more modest approach, but no less strategic."

This strategy is built on three pillars: Promoting national heritage, particularly maritime history, Bedouin traditions, calligraphy and vernacular architecture; supporting local cultural industries such as theater and popular music, where Kuwait has historical strengths; and fostering international educational and cultural partnerships, including Arabizing scholarships, co-financing events in the West and active engagement with UNESCO.

The Capital of Arab Culture 2025 title presents a rare opening for Kuwait to redefine its cultural standing. To fully seize this moment, the country must pursue greater institutional coherence, loosen restrictive cultural laws and invest steadily in both domestic arts and international outreach. Standing at a critical crossroads, Kuwait must now choose whether to continue its path of strategic modesty — or lead with a bold, culturally vibrant model of soft power in the Arab world.



Teams participating in the Haido-Can Olympics.

CAN launches 2025 Summer Haido-CAN Olympics

KUWAIT: The National Campaign for Combating Cancer (CAN) on Saturday announced the launch of the 2025 Summer Haido-CAN Olympics, in collaboration with the Public Authority for Sport, under the slogan "Sports is Prevention." In a press statement, CAN Chairman Dr Khaled Al-Saleh said the month-and-a-half-long sporting event features a series of tournaments, competitions, and physical activities tailored for various age groups. The initiative aligns



with CAN's vision of promoting a culture of fitness and public health, with the participation of 16 teams and over 120 athletes.

Dr Al-Saleh highlighted the critical role of physical activity in disease prevention, noting that an improved lifestyle and regular exercise can significantly enhance immunity and reduce risk factors associated with approximately 30 percent of cancer cases. "Sports play a vital role in lowering the risk of numerous cancer types," he said.

Meanwhile, Director of the Haido-CAN Academy Abdullah Khaled expressed hope that the Olympics would serve as a leading platform to promote sports and wellness among youth and the wider community. "Sports are more than just competition—they are a way of life that supports both mental and physical health," he said. Khaled noted that the event is organized through a strategic partnership between CAN and Haido-CAN Academy, in cooperation with the Public Authority for Sports. The initiative aims to reinforce the link between physical activity and the prevention of chronic illnesses, particularly cancer.

He added that the program will feature a wide range of competitions, including football, volleyball, Cine Gym challenges, bowling, athletics, tug of war, and an American penalty kick tournament. Additionally, a series of awareness workshops and community health initiatives will be held to further engage participants and raise public awareness. The Olympics officially kicked off with a padel championship, which witnessed spirited competition and high levels of sportsmanship among the participating teams. — KUNA

Minister highlights vision for revitalizing theater

KUWAIT: Minister of Information and Culture and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi underscored the importance of advancing theatrical work in Kuwait during a coordination meeting with representatives of theatrical production companies, civil theater associations, and cultural institutions. The meeting, held at the Government Communication Cen-

ter, focused on strengthening partnerships to enhance the role of theater in Kuwait's cultural landscape.

At the outset, Minister Al-Mutairi affirmed the unwavering support that the culture sector receives from the political leadership, noting the rich history of Kuwaiti theater, which this year marks more than a century since its inception. He paid tribute to the pioneers of Kuwaiti theater whose efforts elevated it into a distinguished Arab and international platform, stressing the role of the younger generation in continuing this legacy. "Theater today is not only a cultural expression but a key driver of development, contributing to the economy, boosting tourism, and evolving into a professional industry," the minister said.

Al-Mutairi called for closer cooperation among the public and private sectors, as well as civil society orga-

nizations, to enhance the effectiveness and influence of theatrical productions. He emphasized that the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters (NCCAL) plays a central role in supporting, sponsoring, and organizing the cultural scene, noting, "We operate from a national participatory strategy that values theater, and we welcome all visions and proposals for a brighter future." He also stressed the significance of public engagement and constructive criticism in evaluating the success of performances, highlighting the importance of content that aligns with religious and social values, while also addressing development-related themes that speak to the nation's future.

As part of efforts to modernize and expand theater infrastructure, Minister Al-Mutairi revealed that the Council has launched a study to offer several theaters

— including Kaifan, Al-Shamiya, Salmiya, and Mishref — for public auction, following the recent auctioning of Dasma Theater for sustainable operation. He further announced coordination with the Ministry of Education to allocate one theater in each governorate from select school venues, with the aim of fostering theatrical activity across all regions of the country.

"Kuwaiti theater stands at a historic crossroads," Al-Mutairi said, "with a genuine opportunity to usher in a new era of excellence, backed by the leadership's continuous support and the collaborative efforts of all cultural stakeholders." The meeting also featured remarks and feedback from attendees, in the presence of NCCAL Secretary-General Dr Mohammed Al-Jassar and Acting Assistant Secretary-General for the Arts Sector Aisha Al-Mahmoud. — KUNA



KFAED's Acting Director General Waleed Al-Bahar participates in Mongolia's airport expansion project. — KUNA photos

KFAED supports Mongolia airport expansion

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) has contributed to the development and expansion of Undurkhaan Airport in Mongolia, marking a new milestone in the growing partnership between Kuwait and Mongolia. In a statement issued Friday, KFAED Acting Director General Waleed Al-Bahar said the project was financed through a grant previously extended by the Government of Kuwait to Mongolia under the Fund's supervision, valued at KD 1.06 million (approximately \$3.4 million).

Al-Bahar noted that the Fund also signed an additional grant agreement worth KD 80,000 (approximately \$262,000) with the Mongolian government to finance the technical and economic feasibility study for the project. The objective, he said, is to transform the airport into a Category 4C international facility that would serve as a catalyst for economic growth and align with Mongolia's Vision 2050 sustainable development strategy. "The airport expansion project is expected to become a critical transport hub, facilitating mobility, boosting trade, and unlocking



KFAED's Acting Director General Waleed Al-Bahar

new economic opportunities for the region," Al-Bahar stated. "It will contribute significantly to long-term development and prosperity in Mongolia."

The opening ceremony was attended by Mongolia's Minister of Roads and Transport Delger Saikhan, Kuwait's Ambassador to Mongolia Mutlaq Al-Thuwaimer, and several senior Mongolian officials. To date, KFAED has provided Mongolia with soft loans totaling KD 23.7 million (approximately \$77.6 million), in addition to technical assistance worth KD 519,000 (approximately \$1.7 million), reaffirming Kuwait's commitment to supporting sustainable development across Asia. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Minister of Information and Culture and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi and Acting Assistant Secretary-General for the Arts Sector are pictured during the event. — KUNA photos

International

Trump evokes Russia sanctions after largest assault on Ukraine

UN condemns Moscow's largest drone assault on Kyiv

Dalai Lama says hopes to live beyond 130 years

DHARAMSHALA, India: The Dalai Lama said on Saturday he hopes to live until he is more than 130 years old, two decades longer than his previous prediction, following his assurance to followers that he would reincarnate as the spiritual head of the faith upon his death.

The Nobel Peace Prize winner was speaking during a ceremony organized by his followers to offer prayers for his long life, ahead of his 90th birthday on Sunday, and as China insists it will choose his successor. The Dalai Lama told Reuters in December he might live to 110. "I have been able to serve the Buddhadharm (the teachings of Buddhism) and the beings of Tibet so far quite well," he said between prayers, clearing his throat now and then.

"And still, I hope to live over 130 years," he said, sparking applause and cheers among his followers. The 14th Dalai Lama, already longest-lived head of Tibetan Buddhism, spent about 90 minutes at the prayers in his temple. The ceremony was attended by thousands of followers from around the world who gathered in the northern Indian hill town of Dharamshala, where he has lived since fleeing Tibet in 1959 in the wake of a failed uprising against Chinese rule.

"We have lost our country and we live in exile in India, but I have been able to benefit beings quite a lot. So, living here in Dharamshala, I intend to serve beings and the dharma as much as I can," he said in Tibetan, which was translated simultaneously in English and other languages. China, keen to consolidate its control over Tibet, views the Dalai Lama as a separatist. Beijing insists its leaders would have to approve his successor, in a legacy from imperial times. The Dalai Lama has previously said that he would reincarnate in the "free world" outside China and this week told his followers that the sole authority to recognize his reincarnation rests with his non-profit institution, the Gaden Phodrang Trust.

The Dalai Lama is a charismatic figure whose following extends well beyond the millions of Tibetan Buddhists living around the world. He won the 1989 peace prize for what the Nobel committee said was keeping alive the Tibetan cause and seeking genuine autonomy to protect and preserve the region's unique culture, religion and national identity without pressing for independence. — Reuters

KYIV: US President Donald Trump said Russia just wanted to "keep killing people" and hinted at sanctions after Moscow launched its largest ever drone and missile attack on Ukraine in the three-year-old war. Trump said Friday he was "very unhappy" about his telephone call with Russian leader Vladimir Putin, saying: "He wants to go all the way, just keep killing people, it's no good".

The US president said he and Putin talked about sanctions "a lot", adding: "He understands that it may be coming". Hours-long Russian bombardments sent Ukrainians scurrying for shelters across the country and came after the call between Trump and Putin, which ended without a breakthrough.

AFP journalists in Kyiv heard drones buzzing over the capital and explosions ringing out throughout the night as Ukrainian air defense systems fended off the attack. Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky also spoke to Trump Friday and said they agreed to work on bolstering Kyiv's defenses.

"We spoke about opportunities in air defense and agreed that we will work together to strengthen protection of our skies," Zelensky said on social media after the call. Tymur, a Kyiv resident who said he had experienced previous Russian attacks, told AFP that the assault in the early hours of Friday felt different from others.

"Nothing like this attack had ever happened before. There have never been so many explosions," he said. The Kremlin said Friday it was "preferable" to achieve the goals of its invasion through political and diplomatic means.

"But as long as that is not possible, we are continuing the special operation," spokesman Dmitry Peskov said, referring to Russia's invasion. At least three people were wounded in Russian drone and artillery strikes on several parts of Eastern Ukraine overnight Friday to Saturday, regional governor Sergiy Lysak said on Telegram.

Zelensky said Friday air alerts began echoing out across the country as the Trump-Putin call was getting under way. He urged the United States in particular

'Can't describe the pain': Bosnia recalls Srebrenica massacre

SARAJEVO: Three decades after the Srebrenica genocide, relatives are still looking for and burying the remains of more than 8,000 men and boys killed by Bosnian Serb forces, revealing the painful scars cut deep into the country.

On July 11, 1995, Bosnian Serb forces stormed the Muslim enclave of more than 40,000 people in eastern Bosnia. At the time, it was a "UN protected zone" - an ultimately hollow phrase meant to shield the many displaced people who had fled the 1992-1995 war.

General Ratko Mladic's forces executed thousands of men and boys before burying them in mass graves. After decades of painstaking work, about 7,000 victims have been identified and properly buried, but about 1,000 remain missing. Mass grave discoveries are now rare. The last was uncovered in 2021, when the remains of 10 victims were exhumed 180 kilometers (112 miles) south-

Trump had however forced through the tax bill despite deep misgivings in the Republican Party that it would balloon the national debt. The legislation is expected to pile an extra \$3.4 trillion over a decade onto the US deficit. The tense standoff over the bill included a record-long floor speech by House Democratic Leader Hakeem Jeffries, who spoke for eight hours and 46 minutes, blasting the bill as a giveaway to the wealthy. It squeezed past a final vote in the House of Representatives 218-214 after Republican Speaker Mike Johnson worked through the night to corral the final group of dissenters. Trump thanked Johnson at the White House event, saying: "What a job."

Trump's billionaire former ally Elon Musk was among the most vocal critics, and he has pledged to set up a new political party to oppose Republicans who backed the bill. Democrats and many voters have meanwhile expressed concerns that the "big beautiful bill" will gut health and welfare support. The bill will force through the largest cuts to the Medicaid health insurance program for low-income Americans since its 1960s launch, while also shrinking federal food assistance programs. Up to 17 million people could lose their insurance coverage under the bill, according to some estimates. Scores of rural hospitals are expected to close as a result.

But Trump played down the concerns. "They've developed a standard line, and we can't let them get away with it. 'Oh, it's dangerous. Oh, everybody's going to die.' It's actually just the opposite," said Trump. Democrats hope public opposition to the bill will help them flip the House in the 2026 midterm election, pointing to data showing that it represents a huge redistribution of wealth from the poorest Americans to the richest. — Agencies

ly expanded its military operations. A US- and Zionist-backed group, the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation, took the lead in food distribution in the territory in late May, when the Zionist entity partially lifted a more than two-month blockade on aid deliveries. The group said two of its US staff were wounded in an "attack" on one of its aid centers in southern Gaza on Saturday. "This morning, two American aid workers were injured in a targeted terrorist attack during food distribution activities at SDS-3 in Khan Yunis," the organization said, adding that reports indicated it was carried out by "two assailants who threw two grenades at the Americans".

UN agencies and major aid groups have refused to cooperate with the GHF over concerns it was designed to cater to Zionist military objectives. Its operations have been marred by near-daily reports of Zionist fire on people waiting to collect rations. UN human rights office spokeswoman Ravina Shamdasani said Friday that more than 500 people have been killed waiting to access food from GHF distribution points.

GHF's chairman Johnnie Moore, a Christian evangelical leader allied to Trump, on Wednesday rejected calls for the lead role in Gaza aid distributions to revert to UN agencies. — AFP



KYIV: Firefighters working on a fire following a massive Russian drone and missile attack on the Ukraine's capital Kyiv. — AFP

to increase pressure on Moscow, which on Friday announced fresh territorial gains on the front line with the capture of a village in the Donetsk region.

Poland said its embassy building in Kyiv had been damaged in the attack but that staff were unharmed.

In Kyiv, one person was pulled from the rubble after the strikes, which also wounded at least 26 people, emergency services said. The barrage, according to the air force, comprised 539 drones and 11 missiles. A representative of Ukraine's air force told Ukrainian media that the attack was the largest of the Russian invasion.

Overnight Russian attacks have escalated over recent weeks. An AFP tally found Moscow launched a record number of drones and missiles at Ukraine in June, when direct peace talks between Kyiv and Moscow appeared to stall. In Kyiv, AFP journalists saw dozens of

residents of the capital taking shelter in a metro station.

Yuliia Golovnina, who said she sheltered at the metro regularly, described the worry that came with hearing an explosion during an attack. "Will there be another one? Will something collapse on you?" the 47-year-old said.

UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres condemned Saturday Russia's biggest drone and missile attack yet in the three-year war in Ukraine. "The Secretary-General strongly condemns the latest series of large-scale drone and missile attacks by the Russian Federation," Guterres said in a statement referring to the assault Friday and also calling for a full, immediate and unconditional ceasefire. Hours-long Russian bombardments sent Ukrainians scurrying for shelters across the country. — AFP

west of Srebrenica. This year, the remains of seven victims will be buried during the July 11 commemorations at the Srebrenica-Potocari Memorial Centre, including two 19-year-old men and a 67-year-old woman.

"This year, I'm having my father buried. But only one bone, his lower jaw," Mirzeta Karic told AFP. The 50-year-old said her mother was very ill, and so she decided to go ahead with the burial without waiting for more remains to be found.

Her father, Sejdali Alic, joined several thousand men and teenagers who tried to flee Mladic's troops through the dense forests. He failed. His 22-year-old son, Sejdin, was also killed, as were Alic's three brothers and their four sons. He will be Karic's 50th immediate family member laid to rest at Potocari cemetery.

The ceremony for her brother, Sejdin, was in 2003. "I've been able to endure everything, but I think this funeral will be the worst. We're having a bone buried. I can't describe the pain."

An international criminal court sentenced Mladic, now 83, and former Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic, now 80, to life jail terms for war crimes and genocide during the conflict that left nearly 100,000 dead. Both are still incarcerated, but a proper reckoning

inside the splintered Bosnian states remains overdue. Political leaders in the Bosnian Serb entity, Republika Srpska, reject the term genocide and regularly downplay the massacre.

"This denial is trivialized," Neira Sabanovic, a researcher at the Universite Libre de Bruxelles, said.

"It is very rare to find someone in Republika Srpska who acknowledges that there was genocide," she said. Republika Srpska President Milorad Dodik remains one of the most heard voices of genocide-denial in the statelet and Serbia.

Of 305 instances of denial or downplaying in Serbian and the Bosnian Serb media during 2024, he leads the way, appearing 42 times, according to an annual study published by the Srebrenica Memorial Centre. Last year, an international day of remembrance was established by the United Nations to mark the Srebrenica genocide, despite protests from Belgrade and Republika Srpska.

