



Soccer  
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HH the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah



Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud

## Kuwait Amir congratulates Saudi King Salman on power assumption 'versary

KUWAIT CITY, Oct 5, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a cable of congratulations on Saturday to Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud on the 10th anniversary of his assumption of power.

His Highness hailed the strong historic Kuwaiti-Saudi ties and applauded the developments and achievements of the kingdom during the rule of King Salman.

His Highness Sheikh Mishal wished King Salman a long healthy life and more development and prosperity for Saudi Arabia under the Leadership of King Salman and Crown Prince and Prime Minister Prince Mohammad bin Salman Al Saud.

Similarly, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent a cable of congratulations on Saturday to Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud on the 10th anniversary of his assumption of power.

His Highness applauded the developments and achievements of the kingdom during the rule of King Salman.

His Highness also wished King Salman a long healthy life and more development and prosperity for Saudi Arabia under the leadership of King Salman and Crown Prince and Prime Minister Prince Mohammad bin Salman Al Saud.

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## Government strips 57 of Kuwaiti citizenship

KUWAIT CITY, Oct 5: Five new decrees have been published in the official gazette Kuwait Al-Youm regarding the withdrawal of the Kuwaiti citizenship of 57 individuals, along with their names, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Three among these decrees were regarding the withdrawal of citizenship from 54 people, the majority of whom are women. This step was based on Article 13 of the Nationality Law, which states that "Kuwaiti citizenship may be withdrawn from a Kuwaiti who acquired citizenship, if the supreme interest of the state or its external security so requires."

Also, two decrees have been issued to withdraw Kuwaiti citizenship from three individuals and their dependents.

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### Opinion

Dear government, 'Social Security' needs attention

By Ahmed Al-Jarallah

Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

THE reason we keep bringing up the subject of the Public Institution for Social Security is that it serves nearly 150,000 citizens, along with an additional 88,000 heirs of retirees who receive benefits. This constitutes a sizable population.

As more retirees exit the workforce each year, it is imperative to consider ways to sustain this institution effectively to meet the needs of a growing demographic.

About 238,000 people are currently receiving pensions from the Public Institution for Social Security. Despite the state reporting an actuarial deficit exceeding KD 24 billion, the institution relies heavily on investments and earnings from its high-risk overseas ventures.

Experience has shown that these investments are often shrouded in ambiguity. You might hear about profitability one day, only to read about an anticipated deficit the next.

As a result, it is impossible to trust the released figures, as they seem influenced by the official's mood and lack sufficient transparency. They were constrained by a rigid government policy that limits accountability to the National Assembly. Meanwhile, the numerous failures reveal how inflexible financial laws have failed to prevent deficits.

However, when we examine the structure, management style, and investment portfolios of comparable institutions worldwide, we find that they have never experienced a deficit since their inception due to their careful handling of finances to support both the government and society.

Institutions like the French Retirement Authority, Germany's social security institution, and the Swedish National Retirement Fund operate under specific requirements and advanced laws that are continuously updated to avoid costly mistakes.

In contrast, the Public Institution for Social Security last year recorded negative investment returns in five funds. The losses were particularly evident in Lebanon, where its banks seized deposited funds in 2019, and the status of those funds remains unclear to this day.

This highlights the urgent need to invest the institution's funds domestically, at reasonable rates, to mitigate losses recorded in some countries while also diversifying income sources, as similar institutions do globally.

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### Kuwait marks World Teachers' Day

Acting education minister lauds teachers' dedication

KUWAIT CITY, Oct 5, (KUNA): Kuwaiti Acting Minister of Education and Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research Dr. Nader Al-Jallal said on Saturday that Kuwait proudly appreciates teacher's efforts in the educational sector.

He emphasized that the attention given to education is a reflection in the generous patronage of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, who gives all his attention and appreciation to teachers.

Al-Jallal said in a press statement issued by the Ministry of Education on World Teachers' Day, which falls on October 5th, that education is one of the most important pillars on which national renaissance depends.

He stressed that the official annual teachers celebration held by the Ministry of Education embodies His Highness's keenness to follow up on their affairs and support them in all local and international events.