On Saturday, political leaders from the Bosnian Serb entity and Serbia, along with dignitaries from the Serbian Orthodox Church, will gather in Bratunac, near Srebrenica, for a commemoration of more than 3,200 eastern Bosnian Serb soldiers and civilians killed during the war. — AFP

Bombers and 'beautiful bill': Trump celebrates...

Continued from Page 1

relations between Kuwait and the United States, expressing keenness on further exploring venues of cooperation to add to the solid ties and common interests of both countries. He also expressed Kuwait's sincere wishes of success and progress to the United States' people and leadership. HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah also sent congratulatory cables to Trump.

The 79-year-old's victory lap came a day after Republicans fell into line and passed the sprawling mega-bill, allowing him to sign it as he had hoped on the Fourth of July holiday. The bill honors many of Trump's campaign promises: Extending tax cuts from his first term, boosting military spending and providing massive new funding for Trump's migrant deportation drive.

The legislation's signing caps two weeks of significant wins for Trump that have seen him tighten his grip on power and his party alike. The successes include the recent Iran-Zionist ceasefire that was sealed after what he called the "flawless" US air strikes on Iran. Pilots who carried out the bombing on Iran were among those invited to the White House event, which included a picnic for military families on the South Lawn. "The last two weeks, there has never been anything like it, as far as winning," said Trump.

Hamas ready to start truce talks...

Continued from Page 1

and several bodies in exchange for Palestinians detained by the Zionist entity. However, they said, the group was also demanding certain conditions for the Zionist entity's withdrawal, guarantees against a resumption of fighting during negotiations and the return of the UN-led aid distribution system.

Hamas ally Islamic Jihad said it supported ceasefire talks, but demanded guarantees that the Zionist entity "will not resume its aggression" once captives held in Gaza are freed. Trump, when asked about Hamas' response aboard Air Force One, said: "That's good. They haven't briefed me on it. We have to get it over with. We have to do something about Gaza."

Nearly 21 months of war have created dire humanitarian conditions for the more than two million people in the Gaza Strip, where the Zionist entity has recent-



MOSCOW: An official stands next to the flag of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan on the balcony of the Afghan embassy on July 4, 2025. — AFP

Russia first country to recognize...

Continued from Page 1

It is likely to be closely watched by Washington, which has frozen billions in Afghanistan's central bank assets and enforced sanctions on some senior leaders in the Taliban that contributed to Afghanistan's banking sector being largely cut off from the international financial system.

Russia has been gradually building relations with the Taliban, which President Vladimir Putin said last year was now an ally in fighting terrorism. Since 2022, Afghanistan has imported gas, oil and wheat from Russia. The Taliban was outlawed by Russia as a terrorist movement in 2003, but the ban was lifted in April this year. Russia sees a need to work with Kabul as it faces a major security threat from Islamist militant groups based in a string of countries from Afghanistan to the Middle East.

In March 2024, gunmen killed 149 people at a concert hall outside Moscow in an attack claimed by Islamic State. US officials said they had intelligence indicating it was the Afghan branch of the group, Islamic State Khorasan (ISIS-K), that was responsible. The Taliban says it is working to wipe out the presence of Islamic State in Afghanistan.

Western diplomats say the Taliban's path towards wider international recognition is blocked until it changes course on women's rights. The Taliban has closed high schools and universities to girls and women and placed restrictions on their movement without a male guardian. It says it respects women's rights in line with its strict interpretation of Islamic law.

Russia has a complex and bloodstained history in Afghanistan. Soviet troops invaded the country in Dec 1979 to prop up a Communist government, but became bogged down in a long war against mujahideen fighters armed by the United States. Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev pulled his army out in 1989, by which time some 15,000 Soviet soldiers had been killed. — Reuters

International

IAEA pulls inspectors from Iran as standoff over access drags on

Tehran's stock of near-bomb-grade uranium unaccounted for

VIENNA: The UN nuclear watchdog said on Friday it had pulled its last remaining inspectors from Iran as a standoff over their return to the country's nuclear facilities bombed by the United States and Zionist entity deepens. Zionist entity launched its first military strikes on Iran's nuclear sites in a 12-day war with the Islamic Republic three weeks ago. The International Atomic Energy Agency's inspectors have not been able to inspect Iran's facilities since then, even though IAEA chief Rafael Grossi has said that is his top priority.

Iran's parliament has now passed a law to suspend cooperation with the IAEA until the safety of its nuclear facilities can be guaranteed. While the IAEA says Iran has not yet formally informed it of any suspension, it is unclear when the agency's inspectors will be able to return to Iran.

"An IAEA team of inspectors today safely departed from Iran to return to the Agency headquarters in Vienna, after staying in Tehran throughout the recent military conflict," the IAEA said on X.

Diplomats said the number of IAEA inspectors in Iran was reduced to a handful after the June 13 start of the war. Some have also expressed concern about the inspectors' safety since the end of the conflict, given fierce criticism of the agency by Iranian officials and Iranian media. Iran has accused the agency of effectively paving the way for the bombings by issuing a damning report on May 31 that led to a resolution by the IAEA's 35-nation Board of Governors declaring Iran in

breach of its non-proliferation obligations. IAEA chief Rafael Grossi has said he stands by the report. He has denied it provided diplomatic cover for military action.

Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi said on Thursday Iran remained committed to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). "(Grossi) reiterated the crucial importance of the IAEA discussing with Iran modalities for resuming its indispensable monitoring and verification activities in Iran as soon as possible," the IAEA said.

The US and Zionist entity's military strikes either destroyed or badly damaged Iran's three uranium enrichment sites. But it was less clear what has happened to much of Iran's nine tons of enriched uranium, especially the more than 400 kg enriched to up to 60 percent purity, a short step from weapons grade.

That is enough, if enriched further, for nine nuclear weapons, according to an IAEA yardstick. Iran says its aims are entirely peaceful but Western powers say there is no civil justification for enriching to such a high level, and the IAEA says no country has done so without developing the atom bomb.

As a party to the NPT, Iran must account for its enriched uranium, which normally is closely monitored by the IAEA, the body that enforces the NPT and verifies countries' declarations. But the bombing of Iran's facilities has now muddled the waters.

US President Donald Trump said on Friday that Iran had not agreed to inspections of its nuclear pro-



TEHRAN: Iranian Shiite Muslims attend the "Tasua" (ninth day) mourning ritual to commemorate martyrdom of Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) grandson Imam Hussein, during the Islamic month of Muharram ahead of Ashura on July 5, 2025. -- AFP

gram or to give up enriching uranium. He told reporters aboard Air Force One that he believed Tehran's nuclear program had been set back permanently although Iran could restart it at a different location. Trump said he would discuss Iran with Zionist entity Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu when he visits the White House on Monday. "I would say it's set back permanently,"

Trump said as he traveled to New Jersey after an Independence Day celebration at the White House. "I would think they'd have to start at a different location. And if they did start, it would be a problem."

Trump said he would not allow Tehran to resume its nuclear program, adding that Iran did want to meet with him. — Reuters

Record cold grips Argentina, Chile and Uruguay

SANTIAGO, Chile: A polar air mass has brought record low temperatures to Argentina, Chile and Uruguay, causing at least 15 deaths and forcing governments to restrict gas supplies and activate emergency shelters.

The three South American countries have all recorded sharply below-zero temperatures as the polar air originated from Antarctica and swept across the region. In Argentina, at least nine homeless people have died from the cold this winter, according to NGO Proyecto 7. The capital Buenos Aires recorded its lowest temperature since 1991 at -1.9 degrees Celsius (28.6 Fahrenheit) on Wednesday, while the coastal city of Miramar saw snow for the first time in 34 years. Further south, the town of Maquinchao recorded -18C on Tuesday.

Electricity demand caused cuts across Buenos Aires, leaving thousands without power for over 24 hours in some areas. The government suspended gas supplies to industries and petrol stations Wednesday to ensure household supplies, and removed price controls on gas cylinders Thursday.

Uruguay declared a nationwide "red alert" after six people died, allowing President Yamandu Orsi's government to forcibly move homeless people to shelters. Montevideo recorded its lowest maximum temperature since 1967 at 5.8C on June 30, according to meteorologist Mario Bidegain. Chile also activated homeless shelter plans during the coldest days. The city of Chillan, 400 kilometers (250 miles) south of Santiago, hit -9.3C, according to the Chilean Meteorological Directorate.—AFP



SANTIAGO: A meteorologist sits in front of screens at the Meteorological Directorate of Chile (DMC) in Santiago on July 3, 2025. -- AFP

Search on after Pakistan building collapse kills 16

KARACHI: Rescue teams in Pakistan worked in searing heat and humidity on Saturday to recover residents trapped under the rubble of a building that collapsed, killing 16 people. Authorities said the building had been declared unsafe and eviction notices were sent to occupants over three years, but landlords and some residents told AFP they had not received them.

Residents reported hearing cracking sounds shortly before the apartment block crumbled around 10:00 am on Friday in Karachi's impoverished Lyari neighborhood, which was once plagued by gang violence and considered one of the most dangerous areas in Pakistan. The death toll stood at 16 on Saturday, with 13 injured, according to Summiaya Syed, a police surgeon for the provincial health department.

"My daughter is under the rubble," 54-year-old Dev Raj told AFP at the scene.

"She was my beloved daughter. She was so sensitive but is under the burden of debris. She got married just 6 months ago." Rescue teams worked throughout the night, and families said that at least eight people were still believed to be trapped as temperatures climbed to 33 degrees Celsius (91 de-



PORT OF SPAIN: Trinidad and Tobago's President Christine Kangaloo (right) awards India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi with the Order of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago (ORTT), the country's highest honor, in Port of Spain on July 4, 2025. -- AFP

Trinidad and Tobago gives top honor to Indian PM Modi

PORT OF SPAIN: Trinidad and Tobago on Friday bestowed its highest honor on visiting Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who is seeking to strengthen New Delhi's ties with the Caribbean and Latin America.

Modi arrived Friday in the country, where more than a third of the population is of Indian descent. President Christine Carla Kangaloo gave him the Order of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago at a ceremony at President's House in St Ann's, just outside the capital Port of Spain—the first time a foreign leader was so honored.

"This honor is a symbol of the deep and eternal friendship between our two countries," Modi said, according to an official translation. Relations between India and Trinidad and Tobago date back to 1845, when indentured Indian laborers first arrived to work on sugar and cocoa plantations under British colonial rule, following the end of slavery.

Between 1845 and 1917, more than 140,000 labor-

ers settled in the Caribbean nation. The Indian community is now the country's largest ethnic group, at 35.4 percent of the population of 1.4 million. Black Trinidadians are the second largest group at 34.2 percent. "It is a matter of great pride that the Indian community here continues to preserve our shared traditions, culture and customs with such care and devotion," Modi said. He called Kangaloo and Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar "the biggest brand ambassadors of this community."

"Our relationship carries the excitement of cricket and the flavor of Trinidad pepper," Modi said, calling Trinidad and Tobago a vital partner for New Delhi. "India and Trinidad & Tobago rose from the shadows of colonial rule to write our destiny of progress. Our nations stand tall as proud democracies and pillars of strength in the modern world," Modi wrote on X.

"It's high time we all work together to give the Global South its rightful seat at the high table."

During his time in Port of Spain, Modi addressed the Trinidadian parliament and signed memorandums of understanding with Persad-Bissessar. Devant Maharaj, a former government minister and leader of the nation's largest Hindu organization, called Modi a "hero" and hailed the visit. But Trinidad's largest Muslim organization questioned the decision to honor Modi, citing his human rights record. He will next visit Argentina and Brazil, where a BRICS summit will take place on Sunday and Monday. —AFP

grees Fahrenheit) on Saturday morning. A senior district government official, Javed Nabi Khoso, said that notices had been served in 2022, 2023 and 2024 to occupants. "We don't want to impose our orders by force. We work in phases and send them notices to leave the building. They didn't take the notices seriously," he told AFP.

But Imran Khaskheli, an owner and resident watching the rescue operation on Saturday, denied receiving notices. "Do you think we are out of our senses to stay in an unsafe building with our fami-

lies?" he said. He told AFP he had seen cracks in the pillars of the building early on Friday morning.

"I knocked on all the doors and asked families to leave immediately," he said, adding that around 40 families lived in the building but that many did not heed his warning. More than 50 buildings in the district have been declared unsafe, with six evacuated since yesterday, according to Khoso. Abid Jalaluddin Shaikh, leading the government's 1122 rescue service at the scene, told AFP the operation was expected to continue into Saturday evening.—AFP



KARACHI: A rescue operation is underway at the site where a residential building collapsed on July 4, 2025. - AFP

News in Brief

Nine dead in Egypt road crash

CAIRO: Nine people were killed and 11 injured in northern Egypt on Saturday when two minibuses collided on a busy highway in the Nile Delta, the health ministry said. The crash in Menoufiya, about 80 kilometers (50 miles) north of Cairo, was the second deadly accident on the same highway in just a week. On June 27, 19 people were killed, most of them teenage girls working as day laborers, when a truck collided with their minibus. —AFP

Several hurt in Ryanair false fire alarm

MADRID: A false fire alarm aboard a Ryanair jet preparing for takeoff from Spain's Palma de Mallorca airport saw several passengers injured as they left the plane via inflatable ramps, the Irish carrier said Saturday. Friday evening's Manchester-bound flight was suspended owing to a false fire alarm warning indication. "Passengers were disembarked using the inflatable slides and returned to the terminal," Ryanair said in a statement, adding that there was no fire on the aircraft.—AFP

French doctor handed 10-year jail

LYON: A French court sentenced a doctor to a 10-year prison term on Saturday for raping nine of his patients during medical consultations, according to a lawyer representing some of the victims. Thirty women filed complaints against the gynaecologist, in his 60s, accusing him of sexual assault during medical exams. The Haute-Savoie Court in eastern France found him guilty on Saturday of raping nine of the plaintiffs, said lawyer, Aurelie Zakar. --AFP

Myanmar groups rebuff junta plea

BANGKOK: Myanmar's ruling junta on Saturday made a rare call for the armed groups it is fighting to cooperate with it ahead of a slated election, an invitation anti-coup forces swiftly rejected. The unexpected appeal comes as the junta continues to suffer major battlefield reverses to ethnic minority armed groups and pro-democracy "People's Defense Forces" (PDF) that rose up to oppose its seizure of power in 2021. "If the armed groups... choose to legally establish themselves within the framework of the law and cooperate hand in hand with the government... the government will welcome and accept this," the military said in a statement published by junta media The Global New Light of Myanmar. — AFP

Mexico charges two men

CIUDAD JUÁREZ, Mexico: Two men were charged Friday in connection with the discovery of 383 corpses piled up in a private crematorium in northern Mexico's Ciudad Juarez, the local prosecutor's office said. The crematorium's owner and an employee face charges related to the "burial, exhumation, and respect for corpses and human remains." Hundreds of bodies were found "piled up" in the building in late June, with authorities estimating some remains had been there for up to two years.— AFP

10 Niger soldiers killed in attacks

NIAMEY, Niger: A double attack Friday by suspected jihadists near Niger's western border with Burkina Faso left 10 troops dead, authorities said whilst stating that 41 attackers were also killed. The west African country, now run by a military junta, has been battling violence by groups linked to Al-Qaeda and Islamic Jihad for the past decade. Defense Minister General Salifou Modi said in a statement the simultaneous attacks by "several hundred mercenaries" took place in Bouloundjounga and Samira in Gotheye department. — AFP



QIC receives the prestigious (p) 'AAA' ESG rating from MSCI ESG Research.



QIC Group CEO Salem Al-Mannai



QIC building

Qatar Insurance Group earns MSCI's highest ESG rating

Prestigious rating cements QIC's leadership in regional and global sustainability

DOHA: Qatar Insurance Group (QIC), the leading insurer in Qatar and the MENA region, has achieved the prestigious (p) 'AAA' ESG rating from MSCI ESG Research — the highest possible rating under MSCI's globally recognized environmental, social, and governance (ESG) framework. This exceptional milestone places QIC among the world's top-performing insurers for ESG excellence and governance resilience. It also solidifies QIC's position as the first company in Qatar and the only insurer in the MENA region to receive a provisional ESG 'AAA' rating from MSCI, joining an elite group of property and casualty insurers worldwide to earn this distinction.

A testament to ESG leadership
Effective as of May 22, 2025, the rating highlights QIC's outstanding performance across key ESG pillars:

- **Privacy & Data Security:** Robust data protection measures, world-class cybersecurity infrastructure, and regulatory compliance.
- **Human Capital Development:** Strong employee engagement, inclusive talent strategies, and proactive feedback channels.
- **Corporate Behavior:** A well-established culture of ethical integrity, anti-corruption frameworks, and a governance track record free of controversies.

Salem Al-Mannai, QIC Group CEO, commented: "The State of Qatar is a proud signatory to the Paris Agreement, and at QIC Group, we have aligned our sustainability strategy with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, the Qatar Stock Exchange's ESG reporting guidelines, and the Qatar Central Bank's direc-

tives to strengthen sustainable practices in the financial sector.

We take great pride in being a model of excellence in sustainability and governance, both in Qatar and across the region. This national achievement is a testament to Qatar's advanced investment environment and a reflection of the professionalism and efficiency of the country's regulatory authorities — foremost among them the Qatar Central Bank, which has played a pivotal role in shaping the legislative and regulatory frameworks that empower institutions under its supervision to grow and thrive sustainably.

Achieving MSCI's 'AAA' rating reaffirms our unwavering commitment to sustainability and robust governance. This recognition is a direct result of our clear strategy, disciplined operations, and the tireless efforts of our people to deliver world-class performance across all aspects of our business.

In today's environment — shaped by climate risk, rising societal expectations, and increased investor focus — ESG excellence is no longer optional. It is a strategic priority that defines long-term value, resilience, and reputation. At QIC, we see ESG as more than a responsibility — it is an opportunity to lead with purpose, build trust, and contribute to the sustainable transformation of financial services in Qatar and across the region. MSCI's recognition further strengthens our resolve to set new benchmarks, continuously elevate our performance, and champion sustainable finance throughout MENA."

Outperforming regional and global peers

With a weighted, industry-adjusted

ESG score of 9.7, QIC significantly outperformed both regional and global industry averages, placing it among a select group of global peers that have achieved the 'AAA' rating.

MSCI ESG Research specifically commended QIC for:

- Rigorous data privacy protocols aligned with global standards, complemented by regular security audits and employee training.
- Leadership in responsible investment, with transparent ESG policies covering the entire investment portfolio.
- A strong ethical framework, including anti-bribery, anti-money laundering, and whistleblower protections.
- Robust governance, with a highly independent board and dedicated audit, nomination, and compensation committees.

Sustained excellence across ESG priorities

QIC's ESG success is built on long-term, integrated efforts across all areas of its business:

Human capital and workplace leadership

- 80 percent employee engagement score and a 90 percent+ retention rate.
- A diverse workforce representing 67 nationalities across six continents.
- Comprehensive benefits, regular performance reviews, and structured grievance mechanisms.
- Investment in talent development platforms that foster career growth and leadership visibility.

Responsible investment pioneer

- The first insurer in MENA to publicly measure and disclose ESG risks across its entire investment portfolio.
- ESG investment scores nearly double the global industry average.
- Proactive targets for ESG ratings and carbon intensity reduction across key holdings.



Data protection and cybersecurity leadership

- The first regional insurer to voluntarily align with the EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).
- Advanced data classification, loss prevention technologies, and a proactive cybersecurity framework backed by regular internal and external audits.

Leading sustainable insurance practices

- The first insurer in MENA to sign the UNEP FI Principles for Sustainable Insurance (PSI), embedding sustainability into underwriting and risk management strategies.

Meaningful community and environmental action

- The first insurer in the region to launch

a large-scale reforestation initiative, committing to plant one million trees across Qatar to support national climate goals and combat desertification.

- Active partnership with Qatar's Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (MoECC) to support the Third National Development Strategy (2024–2030), focusing on biodiversity preservation, carbon sequestration, and climate resilience.

This forward-thinking project is expected to significantly enhance air quality, conserve water resources, protect local ecosystems, and contribute to Qatar's long-term environmental sustainability. This milestone is the result of a long-standing journey of commitment and dedicated work towards achieving the highest standards of sustainability. Qatar Insurance Group was the first insurance company in the Middle East to sign the Principles for Sustainable Insurance (PSI) under the United Nations Environment Programme Finance Initiative (UNEP-FI) last year, underscoring its leadership and pioneering role in this field.

The Group remains fully committed to supporting Qatar's national efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 25 percent by 2030, in line with the country's national strategy. QIC Group has also established a comprehensive ESG governance framework and developed a long-term strategy to embed sustainability principles into both its underwriting philosophy and asset management practices. To ensure these efforts are fully integrated across the Group, a dedicated Sustainability Committee has been established to lead this strategic direction and drive the achievement of its ambitious objectives.

Aramco plans to sell power assets to raise cash

DUBAI: Saudi oil giant Aramco is looking to sell up to five gas-fired power plants, three sources with knowledge of the matter told Reuters, part of a broader effort to free up funds that could generate tens of billions of dollars. The potential sale of four or five gas-fired plants that power refineries could alone raise around \$4 billion as the Saudi government pushes Aramco to increase profits and payouts to the state, two of the sources said.

Aramco, the world's most profitable company and the main source of Saudi state income, has been looking to sell some assets, improve efficiency and cut costs, Reuters has reported. The company will also slash dividend payouts by nearly a third this year as lower oil prices hit its income.

The state, which directly owns 81.5 percent of Aramco, is heavily reliant on the payouts, which include royalties and taxes. Besides the sale of the gas-fired plants, the company could divest assets such as housing compounds and pipelines, two of the sources said. Port infrastructure assets could also be up for sale, one of them and a third person said. Aramco declined to comment on the potential asset sales and had no immediate comment on the amount of money the fundraising drive could yield.

The Saudi government communications office did not respond to Reuters requests for comment.

Reuters could not determine a timeline for the sale. The three sources spoke on condition of anonymity because the pro-

Some of Aramco's facilities across the Eastern province of Saudi Arabia

A map of oil and gas production facilities, refining and manufacturing facilities, and terminals



By Federico Maccioni • Source: Aramco's 2024 annual report

cess is private. Local businesses like Saudi utility firms could be interested buyers, one of the people said. Aramco fully or partly owned 18 power plants and related infrastructure locally supplying energy to its gas plants and refineries, according to its 2024 financial report.

Other power plants are expected to come onstream soon. The Tanajib Gas Plant project is expected to start operations this year. The potential asset sales by Aramco coincide with Saudi Arabia Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's planned massive domestic projects to diversify the economy from oil while facing

pressure from tumbling crude prices.

Oil receipts made up 62 percent of state revenues last year with the Saudi budget showing a deficit of more than \$30 billion in 2024 despite a \$199 billion windfall from Aramco.

Aramco sold \$5 billion of bonds in May and signaled more borrowing. The country is pouring hundreds of billions of dollars into projects including showpiece events like the Expo 2030 world fair and soccer's FIFA World Cup 2034. Aramco is also seeking to raise funds for infrastructure by bringing in investors, Reuters reported in May. — Reuters

BRICS nations to denounce Trump tariffs

RIO DE JANEIRO: BRICS leaders meeting in Rio de Janeiro from Sunday are expected to decry Donald Trump's headline trade policies, but are struggling to bridge divides over crises roiling the Middle East.

Emerging nations representing about half the world's population and 40 percent of global economic output are set to unite over what they see as unfair US import tariffs, according to sources familiar with summit negotiations. Since coming to office in January, Trump has threatened allies and rivals alike with a slew of punitive tariffs.

His latest salvo comes in the form of letters due to be sent starting Friday informing trading partners of new tariff rates expected next week on July 9. Diplomats from 11 emerging nations, including Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, have been busy drafting a statement condemning the economic uncertainty.

Any final summit declaration is not expected to mention the United States or its president by name. But it is expected to be a clear political shot directed at Washington. "We're anticipating a summit with a cautious tone: it will be difficult to mention the United States by name in the final declaration," Marta Fernandez, director of the BRICS Policy Center at Rio's Pontifical Catholic University said.

This is particularly the case for China, which has only recently negotiated with the US to lower steep tit-for-tat levies. "This doesn't seem to be the right time to provoke further friction" between the world's two leading economies, Fernandez said.

Conceived two decades ago as a forum for fast-growing economies, the BRICS



have come to be seen as a Chinese-driven counterbalance to Western power. But the summit's political punch will be depleted by the absence of China's Xi Jinping, who is skipping the annual meeting for the first time in his 12 years as president.

"I expect there will be speculation about the reasons for Xi's absence," said Ryan Hass, a former China director at the US National Security Council who is now with the Brookings Institution think tank.

"The simplest explanation may hold the most explanatory power. Xi recently hosted Lula in Beijing," said Hass. The Chinese leader will not be the only notable absentee. War crime-indicted Russian President Vladimir Putin is also opting to stay away, but will participate via video link, according to the Kremlin.

Hass said Putin's non-attendance and the fact that India's prime minister will be a guest of honor in Brazil could also be factors in Xi's absence. "Xi does not want to appear upstaged by Modi," who will receive a state lunch, he said. "I expect Xi's decision to delegate attendance to Premier Li (Qiang) rests amidst these factors." Still, the Xi no-show is a blow to host President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, who wants Brazil to play a bigger role on the world stage. —AFP

Business

NBK prices \$800 million in landmark Additional Tier 1 bond issuance

Issuance represents Bank's largest AT1 transaction to date amid strong global investor demand

- Robust participation from international investors underscores strong confidence in NBK's credit profile
- Intense investor demand enabled a 50bpd tightening from initial price guidance, with final pricing set at 6.375%
- Final pricing reflects a spread of just 240.3 basis points over US Treasury yields

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) successfully priced a \$800 million PNC6 Additional Tier 1 bond issuance (AT1)—its largest issuance to date in this capital tier—following strong investor demand.

The issuance was met with broad interest from global investors, marking a notable return to the GCC AT1 market after a brief pause that followed a concentrated wave of issuances in May. The issuance attracted strong demand, with subscription orders peaking at \$2.2 billion—2.75x the issued amount—underscoring robust interest from a diversified pool of global investors and financial institutions. Private banks, in particular, played a pivotal role as key anchors during the orderbook building process. This overwhelming response reflects international investor confidence in NBK's solid credit profile and Kuwait's position as an attractive investment destination.

MENA-based investors accounted for 47 percent of total allocations, followed by investors from the UK (19 percent), the United States (18 percent), Europe (13 percent), and Asia (3 percent).

By investor type, asset managers and investment funds represented the largest share at 48 percent, followed by banks and private banking clients at 44 percent, while sovereign entities, insurance firms, and pension funds comprised the remaining 8 percent of total demand.

Robust investor demand enabled NBK to achieve highly favorable pricing for the issuance, with the final yield set at 6.375 percent—representing a 50 basis point tightening from the initial price thoughts (IPTs) of 6.875 percent (equivalent to UST+240.3bps). The investment-grade credit rating of the issuance, at Baa3 from Moody's, further enhanced its appeal—driving strong interest from international private banking platforms and global asset managers.

Citigroup, JP Morgan, HSBC, and Standard Chartered acted as Global Coordinators for the issuance, while the Joint Lead Managers included Citigroup, J.P. Morgan, HSBC, Standard Chartered, First Abu Dhabi Bank, Emirates NBD, Abu Dhabi Commercial Bank, KAMCO Investment Com-



- The orderbook peaked at \$2.2 billion, representing an oversubscription of around 2.75x the deal size
- International investors accounted for 53% of total allocations, while 47% originated from within the MENA region
- Asset managers and investment funds represented 48% of allocations, followed by banks and private banking at 44%, while other investors comprised the remaining 8%

pany, and National Bank of Kuwait.

The bonds, which will be listed on the London Stock Exchange, are expected to strengthen NBK's capital

adequacy ratios. The new issuance was conducted in parallel with NBK's liability management exercise which offered holders of the Bank's out-

standing \$750 million Additional Tier 1 securities, issued on November 27, 2019, the option to roll their existing positions into the new offering.

Singapore monetary authority penalizes 9 banks, institutions

SINGAPORE: The Monetary Authority of Singapore penalized six banks and three other financial institutions a total of S\$27.45 million (\$21.5 million) on Friday in relation to the country's biggest ever money laundering scandal in 2023. The case involved more than S\$3 billion (\$2.2 billion) in illicit assets seized after 10 foreigners were busted in a series of simultaneous raids in August 2023. The total penalty is just shy of the S\$29.1 million in financial penalties meted out to eight banks in a case involving Malaysia's IMDB in 2017.

The banks involved - Credit Suisse, UOB, UBS, Citibank, Julius Baer, and LGT Bank - were each penalized between S\$1 million and S\$5.8 million. Brokerage firm UOB Kay Hian, asset management firm Blue Ocean Invest and trust and fund services company Trident Trust Company Singapore were also penalized S\$2.85 million, S\$2.4 million and S\$1.8 million respectively. The penalties mark the conclusion of MAS's enforcement actions against financial institutions.

The 10 convicted money launderers were sentenced to jail terms of between 13 and 17 months in the nation's largest case of its kind. They were deported and barred from re-entering Singapore after completing their sentences. The criminals held money gained from overseas scams and online gambling operations in bank accounts in Singapore, and converted some of their cash into real estate, cars, handbags and jewelry. MAS said it has identified shortcomings in the financial institutions' customer risk assessments, their tracing of the sources of customers' wealth as well as their ability to monitor and follow up on suspicious transactions.

"The financial institutions have embarked on remediation of the deficiencies and MAS will monitor their progress closely," it said. Four people were also issued prohibition orders preventing them from carrying out MAS-regulated activities. In response to media queries, UOB said that it has implemented prompt remedial actions over the past two years and committed significant investments to enhance its internal risk management standards and capabilities further.

UBS, which agreed to take over Credit Suisse in March 2023, said that it acknowledged the findings and has cooperated fully with authorities to resolve the issue. Blue Ocean Invest said that the company has fully cooperated with the authorities and has implemented measures to enhance internal policies and procedures. A Trident Trust Company spokesperson also said it has cooperated with MAS's inspection and implemented a remediation plan to address breaches. Citibank, UOB Kay Hian, Julius Baer and LGT Bank did not immediately respond to a request for comment. In August last year, Singapore charged two ex-bankers from Citi and Julius Baer for forging loan and tax documents for the money launderers.

Singapore has also sought to make it easier for law enforcement to prosecute money laundering offences in the city-state. In June 2024, the government identified Singapore's banking sector as posing the highest money laundering risk in the city-state. — Reuters

Trump: Tariff letters to 12 countries signed, going out Monday

WASHINGTON US President Donald Trump said he had signed letters to 12 countries outlining the various tariff levels they would face on goods they export to the United States, with the "take it or leave it" offers to be sent out on Monday. Trump, speaking to reporters aboard Air Force One as he traveled to New Jersey, declined to name the countries involved, saying that would be made public on Monday.

Trump had earlier on Thursday told reporters that he expected a first batch of letters to go out on Friday, a national holiday in the United States, though the date has now shifted.

In a global trade war that has upended financial markets and set off a scramble among policymakers to guard their economies, Trump in April announced a 10 percent base tariff rate and additional amounts for most countries, some ranging as high as 50 percent. However, all but the 10 percent base rate were subsequently suspended for 90 days to allow more time for negotiations to secure deals.

That period ends on July 9, although Trump early on Friday said the tariffs could be even higher - ranging up to 70 percent - with most set to go into effect August 1.

"I signed some letters and they'll go out on Monday, probably twelve," Trump said, when asked about his plans on the tariff front. "Different amounts of money, different amounts of tariffs."

Trump and his top aides initially said they would launch negotiations with scores of countries on tariff rates, but the US president has soured on that process after repeated setbacks with major trading partners, including Japan and the European Union.

US trade deficit widens in May on weak exports

WASHINGTON: The US trade deficit widened sharply in May as exports fell, but subsidizing imports suggested trade could still lead an anticipated rebound in economic growth in the second quarter. The trade gap increased 18.7 percent to \$71.5 billion in May, the Commerce Department's Bureau of Economic Analysis said on Thursday. Data for April was revised to show the trade deficit narrowed to \$60.3 billion rather than the previously reported \$61.6 billion. Economists polled by Reuters forecast the deficit would rise to \$71.0 billion.

The trade deficit chopped off a record 4.61 percentage points from gross domestic product in the first quarter, accounting for much of the 0.5 percent annualized pace of decline in GDP during that period. A reversal is expected in the second quarter, though the anticipated boost from trade is likely to be partially offset by tepid consumer spending. Presi-

dent Donald Trump's sweeping tariffs, which have led businesses and households to front-load imports and goods purchases to avoid higher prices from duties, have muddled the economic picture. Economists warned it could take time for the tariff-related distortions to wash out of the economic data.

The goods trade deficit increased 13.0 percent to \$97.5 billion in May. Imports dipped 0.1 percent to \$350.5 billion. Goods imports also eased 0.1 percent to \$277.7 billion. Consumer goods imports decreased by \$4.0 billion, pulled down by declines in other textile apparel and household goods as well as toys, games and sporting goods. But imports of pharmaceutical preparations increased.

There were also decreases in imports of industrial supplies and materials, mostly reflecting finished metal shapes, but imports of nuclear fuel materials rose. Imports of motor vehicles, parts and engines increased \$3.4 billion. Capital goods imports rose by \$0.3 billion, lifted by computers. But imports of computer accessories decreased by \$2.8 billion. Imports of services dropped \$0.1 billion to \$72.8 billion amid declines in transport and travel services, which offset rises in other business and maintenance and

US trade balance

As of May 2025, the country's trade deficit was \$71.5 billion.



By Reuters • Sources: Bureau of Economic Analysis, LSEG

repair services. Exports fell 4.0 percent to \$279.0 billion. Goods exports dropped 5.9 percent to \$180.2 billion. They were led by a decline of \$10.0 billion in exports of industrial supplies and materials, mostly non-monetary gold, natural gas and finished metal shapes.

Capital goods exports decreased by \$1.9 billion as shipments of semiconductors, civilian aircraft engines

and telecommunications equipment fell. But exports of computer accessories rose. Consumer goods exports increased by \$1.5 billion, driven by pharmaceutical preparations. Exports of services slipped \$0.2 billion to \$98.8 billion, weighed down by travel and transportation services. But exports of charges for the use of intellectual property increased as did those of other business services. — Reuters



NEW DELHI: Shopkeepers wait for customers at a computer and accessories store in the electronics market in New Delhi on July 4, 2025. — AFP

He touched on that briefly late on Friday, telling reporters: "The letters are better ... much easier to send a letter."

He did not address his prediction that some broader trade agreements could be reached before the July 9 deadline. The shift in the White House's strategy reflects the challenges of completing trade agreements on everything from tariffs to non-tariff barriers such as bans on agricultural imports, and especially on an accelerated timeline.

Most past trade agreements have taken years of negotiations to complete. The only trade agreements

reached to date are with Britain, which reached a deal in May to keep a 10 percent rate and won preferential treatment for some sectors including autos and aircraft engines, and with Vietnam, cutting tariffs on many Vietnamese goods to 20 percent from his previously threatened 46 percent. Many US products would be allowed to enter Vietnam duty free.

A deal expected with India has failed to materialize, and EU diplomats on Friday said they have failed to achieve a breakthrough in trade negotiations with the Trump administration, and may now seek to extend the status quo to avoid tariff hikes.—Reuters

Business

South American bloc looks to Asia, Europe in face of Trump trade war

Lula extols potential benefits of deeper relations with Asian countries

BUENOS AIRES: South America's Mercosur bloc sought Thursday to expand its markets in the face of US President Donald Trump's global trade war, with Brazil calling for closer ties with dynamic Asian economies. "It's time for Mercosur to look toward Asia," President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva said, extolling the potential benefits of deeper relations with Japan, China, South Korea, India, Vietnam and Indonesia.

In a reflection of regional tensions, however, Argentina's President Javier Milei threatened to go it alone if necessary to secure a free trade deal with the United States.

"We will embark on the path of freedom, and we will do so together or alone because Argentina cannot wait," Milei warned, calling for "more freedom" to negotiate. The libertarian leader, a huge fan of Trump, has made no secret of his disdain for Lula, referring to him in the past as "corrupt" and a "Communist." Lula, on his first trip to Argentina since Milei took office in December 2023, had no bilateral talks with the self-declared "anarcho-capitalist."

The veteran Brazilian leftist, who took over Mercosur's rotating presidency from his Argentine counterpart, has accused Milei of talking "nonsense." Lula said that under his leadership, Mercosur would aim to "strengthen inter-bloc trade with external partners" and to implement a landmark trade agreement with the European Union. Brussels in December struck a deal with Mercosur's founding members—Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay—to create a free trade zone of around 700 million consumers.

The agreement has been 25 years in the making, but still needs to be ratified by EU member states.

It has faced stiff opposition from France, where farmers worry about being undercut by less-regulated Latin American peers.

Uruguayan President Yamandu Orsi said that it was now "time to resume negotiations with key partners such as South Korea and Canada." Uruguay has for decades sought a relaxation of the bloc's rules, which prevent agreements with other countries without the consent of all partners.

Climate change, the energy transition, combating organized crime and promoting technological development would be Mercosur's main objectives during the next six months, Lula said.

Steps were discussed to make progress on trade



BUENOS AIRES: Leaders wave as they pose for the family photo during the 66th Summit of Leaders of Mercosur and Associated States at the San Martin Palace in Buenos Aires on July 3, 2025. — AFP

agreements with the United Arab Emirates and Canada, as well as update accords with Colombia, Ecuador, Panama and the Dominican Republic, and to advance regional gas integration. On Wednesday, Mercosur foreign ministers announced a free trade agreement with the European Free Trade Association, made up of non-EU members Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland.

Adding to the tense atmosphere surrounding the summit, Lula took the time to visit his ally Cristina

Kirchner, the former Argentine president who is under house arrest.

Lula, who was granted permission by a court to see Kirchner, spent almost an hour at her apartment in Buenos Aires. He found her "in good health, strong and determined to fight," he said on social media platform X. "In addition to expressing my solidarity with her for everything she has been through, I wished her all the strength she needed to continue fighting, with the same determination that has characterized her

career," he wrote. Kirchner hailed the visit as "much more than a personal gesture: it was a political act of solidarity," in her own message on X. Kirchner, the standard-bearer of the Argentine left for over two decades, was convicted of "fraudulent administration" while president between 2007 and 2015.

The 72-year-old, who says her trial was an attempt to silence her criticism of the right, began a six-year sentence last month after losing a Supreme Court appeal. —AFP

Solid US job growth masks loss of labor market momentum

WASHINGTON: US job growth was unexpectedly solid in June, but nearly half of the increase in nonfarm payrolls came from the government sector, with private industry gains the smallest in eight months as businesses battled rising economic headwinds.

While the Labor Department's closely watched employment report on Thursday also showed the unemployment rate falling to 4.1 percent last month from 4.2 percent in May, that was in part because some people left the labor force. The average workweek was shorter last month, suggesting businesses were probably reducing hours. Economists say President Donald Trump's focus on what they call anti-growth policies, including sweeping tariffs on imported goods, mass deportations of migrants and sharp government spending cuts, has changed the public's perceptions of the economy. Business and consumer sentiment surged in the wake of Trump's victory in the presidential election last November in anticipation of tax cuts and a less stringent regulatory environment before slumping about two months later.

The mixed report is, however, unlikely to encourage the Federal Reserve to resume cutting interest rates this month, but raises the prospects of bigger reductions when the US central bank restarts its monetary policy easing cycle. "Although the overall number of jobs was very strong, the weakness was broad-based across the private sector," said Eugenio Aleman, chief economist at Raymond James. "The labor market continued to weaken in June, which is in line with our view and should reignite the conversation regarding the Federal Reserve's interest rate path."

Nonfarm payrolls increased by 147,000 jobs last month after an upwardly revised 144,000 advance in May, the Labor Department's Bureau of Labor Statistics said. Economists polled by Reuters had forecast payrolls rising 110,000 following a previously reported 139,000 gain in May. The report was published a day early because of the Independence Day holiday on Friday. Despite the bigger-than-expected rise in payrolls, job growth is slowing and concentrated in a few industries.

Government employment rose by 73,000, boosted by a 40,000 increase in state government education, which economists brushed off as a seasonal quirk related to the end of the school year.

Local government education increased 23,000. A reversal was expected in July. Federal government job losses continued amid efforts by the White House to slash headcount and spending, with 7,000 positions lost in May. Federal government employment is now down 69,000 since January.

Private payrolls increased by 74,000 jobs, the fewest since October 2024, after advancing 137,000 in May. The rise was below the three-month average gain of 115,000. The healthcare sector continued to dominate employment growth, adding 39,000 jobs spread across hospitals and nursing and residential care facilities. Social assistance employment increased by 19,000. Outside these non-cyclical sectors, weakness prevailed. —Reuters

Vietnam posts 7.5% growth in first half of 2025

HANOI: Vietnam announced on Saturday its economy grew 7.52 percent in the first half of 2025, the highest in more than a decade as exports soared. The strong growth figure comes just days after southeast Asian manufacturing hub averted the most punishing of US President Donald Trump's threatened "reciprocal" tariffs on its exports.

"GDP in the first six months of 2025 increased by 7.52 percent over the same period last year, the highest level of the first six months in the period 2011-2025," the General Statistics Office said in a statement. The country achieved growth of 7.96 percent in the second quarter over the same period last year, the highest Q2 reading since 2022 when it hit 8.56 percent.

"Our country's socio-economic performance in the second quarter and the first six months of 2025 achieved very positive results, approaching the set target in the context of many uncertainties in the world and regional economy," the GSO statement said. Vietnam—a global manufacturing hub—recorded economic growth of 7.1 percent last year and is aiming for eight percent this year as it vies for "middle-income country" status by 2030. The nation has the third-biggest trade surplus with the United States of any country after China and Mexico, and was targeted with one of the highest rates in Trump's tariff blitz.

Hanoi's trade deal with Washington announced this week has negotiated levies down from an eye-watering 46 percent to a minimum 20 percent in return for opening its market to US products.

However the rate is around five times more than before Trump's second term, according to

Assisted-driving technology: China urges caution, speed

BEIJING: China's automakers are outpacing foreign rivals in their push for assisted-driving technology, eager to woo motorists hungry for rapid innovation. Yet, Beijing has a nuanced message for its rising stars: move fast - but be careful.

Regulators this week have been finalizing new safety rules for driver-assistance systems as Beijing sharpens scrutiny of the technology following an accident involving a Xiaomi sedan in March. That incident killed three occupants when their car crashed seconds after the driver took control from the assisted-driving system. While Chinese officials want to prevent carmakers from overselling the capabilities of such systems, they are also threading the needle between innovation and safety to ensure their automakers don't lose out to US and European rivals.

Setting clear regulations for assisted-driving tech without slowing its advancement could give China's industry an edge over global competitors, analysts say. This approach is in stark contrast to the US market, where companies pursuing autonomous cars have expressed frustration that the government has not implemented a regulatory system to validate and test



HANOI: Workers number fabric at a garment factory in Vietnam's Thai Nguyen Province on July 2, 2025. — AFP

Bloomberg Economics, and the pact contains a clause seeding more uncertainty about vital supply chains with China. Trump says a 40 percent tariff will hit goods passing through Vietnam to circumvent steeper trade barriers targeting their nation of origin—a practice called "transshipping".

Washington has accused Hanoi of using the practice to gate Beijing's products to American markets, but Chinese raw materials are also the lifeblood of Vietnam's manufacturing industries. In its outlook for Vietnam published Friday, Fitch Solutions said there were upside risks to its 2025 Vietnam GDP growth forecast of 6.4 percent as exports and investments

remained strong. The United States is Vietnam's largest export market, worth \$70.91 billion in the first half of the year.

In the first six months of 2025, Vietnam's total goods exports reached \$219.83 billion, up 14.4 percent over the same period last year, the GSO said, with processed industrial goods accounting for almost 90 percent of that.

The statistics office said the reorganization of the country's government apparatus last month which saw most of its provinces and cities merged had been part of its efforts towards socio-economic development. — AFP



BEIJING: People look at a Xiaomi YU7 car on display at the showroom of the Xiaomi EV Factory, where all Xiaomi EV cars are made, in Beijing. — AFP

the technology. Markus Muessig, auto industry lead at Accenture Greater China, said China's regulators and industries have long followed former Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping's "feel the stones to cross the river" philosophy. The expression means to steadily explore new, uncertain technologies, which "has proven very successful for this market," he said.

Current Chinese regulations allow systems that automatically steer, brake and accelerate under certain conditions while requiring the driver to stay engaged. For that reason, marketing terms such as "smart" and "autonomous" are banned.

The new rules will focus on hardware and software

designs that monitor a driver's state of awareness and their capacity to take control in time. To do this, regulators enlisted Chinese automaker Dongfeng and tech giant Huawei to help draft new rules and have sought public input over a month-long period, ending Friday.

At the same time, government officials are pressing Chinese automakers to rapidly deploy even more-advanced systems, known as Level 3 assisted-driving, which allow drivers to take their eyes off the road in certain situations. Level 3 is the midway point on the industry's autonomous-driving scale, from basic features like cruise control at Level 1, to self-driving capability under all conditions at Level 5.

The Chinese government had tapped state-owned Changan to be the first automaker to begin Level 3 validation tests in April, but the plan was paused after the Xiaomi crash, said a source familiar with the regulatory planning process. Beijing still hopes to resume such tests this year and approve the country's first Level 3 car in 2026, the source said.

China's Ministry of Industry of Information Technology and Changan did not respond to requests for comment. Xiaomi has said it is cooperating with a police investigation into the accident.

Driver-assistance systems are seen by industry analysts as the next big battleground in China's hyper-competitive car market. Over the past decade, Level 2 systems have proliferated in China, including Tesla's Full Self Driving system, as well as the Xiaomi feature involved in the March crash.

SUNDAY, JULY 6, 2025



British rock band Oasis perform on stage at the Principality Stadium -- packed to the rafters with fans -- in Cardiff on July 4, 2025, during the opening concert of their highly anticipated reunion tour nearly 16 years after last performing together.

UK ROCK LEGENDS OASIS KICK OFF ‘HISTORIC’ COMEBACK TOUR

British rock legends Oasis kicked off a hotly anticipated worldwide reunion tour Friday in Cardiff, delighting fans with a comeback performance few thought possible after their acrimonious split nearly 16 years ago. The Manchester rockers, who shot to fame in the mid-1990s Britpop era, reeled off a string of their biggest hits in front of a 74,000-strong crowd in the Welsh capital, leaving those there in raptures.

“It was fantastic - everything we dreamed about,” said Sebastian Vyrzt, 37, from Denmark. “Great songs, no nonsense. It was like a hit parade.” Frontman Liam Gallagher told the crowd packed into the Principality Stadium it had “been too long” as he spearheaded a two-hour set featuring classics like “Champagne Supernova”, “Stand By Me” and “Supersonic”.

The once-warring Gallagher brothers, Liam and Noel also sang together on “Roll With It”. The band thanked fans for “putting up with us over the years” as they closed out a jubilant first night of their Oasis Live ‘25 tour. They play a second night in Cardiff Saturday, kickstarting 41 concerts around the



A fan of British rock band Oasis who came all the way from Chile.

world that includes five hometown gigs in Manchester starting July 11.

Further sold-out British and Irish concerts will follow at London’s Wembley Stadium, Edinburgh’s Murrayfield and Dublin’s Croke Park, before visiting other countries. The band’s 1990s gigs are the stuff of legend but the chance to see them perform again was long seen as a remote prospect, following one of music’s bitterest break-ups.

Carnival atmosphere

Fans travelled from far and wide, including from across the Americas and various European and other countries, to pack the stadium from late afternoon, and were not left disappointed hours later. Frank Gonzales, 49, from California, told AFP he was struck by how “emotionally” impacted he was. “I’ve seen them several times before, but (there was) something about them being back together again that I never thought I’d see. It was brilliant.

“It was more than just a show... I had my arms around complete strangers.” A carnival-like atmosphere had built in Cardiff through the day, with hordes of fans in Oasis t-shirts filling the streets as the sound of the band’s various hits drifted through the air. Crowds packed pubs and outdoor terraces also belled out the band’s anthems, while merchandise stands did a brisk trade.

The tour is expected to be a boon for the struggling UK economy, with fans spending on tickets, transport and accommodation. Oasis announced the comeback tour last August, days before the 30th anniversary of their

debut album “Definitely Maybe”. The Gallagher brothers maintained a war of words about each other for more than a decade, performing individually over those years but never together. They now appear to have put their differences aside. Although the duo did not engage in any on-stage banter Friday, they briefly high fived and hugged each other’s shoulders following their closing track.

‘Amazing’

Last summer’s reunion announcement sparked a chaotic clamour for tickets that devolved into outrage over sudden price hikes and saw Britain’s competition watchdog threaten legal action. Resale tickets costing thousands of pounds have surfaced, while fans have also been targeted by on-line scams. Liam appeared to make light of the furore Friday, reportedly telling fans: “Are you having a good time? Was it worth the £40,000 you paid for the ticket?” Leaving the arena, Debbie Bonfield, 65, from Wales, said “what they charged the fans was a rip-off” but added “the atmosphere and everything made up for it.” “It was

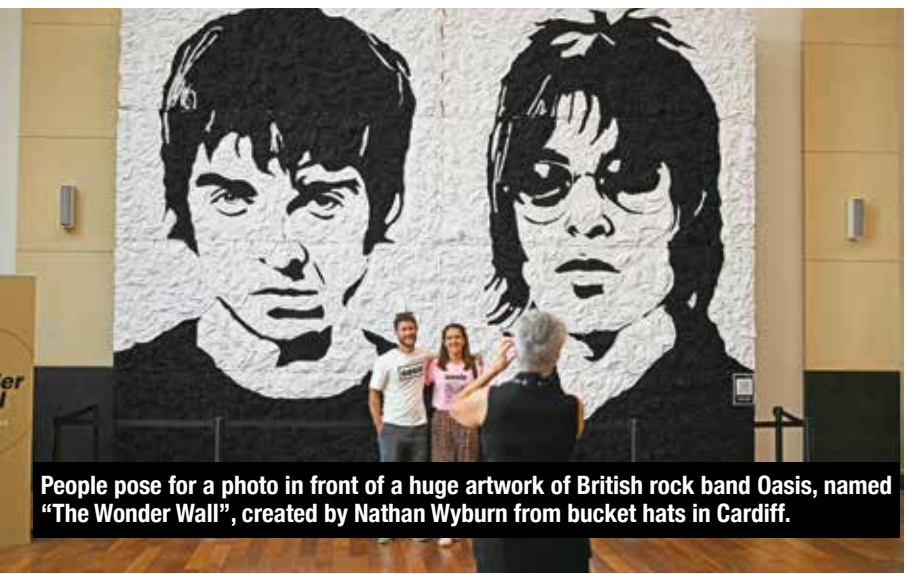
amazing - loved it,” she told AFP.

During the final bars of “Live Forever” a picture of Liverpool footballer Diogo Jota, who died in a car accident Thursday, was displayed, with the crowd cheering and applauding the gesture. Oasis are being supported in the UK by Richard Ashcroft, frontman of British rock band The Verve, as well as 1990s indie band Cast. Starting his debut tour performance, Ashcroft said he was “proud to be here on this historic night”, joking that he felt like he was in Oasis. He then launched into “Sonnet”, the 1997 hit song he released as frontman of The Verve.

The Principality Stadium has its roof closed for both nights, adding to what fans described as an “incredible” atmosphere, with attendees bonding strongly. “I’ve never experienced anything like it,” said Parisian David Mace. Oasis reportedly began jamming together months ago, before rehearsing in London more recently. The band has welcomed several new members for the tour, including a keyboard player and drummer. — AFP



Merchandise for British rock band Oasis are seen for sale in the centre of Cardiff.



Fans of British rock band Oasis react outside the Principality Stadium in Cardiff.



Soundchecks take place on the eve of British rock band, Black Sabbath’s “Back to the Beginning” concert, Ozzy Osbourne’s final ever gig as Black Sabbath’s frontman at Villa Park



A member of US rock band Anthrax, Scott Ian (left) on stage as preparations continue on the eve of British rock band, Black Sabbath’s “Back to the Beginning” concert.



Charlie Benante of US rock band Anthrax plays the drums as preparations continue on the eve of British rock band, Black Sabbath’s “Back to the Beginning” concert.

Ozzy Osbourne set for swansong at Black Sabbath hometown gig

Birmingham braced Saturday for wildman rocker Ozzy Osbourne’s final ever gig as Black Sabbath’s frontman, with thousands flocking to his UK hometown for a celebration of the heavy metal genre he helped to create. Millions are also expected to follow on-line after fans snapped up tickets for the show, starring the original line-up, in just 16 minutes.

Osbourne, 76, who revealed in 2020 that he has Parkinson’s disease, will join Tony Iommi, Geezer Butler and Bill Ward for the all-day “Back To The Beginning” show in Birmingham, central England, where the heavy metal giants formed in 1968. The gig at Aston Villa Football Club’s Villa Park stadium will also feature sets by US rockers Metallica, Guns N’Roses, Tool and Slayer among others, as well as a short solo set by Osbourne.

Around 40,000 fans are expected to watch the original line-up’s first show together in 20 years and Osbourne’s swansong. The show comes as 1990s Britpop band Oasis play in Cardiff in the second of two concerts as part of another highly anticipated reunion.

“Birmingham is a city which means so much to Ozzy. When it comes to heavy metal music, Black Sabbath forming and his love of Aston Villa - it all started here,” his wife Sharon said in comments released by West Midlands Growth Company (WMGC), the region’s investment and promotion body. Black Sabbath have sold over 75 million albums worldwide and are widely recognized as one of the pioneers of heavy



Members of US rock band Anthrax (from left) Scott Ian, Charlie Benante, Joey Belladonna, Frank Bello and Jon Donais pose for a picture as preparations continue on the eve of British rock band, Black Sabbath’s “Back to the Beginning” concert.

metal. All profits from the show will go to charities including Cure Parkinson’s and Birmingham Children’s Hospital. Osbourne’s diagnosis led to him pausing touring. But Sharon told the BBC the Villa Park gig would be his last. “This is his full stop,” she was quoted as saying.

‘Greatest day’

Rage Against the Machine guitarist Tom Morello, musical director for the concert, said he plans “to make it the greatest day, the most important day in the history of heavy metal music”. The Smashing Pumpkins frontman Billy Corgan, who will also perform, added that “this might be the greatest one-day lineup in the history of rock ‘n’ roll”. The show is expected to deliver the area a multi-million pound boost, with hotel occupancy in Birmingham city centre expected to surge close to 90 percent,

according to WMGC. “The eyes of the world will be on Birmingham,” said John Cotton, leader of the city council. “There is always such a special atmosphere in the city on major event days.” Osbourne’s live performances at the height of his hedonism have gone down in rock folklore, particularly a 1982 gig in Des Moines, Iowa, when he bit the head of a bat on stage. Osbourne says he thought a fan had thrown a fake rubber bat on-stage, and it wasn’t until he took a bite that he realized it was real.

“I can assure you the rabies shots I went through afterwards aren’t fun,” he told US TV host David Letterman in 1982. But there are unlikely to be any repeat performances on Saturday, with the rocker mellowing in his old age. — AFP



A general view of the film set of "Le Testament", directed by Burkina's Adama Rouamba.



A general view of the film set of "Le Testament", directed by Burkina's Adama Rouamba.

Abidjan dreams of becoming Africa's next cinema hub

In the lush forests north of Abidjan, technicians were busy filming on the set of "Le Testament" ("The Will"), a comedy co-production between Ivory Coast, Burkina Faso and Senegal. Under a large tree, village elders gathered to discuss the death of a wealthy local cocoa planter. In the film, his children return to their native village and bicker over his inheritance. Ivory Coast is hosting an increasing number of local, pan-African and international productions, and is striving to establish itself as a go-to film destination in Africa in the face of longtime dominance by Nigeria's thriving Nollywood.

According to the Ivorian culture ministry, about 30 films and television series were shot in the country last year. This year, 39 other projects have been approved. Between takes of "Le Testament", production manager Shaidate Coulibaly, 31, said there was a growing number of enthusiastic technicians and filmmakers.

"The sector's really developing locally," she told AFP. "The new generation wants to tell stories about their daily life, stories that represent them." "We have people who are able to oversee an entire production without needing to look elsewhere," added Adama Rouamba, the film's Burkinabe director, who has witnessed first-hand how the sector has professionalized.

'Soft power'
Ivory Coast, the world's top cocoa



A general view of the film set of "Le Testament", directed by Burkina's Adama Rouamba.

grower and a regional economic powerhouse, is banking on its youth -- 75 percent of the population is under 35 -- to take its fledgling film sector to new heights. Coulibaly, however, said private investors were still "cautious" and even though she received public funding, she had to fight to secure financing. "The credibility of Ivorian cinema is building up bit by bit, but it's a struggle," she added. The commercial capital Abidjan has been the backdrop of Franco-Ivorian director Philippe Lacote's productions since he began his career in 2022.

Lacote just finished filming "Clash" -- about rivalry between stars of the

popular coupé-décalé dance music -- in Abidjan and the Congolese capital Kinshasa, using a predominantly Ivorian team. "It wouldn't have been possible a few years ago," he said. Ivory Coast's Minister of Communication, Amadou Coulibaly, said the government was considering setting up specialized programs in schools and wants to "train all players in the film sector locally". At a major international convention in Abidjan last month, he said he wanted to make Ivory Coast "the hub of audiovisual content on the continent".

The stakes are both economic and cultural, particularly with representations of Africa long dominated by

Western countries. Earlier this year, Franco-Ivorian director Jean-Pascal Zadi shot part of his movie "Le Grand Déplacement" here, while "Eldorado", a series by Franco-American film producer Alex Berger, was filmed in the lush tropical Banco forest near Abidjan. "It's important for me to contribute to the development of Africa's cultural industry. We need to produce our own stories, quality content," said Zadi, calling local cinema a form of "soft power". His next film, an action movie, will also be shot in Ivory Coast.

Vision needed

At the National Cinema Office, Adama Konkobo described 2024 as an "exceptional year" and estimated about 20 Ivorian films were screened. In stark contrast, Nollywood -- Nigeria's massive and hugely popular film industry -- released about 2,500. In 2024, Ivorian films made up for about 10 percent of screenings in the country and six percent of the box office.

Meanwhile, films produced or co-produced in the United States accounted for 80 percent of the market share, according to the National Cinema Office. "What's missing in the development of local cinema is a clear vision from the authorities," said Lacote, lamenting that the government is focusing on attracting foreign films without adequately financing Ivorian ones. "It creates jobs," he said. "But it doesn't develop national cinema."



Actors prepare on the set of "Le Testament", directed by Burkina's Adama Rouamba.

Coulibaly insisted the political will was there, and highlighted a forthcoming "subsidy mechanism" aimed at young Ivorian talent. Another obstacle to the development of a local film industry has been the country's lack of cinemas, with only 15 movie theatres, nearly all of them in Abidjan. A project to open a new cinema in Bouaké in central Ivory Coast and the arrival last year of Pathé cinemas -- a chain owned by a French film production and distribution company -- in Abidjan could change the dynamic. — AFP



A general view of the film set of "Le Testament", directed by Burkina's Adama Rouamba.



Franco-Ivorian director Jean-Pascal Zadi speaks during an interview in Abidjan.



A general view of the film set of "Le Testament", directed by Burkina's Adama Rouamba.

Mark Snow, composer of 'X Files' theme, dies at 78

Mark Snow, a composer of music for television -- including the distinctively eerie theme for "The X Files" -- has died at age 78, his agent confirmed. A cause of death was not provided, but Hollywood trade publication Variety said Snow died Friday at his residence in the northeastern state of Connecticut. In addition to "The X Files" main theme, which was released as a single in 1996 and charted internationally, Snow composed the music for over 200 episodes and both feature films of the hit science fiction show about a pair of paranormal FBI investigators.

Born Martin Fulmerman on August 26, 1946, Snow grew up in Brooklyn, New York and attended the prestigious Juilliard School. He began composing music for television in the late 1970s,



Composer Mark Snow poses as he arrives on the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers (ASCAP) 20th Annual Awards Celebration on April 27, 2005 in Beverly Hills, California. — AFP

garnering 15 Emmy nominations over the course of his career.

In addition to "The X Files," Snow composed the music for other US television series, including "Blue Bloods," "Smallville" and "Hart to Hart." He is survived by his wife Glynnis, three daughters, and grandchildren, Variety reported. — AFP

Michael Madsen, 'Reservoir Dogs' and 'Kill Bill' actor, dies at 67

US actor Michael Madsen -- best known for his frequent collaborations with director Quentin Tarantino including "Reservoir Dogs" and "Kill Bill" -- died Thursday at age 67 after suffering cardiac arrest, his management team said. The actor was found unresponsive early Thursday at his home in Malibu, they said.

"Michael Madsen was one of Hollywood's most iconic actors, who will be missed by many," his managers Susan Ferris and Ron Smith said in a joint statement with his publicist, Liz Rodriguez. Madsen's most iconic performances include Mr. Blonde, a psychopathic criminal in the 1992 crime thriller "Reservoir Dogs," and Budd, the younger brother of the antagonist in the "Kill Bill" movies, both directed by Tarantino.

In addition to his appearances in other Tarantino films like "The Hateful Eight" and "Once Upon a Time... in Hollywood," Madsen's prolific career saw

him play more than 300 roles over the course of 40 years. Among his other notable films are "Thelma & Louise," "Free Willy," "Donnie Brasco" and the 2002 James Bond flick "Die Another Day."

Madsen also did voiceovers for several video games, including "Grand Theft Auto III," and published several volumes of poetry. Madsen was born on September 25, 1957 in Chicago to a firefighter father and a filmmaker mother. His sister, Virginia Madsen, is also an actress. He married three times over the course of his life and had six children, one of whom died by suicide in 2022. — AFP



US actor Michael Madsen poses as he arrives on May 14, 2018 for the screening of the film "BlacKkKlansman" at the 71st edition of the Cannes Film Festival in Cannes, southern France. — AFP



Keanu Reeves attends the 78th Annual Tony Awards at Radio City Music Hall on June 08, 2025 in New York City. — AFP

Hollywood star Reeves in driving seat for Cadillac series

Hot on the heels of Brad Pitt's recently released film F1: The Movie, another Hollywood star is set to front a behind-the-scenes series on Cadillac's journey to join the F1 grid next year. Canadian screen actor Keanu Reeves, a motorsport fan, is to present a multi-episode production that will focus on the team's development of staff, cars and race

team through a two-year process. Cadillac was confirmed as the sport's 11th team for 2026 in March.

Reeves, 60, presented the Emmy award-winning 2023 documentary on Ross Brawn's eponymous team's success in beating the odds to win the title in 2009. The star of Speed and The Matrix said he felt honored and excited to tell the Cadillac story

and "bring audiences into the heart of this journey and to showcase what it takes to participate in one of the most exclusive sports arenas in the world."

Reeves, who has an extensive collection of motor cycles and has taken part in a professional car race, the Toyota GR Cup, in Indianapolis, is not expected to follow Pitt's example and sample the thrill of driving an F1

car. Pitt, 61, who reached a top speed of 197 mph in a test at Austin, Texas, in June, said recently that he wanted to "go back ...I want to hit 200!" McLaren boss Zak Brown, whose team supplied the car he drove, said he expected to see him return and repeat the experience. — AFP



'Frogging' takes off in Borneo's jungle



A Torrent frog seen at Kubah National Park in Kuching.



A Kuhl's creek frog seen at Kubah National Park in Kuching.



A Sticky frog seen at Kubah National Park in Kuching.



A Harlequin Flying frog seen at Kubah National Park in Kuching.



A Brown Marsh frog seen at Kubah National Park in Kuching.

Dodging fire-ants, snakes and millions of night-time creepy-crawlies, a group of trekkers advances through the humid Bornean rainforest, scanning with torches for some of the jungle's most unlikely stars: frogs. "There's another one! And it's massive," British tourist Lauren Heywood exclaimed as she spotted the telltale reflective glint off a pair of blinking eyes, seemingly waiting to be photographed by admirers.

"Frogging", or the hunt for the exotic amphibians that call the rainforest home, is taking off in Malaysia's Sarawak state in Borneo. And herpetologists say few places rival Kubah National Park, around half an hour's drive from state capital Kuching. It is home to some of the world's smallest and most unusual frog species.

While many visitors flock to Borneo's jungle to see charismatic large species like orangutans or elephants, some of its tiniest residents are increasingly getting their turn in the spotlight, according to Kubah park ranger Muhammed Tajuddin. "More and more people are coming to see our frogs," he told AFP.

Frog central

The tour begins at dusk, with Indigenous Dayak

guide Dominic Jikie leading a 45-minute hike up Mount Serapi, the highest peak in the area, to frog central. Here, surrounded by ancient jungle trees is a shallow pond around the size of two swimming pools. Scientists say it serves as the primary breeding ground for many of the 180 frog and toad species found on Borneo -- the world's third-largest island, divided between Malaysia, Indonesia and Brunei. Dozens of species dot almost every surface, submerged in the torchlit water, or perched on leaves, branches or tree trunks, placid and unbothered by their human fans.

"There is something special here," said Jikie, 64, a retired park ranger who now specializes as a frogging guide. "People come to the park because they don't have the species that we have here back at home." Among the stars of the show on this visit are pinkish harlequin flying frogs with mottled underbellies, file-eared tree frogs with distinctive sharp noses and white-lipped frogs whose lurid green backs give way to a stripe of white along their bottom jaw.

One of Borneo's most famous species, the giant river toad nicknamed "frogzilla" for its dinner-plate

size, is not seen in Kubah. But there are other more delicate types, according to Jikie. "We have one of the world's smallest frog species, that breed inside pitcher plants," he said, training his sharp spotlight on a pair of amphibian eyes just up the steep mountain road. The Matang narrow-mouthed frog was officially described by Malaysian and German herpetologists in 2010 after its discovery in Kubah.

It grows to a maximum of just 11 millimeters (less than half an inch) as an adult. British tourist Thom Harris and his fellow visitors spotted 11 species on their nighttime trek. "This was an amazing experience," he told AFP. "They are just stunning creatures." "There are a few fire ants and a few other things to be careful of -- and a lot of bugs," he laughed. "But it's definitely worth it. And it's a lot of fun!"

'I love nature'

The rising popularity of the forest frogs is a chance for environmentalists to highlight the serious threats they face. Deforestation, climate change and over-hunting are all putting pressure on the tropical island's frog population, scientists say. "Even slight

changes in the temperature and climate may affect the survival of the frog species in a particular habitat," University of Malaysia, Sarawak researchers Nur Hidayah Zulkefli and Ramlah Zainudin wrote in 2022.

Deforestation in Sarawak remains significant and ongoing, statistics by environmental group Global Forest Watch showed, including for timber and to make way for palm oil plantations. Sarawak's government said it backed community conservation movements to preserve the amphibians and it ran well-protected game and nature reserves like Kubah National Park.

Awareness events include the annual International Bornean Frog Race, which sees scientists and the public compete to spot and photograph as many frog species as possible within a set timeframe and area. For park ranger Tajuddin, the more people are able to engage with the unique creatures, the more they will understand the need to protect them and their habitats. "I love nature," he said. "Frogging is a unique way for me to share that love with all our visitors." — AFP



A Brown Marsh frog seen at Kubah National Park in Kuching.



A Giant River frog seen at Kubah National Park in Kuching.



A Harlequin Tree frog seen at Kubah National Park in Kuching.



A Harlequin Flying frog seen at Kubah National Park in Kuching.



A Copper-cheeked frog seen at Kubah National Park in Kuching.



A Slender Litter frog seen at Kubah National Park in Kuching.



A Four-lined Tree frog seen at Kubah National Park in Kuching.



British tourists Thom Harris and Lauren Heywood taking part in frogging activity at Kubah National Park in Kuching, capital of the Malaysian state of Sarawak on the island of Borneo. — AFP photos

Sports

Rivals rock as fans flood in for Tour de France opener

Team UAE's Pogacar starts as red-hot favorite

LILLE: A frantic fight for the first overall leader's yellow jersey will mark the start of cycling's Tour de France when the much anticipated 2025 edition races out of Lille in a carnival atmosphere on Saturday. Title contenders Tadej Pogacar and Jonas Vingegaard were promising to steer clear of any scrapes to avoid picking up an early injury in the 21-day excursion around France. Instead sprinters such as Belgium's Jasper Philipsen and Italian Jonathan Milan are the men to beat on a flat but frenetic opening run around Lille, where partying fans have been gathering this week.

After starts in Florence, Bilbao and Copenhagen, and with upcoming editions in Barcelona and Edinburgh, cycling's most prestigious race has an old school itinerary this year raced exclusively in France and favoring climbers. But with the race starting in the northern city of Lille, fans from cycling-mad Belgium have been flooding across the nearby border.

All in all the way

They have come to cheer on Remco Evenepoel in his bid to reach further than his third man billing. "I'll go all in all the way," promised the double Olympic champion. Often described as the most beautiful stadium in the world, the Tour route roves across the north coast to the west of Brittany, before heading south through the Massif Central and the first mountain stage on day 10. "Everybody knows that's when the real race begins," said Evenepoel.

Team UAE's Pogacar starts as red-hot favorite with fans and bookmakers alike, and he can silence any remaining doubters by beating arch-rival Vingegaard of Visma. Pogacar has won three Tour

de France and has 99 professional wins, so will almost certainly hit his century here, maybe in the first week. "Jonas might be stronger in the mountains, so I'd better get ahead a bit early on with some bonus seconds," he said.

'Intense rivalry'

Glimpses of Pogacar and Vingegaard going head-to-head on the Alpine slopes or along the panoramic roads of the French Riviera provide tension, drama and sporting rivalry as enthralling as any involving the old-time legends. Vingegaard tends to focus on a single-mission strategy, awaiting one big moment to spring a deeply considered killer move at a meticulously chosen spot. Visma team boss Grischmann insisted Friday his team had come to win, but both he and Vingegaard were keeping mum about what their plan was. "I'm on the highest level that I've ever been," said Vingegaard, the 2022 and 2023 winner. "If we didn't think we could win, we wouldn't be sat here," said Niermann.

See-saw title struggle

Pogacar certainly seemed relaxed when he spoke to the press at the Lille opera house. "The last five years have been intense between me and Jonas," Pogacar said. "It's a great competition and rivalry and it will be interesting to see if the title changes hands again." The volcanoes of the Puy de Dome present the first mountains as late as stage 10, with two more colossal climb days in the Pyrenees before the blockbuster final week in the Alps. But before any dash towards the eventual finish line on the Champs-Élysées there is one final twist. A last-minute addition to



NŒUX-LES-MINES: The pack of riders cycles during the 1st stage of the 112th edition of the Tour de France cycling race, 184.9 km starting and finishing in Lille Metropole, northern France, on July 5, 2025. — AFP

the 2025 route is a nod to the 2024 Olympic Games road race, which drew vast crowds to the old Parisian neighborhood of Montmartre. On the final day

a cauldron of noise up the narrow cobbled climb to the Sacre-Coeur Basilica provides one last obstacle, after which the winner will be crowned. — AFP

Salah 'frightened' to return to Liverpool as fans mourn tragic Jota

LIVERPOOL: Mohamed Salah said the death of Liverpool teammate Diogo Jota in a car crash had left him "frightened" to return to the club as devastated fans swarmed to Anfield to pay their respects. The 28-year-old Portugal forward and his younger brother Andre Silva, 25, died in the early hours of Thursday after their car veered off a motorway in Spain and burst into flames. A wake for the siblings was organized at a chapel in the Porto suburb of Gondomar ahead of their funeral on Saturday while fans in Liverpool were also in mourning.

Jota's teammates have spoken of their struggle to comprehend his death, with captain Virgil van Dijk writing on Instagram that he was "absolutely devastated and in total disbelief". Egypt international Salah shared his deep grief on social media, admitting he was dreading returning to the club. "I am truly lost for words," last season's Premier League top-scorer posted on Instagram.

"Until yesterday, I never thought there would be something that would frighten me of going back to Liverpool after the break. "Teammates come and go but not like this. It's going to be extremely difficult to accept that Diogo won't be there when we go back. "My thoughts are with his wife, his children, and of course his parents who suddenly lost their children. Those close to Diogo and his brother Andre need all the support they can get. They will never be forgotten."

Jota had married his partner Rute Cardoso on June 22, posting a video of their wedding on Instagram just hours before the accident. They had three children. Former Liverpool captain and teammate Jordan Henderson was among thousands of mourners to lay a tribute at a temporary shrine that has built up outside Anfield. "Jots" it was a pleasure to share a pitch with you but more importantly a friendship. All the laughs we had off the pitch," the Ajax and England midfielder wrote on Instagram.

Supporters' grief

Fans have left flowers, scarves and shirts outside Anfield and there are similar scenes at Wolves' Molineux ground, where Jota played prior to his move to Liverpool. Emma Dainty, 38, from Liverpool, told AFP: "One of our great players has just lost his life and his brother as well. "And it's an absolute tragedy and it should not have happened, no way should it have happened. He's not just a footballer to me. He had a wife, children. He had a family. It just shouldn't have happened."

Richard Jones, 39, a financial advisor from nearby Chester, said there was a feeling of "disbelief" among fans of the recently crowned Premier League champions. "We wanted to come down and just pay tribute, leave some flowers, and basically just to show our respects for such a tragic loss of life," he said. "You know, someone of 28 like that in the prime of his life, the prime of his career. Really, really tragic." Joy Taylor, 65, a Liverpool shop worker, said Jota was "absolutely awesome". "He was really, really so professional," she added. "And he's such a lovely man. You know, every time you saw him, he was always smiling. He always had a big smile on his face. He was just an all-rounder."

A delegation from Liverpool's city rivals Everton, including forwards Beto and Youssef Chermiti visited to pay their respects and lay wreaths. Liverpool have opened a book of condolence and lowered flags to half-mast. Some of the club's players had been due back on Friday at the start of pre-season training, but the first tranche of a phased return was postponed. Liverpool's first pre-season match was due to take place at Preston on July 13. But the club posted a statement on its website saying: "Ticket sales for this game have been suspended following the devastating passing of our men's first team player Diogo Jota and his brother Andre Silva." — AFP

Sinner powers into Wimbledon last 16 as Djokovic eyes century

LONDON: Wimbledon top seed Jannik Sinner crushed Pedro Martinez to reach the last 16 without losing a set on Saturday while title rival Novak Djokovic targets his 100th victory at the tournament. Sinner took just one hour and 55 minutes to demolish 52nd-ranked Martinez 6-1, 6-3, 6-1 in a Centre Court masterclass, though the Spaniard was struggling with a shoulder issue. The 23-year-old will face Bulgarian 19th seed Grigor Dimitrov or Austria's Sebastian Ofner in the fourth round at the All England Club. Sinner has lost just 17 games across his first three matches at this year's tournament, in contrast to defending champion Carlos Alcaraz, who has shown patchy form on route to the last 16.

The Italian returned from a doping ban in May, losing the Italian Open final to Alcaraz and squandering three championship points against the Spaniard in the French Open final last month. His best performance at Wimbledon was a run to the semi-finals in 2023 and he reached the quarter-finals last year. "Every time you reach the second week of a Grand Slam it's a very special occasion," said Sinner, who acknowledged Martinez's discomfort with his shoulder. "Even more special here in Wimbledon, so I'm very happy to be in the second week."

Later on Centre Court, Djokovic will resume his bid for a record-breaking 25th Grand Slam crown. The seven-time champion, locked with the long-retired Margaret Court on 24 majors, is aiming to reach the fourth round for the 17th time in his 20th appearance at Wimbledon. A third-round clash against Serbian Davis Cup teammate Miomir Kecmanovic will hold few fears for the sixth seed, who has not lost against his 49th-

ranked compatriot in three previous meetings.

If Djokovic beats Kecmanovic he will reach a century of victories at the All England Club, a feat only surpassed by eight-time champion Roger Federer, who won 105 times on the lawns of southwest London, and Martina Navratilova, who chalked up 120 victories. "If I play like this, I feel like I have a very good chance against anybody, really, on the Centre Court of Wimbledon, a place where I maybe feel the most comfortable on any court," Djokovic said after beating Britain's Dan Evans in the second round. Djokovic's first Wimbledon win came against Argentine Juan Monaco 20 years ago, when Kecmanovic was aged just five.

Swiatek's title chance

Former champion Elena Rybakina became the latest star to suffer a shock exit, losing to Denmark's Clara Tauson 7-6 (8/6), 6-3. Rybakina, the Kazakh 11th seed, won her maiden Grand Slam title at Wimbledon in 2022 and reached the semi-finals last year. But the 26-year-old's hopes of another strong run were ended by 23rd-seeded Tauson in a third-round tie on Court Two. Russian teenager Mirra Andreeva thrashed American world number 55 Hailey Baptiste 6-1, 6-3 in just 78 minutes on Court One.

The 18-year-old, seeded seventh, is one of the few leading players left in the women's draw. World number one Aryna Sabalenka is the only player remaining from among the top six seeds. Iga Swiatek has quietly gone about her business at this year's Wimbledon but will have watched the mass exodus of her top rivals with interest.

The five-time Grand Slam champion is seeded eighth at the All England club after slipping down the rankings, though she is now back in the world's top four after reaching the Bad Homburg final last week. The Pole, who faces American Danielle Collins in the third round, has never been beyond the quarter-finals at the All England Club. Swiatek, who has won four titles on the French Open clay, was beaten by former Australia-



WIMBLEDON: Italy's Jannik Sinner serves to Spain's Pedro Martinez during their men's singles third round tennis match on the sixth day of the 2025 Wimbledon Championships at The All England Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club in Wimbledon, southwest London, on July 5, 2025. — AFP

lian Open finalist Collins at the Italian Open in May. Defending women's champion Barbora Krejickova is also in action on Saturday against American 10th seed Emma Navarro. — AFP

Norris tops practice as Horner quizzed over Verstappen

SILVERSTONE: Lando Norris thrilled his home fans at Silverstone when he topped the times for McLaren ahead of both Ferraris in second practice on Friday for this weekend's British Grand Prix. In gusty conditions at the former airfield circuit in central England, the 25-year-old Briton clocked a best lap in one minute and 25.816 seconds to outpace Charles Leclerc by 0.222 seconds.

Seven-time champion Lewis Hamilton, a record nine-time winner of his home race, was three-tenths adrift in third after topping F1, his first practice success since last year's Las Vegas Grand Prix and his first with Ferrari. Championship leader Oscar Piastri, who leads Norris by 15 points, was fourth in the second McLaren ahead of four-time champion Max Verstappen, who spent much time grumbling about the balance and performance of his Red Bull.

Kimi Antonelli was sixth for Mercedes ahead of Aston Martin's Lance Stroll, George Russell in the second Mercedes and RB rookies Isack Hadjar and Liam Lawson. "That was a good lap from Lando," said McLaren chief Zak Brown. "But Ferrari look very strong here and they're fast on both one lap and on race runs." After a fevered break replete with rumour in the paddock Red Bull boss Christian Horner did little to quell stories claiming Verstappen was bound for



SILVERSTONE: McLaren's British driver Lando Norris takes part in the second practice session ahead of the Formula One British Grand Prix at the Silverstone motor racing circuit in Silverstone, central England. — AFP

Mercedes even when a chance to categorically deny it was presented to him.

Max exit clause

"Contracts between the drivers and the team are always going to remain confidential," he told a news conference. "And with any driver's contract, there is an element of performance mechanism and that exists within Max's contract. "Now, absolutely, his intention is that he will be there and driving for us in 2026. It's inevitable that he's of huge interest to any other team and in the pit lane."

Horner's comments confirmed the existence of an exit clause for Verstappen that, it is widely believed, may permit him to agree to join another team if he is outside the top three in the drivers' championship at the end of July. All of this was only a slight distraction

from Hamilton's performance in topping the times in F1 for Ferrari, his first practice success since last year's Las Vegas Grand Prix with Mercedes – and he began FP2 in the same vein by clocking 1:27.280 to set the pace on mediums. After briefly being overhauled by the McLaren duo, he trimmed his time to 1:26.902 while Verstappen was complaining "Have you seen my front tyres in the high speed? They just don't respond". He was 10th after 20 minutes when Carlos Sainz, affected by the wind, spun his Williams out of Luffield and almost hit Nico Hulkenberg before Hamilton regained top spot from Leclerc by three-tenths in 1:26.592. The top men bolted on softs with 30 minutes remaining and after Mercedes briefly took control, Leclerc went fastest ahead of Piastri before Norris delighted his fans, in the grandstands named after him, in 1:25.816 to move clear. — AFP

country's declaration of independence. Known in the mixed martial arts world as the "Combatant in Chief," Trump counts UFC President Dana White as a close friend and considers fans of the sport part of his political base. Trump made the announcement during a winding speech that ricocheted from topic to topic at the Iowa state fairgrounds. The fairgrounds event served as a prelude to July 4 Independence Day celebrations on Friday.

"We're going to have a UFC fight, think of this, on the grounds of the White House," Trump said.

"We have a lot of land there. We are going to build a little – we are not, Dana (White) is going to do it ... we are going to have a UFC fight, championship fight, full fight, like 20-25,000 people, and we are going to do that as part of 250 also," he said, referring to the country's anniversary of independence. Trump has been a regular attendee at UFC fights, most recently attending one in New Jersey in June. UFC and its parent company TKO Group Holdings did not immediately respond to a request for comment. — Reuters

Trump plans UFC fight at White House for US 250th anniversary

DES MOINES: US President Donald Trump said on Thursday he is planning to bring an Ultimate Fighting Championship event to the White House next year to help celebrate the 250th anniversary of the

Sports

MLB Cubs smash team-record 8 homers to crush Cardinals 11-3

Cubs unleash US Independence Day fireworks in style

CHICAGO: Michael Busch smacked three home runs and the Chicago Cubs belted a team-record eight homers to defeat visiting St Louis 11-3 on Friday at historic Wrigley Field. The Cubs, a founding member of the National League in 1876, unleashed US Independence Day fireworks with a club-record six homers in the first three innings of their Major League Baseball contest. They added two more in the seventh to break the old Cubs mark for homers in a game of seven, set several times but most recently on August 1, 2023 against Cincinnati. Busch, a 27-year-old American obtained in a trade last year with the Los Angeles Dodgers, became the first Cubs first baseman with three homers in a game since legend Ernie Banks in 1963. Busch was also the third Cub with a three-homer outing on the July 4 holiday, joining Moises Alou and Hank Leiber. "It's just really cool to get the win and to celebrate so many good days by the guys," Busch said. "I think that was my first three-homer game ever."

Seiya Suzuki, Pete Crow-Armstrong, Busch and Carson Kelly combined for the six early homers off

Cardinals 36-year-old right-handed starting pitcher Miles Mikolas. Suzuki, a 30-year-old Japanese designated hitter who played nine seasons for the Japan League's Hiroshima Toyo Carp before joining the Cubs in 2022, began the onslaught with a two-out homer to left-centerfield in the first inning, his 24th homer of the year. Crow-Armstrong, the next batter, smashed his 22nd homer of the season to right-centerfield to give Chicago a 2-0 edge.

In the second inning, Busch and Kelly duplicated the back-to-back homers feat, both on solo shots to centerfield for a 4-0 Cubs lead. In the third inning, Crow-Armstrong — who went 4-for-4 at the plate — bashed a solo homer to right field and Busch added a two-run homer to right field, his 16th homer of the campaign for a 7-0 Cubs advantage. After trading runs with St. Louis in the fourth and fifth innings, the Cubs' sluggers struck again in the seventh when Dansby Swanson hit a two-run homer, his 15th of the season, to centerfield. Busch followed next with his 17th homer of the year and third of the game to complete the third set of back-to-back homers on the day for the Cubs. — AFP



CHICAGO: Seiya Suzuki #27 of the Chicago Cubs hits a solo home run against the St Louis Cardinals during the first inning at Wrigley Field on July 4, 2025 in Chicago, Illinois. — AFP

Germany see off Poland in Women's Euro 2025 opener

ST GALLEN: Germany made a winning start to their Women's Euro 2025 campaign with Friday's 2-0 win over Poland which moved the eight-time continental champions top of Group C. Christian Wueck's side lead Sweden, 1-0 winners in a Scandinavian derby with Denmark, on goal difference after coming through a hard-fought group opener in St Gallen thanks to goals in the second half from Jule Brand and Lea Schueller. Germany are one of three big contenders for overall victory in Switzerland alongside world champions Spain and holders England.

But the "Frauenteam" were far from their best for most of the match, with Wueck frequently bellowing at his charges to up their game. And they lost captain Giulia Gwinn to what looked like a knee injury before half-time following a nasty fall in a challenge with Ewa Pajor. "She's injured her knee and will undergo an MRI tomorrow, at which point we'll know what's happened," said Wueck. "It was a tough, hard-fought victory. Poland made it very, very difficult for us with their style of play... We're happy with the result and we know that we can do better."

Germany had won all six previous encounters



ST GALLEN: Germany's midfielder #22 Jule Brand (left) celebrates with a teammate after scoring the first goal of the match during the UEFA Women's Euro 2025 Group C football match between Germany and Poland at the Arena StGallen on July 4, 2025. — AFP

with Poland but the game was even until Brand cut inside and unleashed an unstoppable shot six minutes after half-time. And Brand was on hand in the 66th minute with a perfect cross for Bayern Munich striker Schueller, who made sure of the points with a simple header. Germany have now won six matches on the bounce, scoring 26 goals in that run, but looked some way below the standard shown by tournament favourites Spain on Thursday, with England facing France on Saturday.

Wales lost lock Ben Carter to a head injury in the first minute but tries from Ben Thomas and Tom Rogers and a penalty try sent them into half-time with a comfortable lead. Japan took control midway through the second half and a try from substitute debutant Halatoa Vailea with nine minutes to go gave them their first win over a Six Nations team since the 2019 World Cup. Sherratt said Wales would dust themselves down and be ready for next week's second Test in Kobe.

"First half, 19-7 lead, so to lose the game at the end is very disappointing," he said. "It hurts. Already, we've got to use that hurt to fuel next week because the great thing about this tour is that we get a chance next week to put it right." Japan reached the World Cup quarter-finals on home soil in 2019, beating Ireland and Scotland along the way, but they have struggled for results since Jones returned for a second spell last year. The Australian was rewarded for naming two uncapped players in his starting line-up and another six on the bench, after debutant substitutes Vailea and Ichigo Nakukusu scored second-half tries to turn the game in Japan's favor.

Carter ruled out

Fly-half Seungsin Lee said Japan's "DNA is to play high-tempo rugby". "We haven't been able to beat any of

wide to the left, then a cute chip, chase and offload from Bailyn Sullivan put scrum half Sam Nock over.

Scotland awoke and struck back 10 minutes later, Harry Paterson dotting down just before the dead ball line after chasing down a grubber kick. Sloppy play by the hosts allowed Scotland to extend their advantage, fumbling a high bomb before watching the scramble for the ball roll 50 metres into their own territory with scrum-half George Horne eventually scoring his first of the afternoon. Isaia Walker-Lea were found a response in the 32nd minute after sustained pressure on the Scotland line, which also saw Alexander Masibaka yellow carded minutes into his debut off the bench.

Wasteful Pajor

Poland acquitted themselves admirably in their European Championship debut but Barcelona's Pajor, who has scored 51 goals for club and country this season, was uncharacteristically wasteful with her finishing. Pajor walloped a great chance at Germany goalkeeper Ann-Katrin Berger just before Schueller doubled Germany's lead and did the same with a close-range header with nine minutes remaining.

Filippa Angeldahl scored Sweden's winner in the 55th minute in Geneva after exchanging passes with Kosovare Asllani and firing into the far corner. Sweden should have doubled their lead 10 minutes later when Madelen Janogy headed Hanna Lundkvist's pinpoint cross narrowly wide, while moments before Stina Blackstenius was denied by Frederikke Thøgersen's brilliant goalline clearance.

"It was an enormous sense of joy and relief. There are so many nerves when you start a tournament that it was a wonderful feeling to score that goal," Angeldahl told reporters. Peter Gerhardsson's team are now unbeaten in 13 games after a second straight win over the Danes, with Sweden running out emphatic 6-1 winners in the Nations League last month. Sweden kept a tight handle on Denmark's skipper Pernille Harder, although she did smash an effort off the crossbar with nine minutes remaining. The Bayern Munich forward was also involved when VAR decided not to award a penalty to Denmark in the opening minutes for a potential handball by Madelen Janogy, who was marking Parder. — AFP

the top 10 teams in the world for a few years now so we're happy," said Lee, who kicked a crucial penalty with the tide turning in Japan's favor. "More than anything, it gives us confidence." Wales were dealt an immediate blow when Carter went down in the first minute following a heavy head-first collision. Sherratt said the 24-year-old, who was returning to the team after missing the Six Nations through injury, would not be available for next week's game. Wales opened the scoring in the fourth minute when Thomas went over after Taulupe Faletau had punched a hole in the Japanese defense from a line-out. Japan fought their way back into the game and leveled when Takuro Matsunaga finished off a flowing move with a try in the 16th minute.

Nakakusu came off the bench and conceded a penalty try when he swatted the ball away from Josh Adams with the Wales winger in a try-scoring position. Nakakusu was also sin-binned and Wales took advantage of their temporary numerical advantage when Rogers ran in their third try. Wales looked in command at the break and captain Dewi Lake said they were "guttled" at how the second half panned out. "We take nothing away from Japan for the way they played and for coming out on top, but we had moments to win that game and probably put it to bed," said the hooker. "So it's very, very tough to take." — AFP

Despite being a man down, Scotland struck once more on the stroke of half-time, Arron Reed collecting another grubber kick to score with no defender in sight. Horne scored his second in the 53rd minute, Scotland using added space created by two Maori All Blacks being sent to the bin, stretching the field and breaking for a stunning team try. Maori All Blacks captain Kurt Eklund scored from a rolling maul with just over 20 minutes remaining to give his side hope. Gideon Wrampling rampaged over a tired, ramshackle Scottish defense with 14 minutes remaining, making it a three-point game. But Scotland held firm, pipes blaring from the banks of the ground, for a victorious start to their tour. — AFP



DUNEDIN: New Zealand's Fabian Holland (center) secures the ball during the first international rugby Test match between New Zealand and France at Forsyth Barr Stadium in Dunedin on July 5, 2025. - AFP

New Zealand struggle past under-strength France 31-27

DUNEDIN: New Zealand edged past an under-strength France 31-27 in Dunedin on Saturday to record a 500th Test win for the All Blacks in unconvincing fashion. Will Jordan scored two tries to secure a tense victory as the All Blacks held off an energetic France side fielding eight debutants to take a 1-0 lead in the three-Test series. New Zealand wing Sevu Reece lasted less than a minute as poor technique in a tackle saw him dazed and helped from the field with a head injury. It forced an immediate reshuffle, with Jordan moving from fullback to the right wing, and Damian McKenzie coming off the bench. It clearly rattled the All Blacks.

The young French side took the lead from a penalty goal in the seventh minute and extended it to 10 points soon after when No.8 Mickael Guillard crossed next to the posts. New Zealand centre Jordie Barrett thought he had scored moments earlier, after Cam Roigard split the line and fed him for an easy try, only for it to be pulled back for a knock-on in the build-up.

But the home side's response was swift. Jordan scored his first of the night on the end of a pinpoint Beauden Barrett cut-out pass. Tupou Vai'i gave New Zealand the lead for the first time moments later, crashing under the posts as the attack started to click on the back of fierce defensive work. Jordie Barrett did score a try just before half-time, diving like a slip felder to catch a Jordan pass on the right wing, before finding his feet and plopping over. But France would not lie down and hit back almost immediately from the second-half kickoff. Rieko Ioane, playing on the wing for the first time in four years, bobbled the restart, allowing France good territory and Gabin Villiere scored to cut the deficit to a single point at 21-20. Jordan scored his second of the match - his 40th Test try - to restore an eight-point advantage but again France wouldn't give in. Replacement Jacobus Van Tonder broke the All Blacks line and fell just short of the posts, allowing Cameron Woki to cross off the back. — AFP

Scotland thump Maori All Blacks

WHANGAREI: Scotland edged the Maori All Blacks 29-26 in Whangarei on Saturday, holding off a spirited fightback from the hosts to start their Pacific tour with a win. In front of a sellout crowd at Semenoff Stadium, Scotland overcame a sluggish start and a tired finish, riding the sound of bagpipes in the final stages for a tense victory. The Maori All Blacks caught Scotland off guard with a try inside 40 seconds. At the first opportunity they spread the ball

Classifieds

Clinics & Hospitals

Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khaldiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134

Nuzha	22526804
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadsiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Shaab	22518752
Qibla	22459381
Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Mirqab	22456536
Sharq	22465401
Salmiya	25746401

Hospitals

Sabah Hospital	24812000
Amiri Hospital	22450005
Maternity Hospital	24843100
Mubarak Al-Kabir	25312700
Chest Hospital	24849400
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010
Adan Hospital	23940620
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300

Change of Name

I, SHAIKH FAIJAN MOHAMMAD SALIM, holder of Indian Passport No. N5636814, do hereby change my name to Faizan Salim (as given name) Sibhai (as surname) for all purposes. I will henceforth be known in the name Sibhai Faizan Salim (new) and I also undertake to carry out this name change in all my documents.
(#7043) 4-7-2025

Automated enquiry about the Civil ID card is 1889988



GONDOMAR, Portugal: Diogo Jota's parents (left) follow the coffin of Portuguese football player Diogo Jota carried out of the church after the funeral ceremony of Liverpool's Portuguese forward Diogo Jota and his brother Andre Silva at the Mother Church of Gondomar, on the outskirts of Porto, on July 5, 2025. — AFP

Family, friends, world of football unite to bid Diogo Jota farewell

'Football truly in mourning'

GONDOMAR: Close family and friends and stars of the world of football will gather Saturday for the funeral of Liverpool and Portugal forward Diogo Jota and his brother 48 hours after the siblings' car crash. Jota, 28, and Andre Silva, 25, were killed on Thursday after their vehicle veered off a motorway in northwestern Spain and became engulfed in flames, a week after the Portugal forward had got married. The funeral, which begins at 0900 GMT, is being held in his hometown of Gondomar, near Porto. The service will be conducted by the bishop of Porto, local media report.

On Friday hundreds attended a wake for the brothers. Among those who came to offer their condolences were a childhood friend, Portuguese President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, Prime Minister Luis Montenegro, Jota's agent Jorge Mendes and Porto club president Andre Villas-Boas. "Football is truly in mourning. Dio-

go was an icon of the talent Portuguese football represents," said football federation chief Pedro Proenca. Close family and friends including the parents paid their respects at Friday's wake first, with the grandfather propped up by two others to help him enter the chapel.

'Rest in peace'

Mourners arrived carrying wreaths of flowers, some sobbing audibly, before the wake was opened to members of the public. The death of the Portugal international and his brother has triggered an outpouring of emotion in football, and beyond. Liverpool opened a book of condolences and lowered flags to half-mast, with dozens of supporters laying a sea of flowers, balloons, Jota shirts, and scarves with the message "Rest in peace Diogo Jota", outside Anfield.

At the Diogo Jota football academy, close to Gondomar SC where the ex-Porto and Atletico Madrid player took his first steps in the game, well-wishers created a memorial with flowers, scarves, candles and shirts. "Thank you, Diogo Jota," read a child's handwritten message. Pedro Neves, who was friends with Jota at school in Gondomar, said he "will remember him as someone who was very friendly, very courteous, who loved everyone, who always had a smile on his face".

"He left us too young, it's not fair. But that's how life is sometimes," Neves, 31, told AFP. Former Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp, who brought Jota to the Reds in 2020, has said he was "heartbroken" while the club spoke of an "unimaginable loss". Klopp's successor at Anfield, Arne Slot, said everyone associated with the club owed it to Jota to "stand together

and be there for one another". Jota was remembered at the Club World Cup in the United States on Friday, with a one-minute silence held at the quarter-final between Brazil's Fluminense and Saudi Arabia's Al Hilal in Orlando.

Portuguese and UK media reported Jota was driving to the northern Spanish port of Santander to take a ferry to England where Liverpool were due to start training on Friday, avoiding a flight on medical advice after a recent lung operation. Liverpool's Egyptian striker Mohamed Salah said the death of his teammate had left him "frightened" to return to the club as the Premier League champions postponed the return of some players for pre-season training. Jota had married his partner Rute Cardoso on June 22, posting a video of their wedding on Instagram just hours before the accident. They had three children. — AFP



ORLANDO: Marcos Leonardo #11 of Al Hilal scores his team's first goal past Fabio #1 of Fluminense FC during the FIFA Club World Cup 2025 quarter final match between Fluminense FC and Al Hilal at Camping World Stadium on July 04, 2025 in Orlando, Florida. — AFP

Al Hilal bow out of Club WCup

ORLANDO: Substitute Hercules struck a 70th-minute winner as Brazil's Fluminense defeated Saudi Arabia's Al Hilal 2-1 on Friday to reach the semi-finals of the Club World Cup. A fine left-foot finish from Matheus Martinelli had put the Rio club ahead in the 40th minute but Al Hilal's Brazilian forward Marcos Leonardo levelled six minutes into the second half before Hercules stole the show to the delight of the vast majority of the 43,091 crowd.

Al Hilal had pulled off the biggest upset of the tournament, beating Manchester City 4-3, to reach the last eight and Simone Inzaghi's side fought hard until the end to keep their adventure alive. They bow out of the tournament having been unbeaten through the group stage, including holding Real Madrid to a draw, and having truly made their mark on the world stage.

There was a moment's silence before the kick-off in

memory of Liverpool and Portugal forward Diogo Jota and his younger brother Andre Silva, who died in the early hours of Thursday after their car veered off a motorway in Spain and burst into flames. Al Hilal's line-up featured two of Jota's Portugal team-mates in Ruben Neves and Joao Cancelo. The first half was a tight and tactical affair with few chances until Martinelli opened the scoring when he picked the ball up from Gabriel Fuentes inside the box and span out to give himself space for a left-foot shot that rocketed past Yassine Bounou.

Al Hilal went close to a quick response when Kalidou Koulibaly's header forced Fluminense's 44-year-old goalkeeper Fabio into a fine save. The Saudi side were awarded a penalty when Samuel Xavier was ruled to have brought down Marcos Leonardo in the box but Dutch referee Danny Makkelie was eventually sent to the monitor where he overturned his own decision after seeing there had been no contact between the two players. After going in at the break trailing by a goal, Al Hilal came out strongly for the second half and drew level when Koulibaly headed a Neves corner down to Marcos Leonardo who poked home. — AFP

Chelsea edge Palmeiras, book Club WCup semis

PHILADELPHIA: A late own-goal by goalkeeper Weverton took Chelsea through to the Club World Cup semi-finals on Friday as the Premier League side edged Palmeiras of Brazil 2-1 in a last-eight tie that had been lit up by a moment of magic from young star Estevao Wilian. The teenage Brazil forward, who will join Chelsea after the tournament, was eager to impress his future employers and his brilliant 53rd-minute finish cancelled out Cole Palmer's opener in Philadelphia.

But a deflected Malo Gusto cross went in off Palmeiras' keeper Weverton in the 83rd minute to take Chelsea through to a semi-final showdown with another Brazilian side in Fluminense. "In the first half we were in control of the game and could have scored more than one goal," said Chelsea coach Enzo Maresca, dismissing suggestions his team had been fortunate.

"They started the second half better than us and the dynamic of the game changed, but then in the last 25 minutes we were in control again and I think we deserved to win without being lucky." The scoreline was a repeat of Chelsea's victory when the teams met in the final of the Club World Cup under the tournament's old guise in 2022. "Overall Chelsea was better. They have better players and a better coach," admitted Palmeiras coach Abel Ferreira. "They were lucky with the way they scored the second goal but it can happen in football and we need to accept it and move on."

Chelsea will now be fancied to go on and reach the final, with Fluminense standing in their way in the last four at the MetLife Stadium in New Jersey on Tuesday. If not everyone has yet been won over by the tournament, the intensity levels on the pitch are rising as it reaches the business end and there was a big-game atmosphere in Philadelphia. Lincoln Financial Field was almost sold out, with 65,782 fans in attendance de-



PHILADELPHIA: Chelsea's Brazilian midfielder #17 Andrey Santos and Palmeiras' Uruguayan midfielder #32 Emiliano Martinez fight for the ball during the FIFA Club World Cup 2025 quarterfinal football match between Brazil's Palmeiras and England's Chelsea on July 4, 2025. — AFP

spite much of the city having emptied out for the July 4 holiday and long weekend. This game played out to a backdrop of Independence Day fireworks lighting up the sky over the nearby Delaware River, but there were fireworks on the pitch too.

Chelsea lit the spark first, going ahead in the 16th minute thanks to a moment of class from England international Palmer. After drifting into a pocket of space just outside the Palmeiras box, Palmer controlled a Trevoh Chalobah pass on the half-turn, carried on into the area and dispatched a low shot past Weverton.

It was the ideal start for Chelsea, who lost to Flamengo when they last faced Brazilian opposition in the same stadium during the group stage. Maresca added extra Brazilian flavor to the occasion by handing a first start to young midfielder Andrey Santos. With Moises Caicedo suspended, Santos occupied the holding midfield role for Chelsea while Pedro Neto lined up on the right wing, choosing to play despite having to come to terms with the tragic death of his Portugal teammate Diogo Jota on Thursday. — AFP



Trump evokes Russia sanctions after largest assault on Ukraine

IAEA pulls inspectors from Iran as standoff drags on



COMFORT, Texas: Boerne Search and Rescue teams prepare deployment routes along the Guadalupe River on July 4, 2025 in Comfort, Texas. (Right) Laeighton Sterling (right) and Nicole Whelam observe flood waters from the banks of the Guadalupe River. — AFP photos

Texas flood toll mounts to 24

US rescuers search for 20 missing children from summer camp

KERRVILLE, US: Rescuers were desperately searching for at least 20 girls missing from a riverside summer camp, officials said Friday, after torrential rains caused a “catastrophic” flash flood that killed at least 24 people as it swept through south-central Texas. “At this point we’re at about 24 fatalities,” Kerr County Sheriff Larry Leitha told an evening press conference as rescue teams scrambled to locate stranded residents in the region northwest of San Antonio. Some of the dead were children, Texas Lieutenant Governor Dan Patrick said at a previous news conference.

The county sheriff said there were “kids that are still missing”, adding that between 23 and 25 people were unaccounted for. Lieutenant Governor Patrick previously said “about 23” girls attending a summer camp in the flooded Kerr County were missing.

They were part of a group of around 750 children at Camp Mystic, a girls summer camp along the banks of the Guadalupe River which rose 26 feet (eight meters) in 45 minutes with heavy rainfall overnight. “That does not mean they’ve been lost, they could be in a tree, they could be out of communication,” he said.

Texas Governor Greg Abbott said he was signing a “disaster declaration” to boost resources in counties in the region. “It’s terrible, the floods,” US President Donald Trump told reporters Friday night. “It’s shocking.” Asked if Texas would receive federal aid, he said: “Oh yeah, sure, we’ll take care of it. We’re working with the governor.”

A massive rescue operation was underway in the region, with around 500 personnel and 14 helicopters helping in the search for survivors. Texas military official Major General Thomas Suelzer told reporters at least 237 people had been rescued or evacuated by emergency personnel, with 167 rescues performed using helicopters. Freeman Martin, director of the state’s public safety department, told the evening conference: “We had a hard time getting in this morning with the weather the way it was.”

“As the day went on, it picked up and we were able to rescue more and recover more, that will continue tomorrow,” Martin said, calling the disaster a “mass casualty event.”

US media reported that trucks had arrived at Camp Mystic to transport stranded people. State

and local officials warned against residents traveling to the area which includes camp grounds dotted along the river, with dozens of roads “impassable.” Videos on social media showed houses and trees swept away by the flash flood caused by heavy overnight rain of up to 12 inches - one-third of Kerr County’s average annual rainfall.

Governor Abbott shared a video on X of a victim being plucked from the top of a tree by a rescuer dangling from a helicopter, as floodwaters raged below. “Air rescue missions like this are being done around the clock. We will not stop until everyone is accounted for,” he said.

The Texas National Guard sent rescue teams and the US Coast Guard joined efforts as well.

Public safety official Martin warned of “another wave” that could impact other counties in the state, adding that “this is not going to end today”. Kerr County officials have repeatedly said they were unaware of an impending flood overnight from Thursday to Friday.

“We didn’t know this flood was coming,” Kerr County judge Rob Kelly said earlier on Friday, adding that the region has “floods all the time.” “This

is the most dangerous river valley in the United States,” he added, referring to the Guadalupe River. Soila Reyna, 55, a Kerrville resident who works at a local church helping people who lost their belongings, witnessed the devastation unfold.

“It has been years since we had a flood, but nothing like this,” Reyna said. “Nothing like as catastrophic as this, where it involved children, people and just the loss of people’s houses and you know, it’s just crazy,” she added.

Forecasters issued a flood warning for Kerr County, urging those living near the river to “move to higher ground.” Flash floods, which occur when the ground is unable to absorb torrential rainfall, are not unusual. But scientists say in recent years human-driven climate change has made extreme weather events like floods, droughts and heatwaves more frequent and intense.

In mid-June, at least 10 people were killed by flash flooding in San Antonio following torrential rains. In the northeastern state of New Jersey, at least two people were killed when a tree fell on their vehicle during a “severe storm,” local police confirmed on Friday. — AFP

Seine reopens to Paris swimmers after century-long ban

PARIS: The River Seine reopened to swimmers in Paris on Saturday morning, marking the first time since 1923 that bathers could take a dip in the iconic waterway following a years-long cleanup effort. A 95-year-old Parisian was among the first to take the plunge at a newly opened swim zone in the city’s east — one of three sites in the French capital where visitors can officially hop in the Seine for the first time in more than a century. “I’m so happy! I’ve dreamed of swimming in the Seine for years,” said Ingrid, who declined to give her last name, as she stepped carefully into the warm water wearing a turquoise-blue swimsuit. Chantal Eyboullet, wearing a fluorescent pink swimming cap, shared in the excitement. “I’ve been waiting 30 years for this,” said the 61-year-old engineer from Paris after completing a lap. The seasonal opening of the Seine for swimming is seen as a key legacy of the Paris 2024 Olympics, when open-water swimmers and triathletes competed in its waters which were specially cleaned for the event. Earlier on Saturday, Paris mayor Anne Hidalgo looked on as people of

all ages arrived for the 8:00 am (0600 GMT) opening of the Bras Marie swimming zone, snapping on swim caps and goggles as they prepared to dive in and celebrate the long-awaited return of bathing in the Seine.

“It’s a childhood dream to have people swimming in the Seine,” said Hidalgo at the swim zone in the city’s historic centre near Ile Saint-Louis.

“Look at how happy everyone is,” she said with a smile. The swimming zones are equipped with changing rooms, showers, and beach-style furniture, offering space for 150 to 300 people to relax, lay out their towels, and unwind from the city’s hustle and bustle. For those still unsure about diving in, Paris officials say they have taken several measures to ensure swimmers can safely enjoy the long-anticipated reopening, including daily water pollution testing.

“The water quality is “exceptional”, said Marc Guillaume, the prefect for the Ile-de France region that includes Paris. But officials reminded swimmers of potential dangers, including strong currents, boat traffic, and an average depth of 3.5 meters (11 feet). To mitigate that risk, lifeguards will assess visitors’ swimming abilities before allowing independent access, while a decree issued in late June introduced fines for anyone swimming outside designated areas.

Weather permitting, Parisians and locals can swim under the watchful eye of lifeguards at the three bathing sites, including one a stone’s throw from the Eiffel



PARIS: A swimmer dives in the water at the Grenelle safe bathing site on the Seine river on its opening day, in front of the Eiffel Tower in Paris on July 5, 2025. — AFP

Tower until the end of August.

The opening comes after the French capital during the week endured a major heatwave that saw Paris put on the weather agency’s highest alert level during a Europe-wide heatwave. Hidalgo, who took the inaugural swim last year, said that cleaning up the Seine for the Olympics was not the final goal but part of a broader effort to adapt the city to climate change and enhance quality of life. — AFP

Nasser hospital in Gaza ‘one massive trauma ward’: WHO

GENEVA: Nasser hospital in Gaza is operating as “one massive trauma ward” due to an influx of patients wounded at non-United Nations food distribution sites run by the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation, the World Health Organization said on Friday. The US and Zionist-backed GHF began distributing food packages in Gaza at the end of May, overseeing a new model of deliveries that the United Nations says is neither impartial nor neutral. It has repeatedly denied that incidents involving people killed or wounded at its sites have occurred.

The GHF told Reuters on Friday that “the most deadly attacks on aid sites have been linked to UN convoys,” and said the UN and humanitarian groups should work “collaboratively” with the GHF to “maximize the amount of aid being securely delivered into Gaza”. The UN in Geneva was immediately available for comment. Referring to medical staff at the Nasser hospital, Rik Peepers, WHO representative in the West Bank and Gaza, told reporters in Geneva: “They’ve seen already for weeks, daily injuries ... (the) majority coming from the so-called safe non-UN food distribution sites. The hospital is now operating as one massive trauma ward.”

Zionist entity lifted an 11-week aid blockade on Gaza on May 19. The United Nations human rights office said on Friday that it had recorded at least 613 killings both at aid points run by the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation and near humanitarian convoys.

“We have recorded 613 killings, both at GHF points and near humanitarian convoys - this is a figure as of June 27. Since then ... there have been further incidents,” Ravina Shamdasani, the spokesperson for the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, told reporters in Geneva.

The OHCHR said 509 of the 613 were killed near GHF distribution points. The GHF dismissed these numbers as coming “directly from the Hamas-controlled Gaza Health Ministry” and were being used to “falsely smear” its effort. The GHF has previously said it has delivered more than 60 million meals to hungry Palestinians in five weeks “safely and without interference”, while other humanitarian groups had “nearly all of their aid looted.” — Reuters

Palestinian Bedouins forced out of rural West Bank community

JORDAN VALLEY, West Bank: Thirty Palestinian families left their home in a remote area of the Zionist-occupied West Bank on Friday, saying they were forced out after years of persistent harassment and violence by Zionist settlers. The families, members of the Bedouin Mleihat tribe from a herding community in the Jordan Valley, began dismantling homes built with iron sheets and wooden boards on Friday, overwhelmed by fears of further attacks.

“The settlers are armed and attack us, and the (Zionist entity) military protects them. We can’t do anything to stop them. We can’t take it anymore, so we decided to leave,” said Mahmoud Mleihat, a 50-year-old father of seven from the community. As the Palestinians took down their encampment, a Zionist settler armed with a rifle and several Zionist soldiers looked on. Palestinian communities in the Jordan Valley, a sparsely populated region near the Jordan River, have faced escalating harassment from settlers in recent years, including violence.

Zionist entity human rights group B’Tselem has documented repeated acts of violence by Zionist settlers against Palestinians in Mu’arrajat, near Jericho, where the Mleihat tribe lives. In 2024, settlers



Masked Zionist settlers hurl rocks at Palestinians from hilltop in the village of Sinjil, in the occupied West Bank on July 4, 2025. — AFP

armed with clubs stormed a Palestinian school, while in 2023, armed settlers blocked the path of vehicles carrying Palestinians, with some firing into the air and others hurling stones at the vehicles.

“We want to protect our children, and we’ve decided to leave,” Mahmoud said, describing it as a great injustice. He had lived in the community since he was 10, Mahmoud said.

Zionist entity’s military did not immediately respond to Reuters questions about the settler harassment faced by the Bedouin families or about the families leaving their community. Asked about settler violence in the West Bank, Zionist entity Foreign Minister Gideon Saar told reporters on

Monday that any acts of violence by civilians were unacceptable and that individuals should not take the law into their own hands. Activists say Zionist settlement expansion has accelerated in recent years, displacing Palestinians, who have remained on their land under military occupation since Zionist entity captured the West Bank in a 1967 war. B’Tselem representative Sarit Michaeli said the Mleihat tribe had faced “intense settler violence” that included, theft, vandalism, and assault. This week, she said, the settlers had established an informal outpost near the Palestinians’ home.

The military was failing to protect Palestinians from attacks by settlers, who she said acted with impunity. Aaliyah Mleihat, 28, said the Bedouin community, which had lived there for 40 years, would now be scattered across different parts of the Jordan Valley, including nearby Jericho.

“People are demolishing their own homes with their own hands, leaving this village they’ve lived in for decades, the place where their dreams were built,” she said, describing the forced displacement of 30 families as a “new Nakba”. The Nakba, meaning “catastrophe” in Arabic, refers to the mass displacement of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians from their homes during 1948 at the birth of the state of Zionist entity.

Most countries consider Zionist settlements a violation of the Geneva Conventions which ban settling civilians on occupied land; Zionist entity says the settlements are lawful and justified by historic and biblical Jewish ties to the land. — Reuters