On the occasion of World Teacher's Day, Kuwait and the Ministry of Education celebrate the pivotal role of teachers in the educational process.

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# Driving license validity for citizens 15 years, expats 3

Bedoun's tied to security card duration



People carry their luggage as they cross into Syria on foot, through a crater caused by Israeli airstrikes aiming to block Beirut-Damascus highway at the Masnaa crossing, in the eastern Bekaa Valley, Lebanon, Saturday, Oct. 5, 2024. (AP)

Israel expands bombardment in Lebanon, hits Palestinian camp

## Kuwait slams Israeli campaigns targeting UN chief

KUWAIT CITY, Oct 5, (Agencies): The State of Kuwait has condemned the Israeli occupation government's malicious campaigns against the United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres, highlighting his role in promoting international peace.

In a press statement, Kuwait's Ministry of Foreign Affairs denounced the Israeli occupation government's decision to declare the UN chief as a persona non-grata.

It voiced appreciation to Guterres' prominent and vital role in supporting efforts aimed at achieving international peace and security as well as commitment for the implementation of international law and the noble principles and goals of the UN Charter.

Meanwhile, Israel expanded its bombardment in Lebanon on Saturday, hitting Beirut's southern suburbs with a dozen airstrikes and striking a Palestinian refugee camp deep in northern Lebanon

for the first time.

The attack on the Beddawi camp near the northern city of Tripoli killed an official with Hamas' military wing along with his wife and two young daughters, the Palestinian militant group said in a statement. Hamas later said another member of its military wing was killed in an Israeli strike in Lebanon's eastern Bekaa Valley.

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## Power cuts across Kuwait amid transformer repairs

KUWAIT CITY, Oct 5: The Ministry of Electricity and Water has announced plans to conduct maintenance on several secondary transformer stations across the six governorates of Kuwait, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The maintenance work is scheduled to commence Saturday and will continue until October 12. During this period, power outages are expected from 4 am to 8 am daily in specific areas.

The ministry provided a detailed schedule of the areas impacted by the maintenance work, as follows:

Saturday, October 5: Power outages will affect the following areas -- Qibla Block 1, Al Adan Block 3, Taima Block 7, Khaitan Block 6, North Farwaniya Block 1, East Hawalli Block 11 and Al Siddiq Block 1  
Sunday, October 6: The following areas will experience outages -- Al-Masayel Block 1, East Taima Block 9, Taima Block 2, Khaitan Block 9, Salmiya Block 11, Salam Block 1 and Farwaniya, Fahad Al-Ahmad, Hadiya, Doha, Dhahr  
Monday, October 7: The following areas will be affected -- Al-Masayel Block 1, East Taima Block 9, Taima Block 7, Khaitan Block 4, Farwaniya Block 25.

Ad-Daiya Block 5, Salmiya Block 12, Shuhada Block 4 and Fahad Al-Ahmad, Hadiya, Doha, Dhahr  
Tuesday, October 8: Outages will affect -- Al-Masayel Block 1, East Taima Block 9, Taima Block 7,

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## Biometric protocols mandatory for everyone, ministry stresses

KUWAIT CITY, Oct 5, (Agencies): No one can bar Kuwaitis from entering Kuwait or force them to leave, and everyone, without any exception, must abide by state laws and fulfill their due duties, said the Kuwaiti Ministry of Interior (MoI) on Friday.

The ministry's statement came in response to social media claims regarding First Deputy Prime Minister, Defense Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Fahad

Yousef Al-Sabah's recent remarks in this regard.

"No one can prevent Kuwaitis from entering Kuwait, nor can anyone force them to leave their country," the ministry stressed.

It added that the interior minister's recent media statements in this regard were misinterpreted.

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## Finance minister stresses need to boost GCC economic bonds

DOHA, Oct 5, (KUNA): It is imperative to enhance the Gulf economic cooperation in the future, Kuwait's Minister of Finance, Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investment, and Acting Minister of Oil Nora Al-Fassam said.

Al-Fassam welcomed Kuwait's hosting of the next GCC financial and economic cooperation committee meeting in 2025, Kuwait's Ministry of Finance said in a statement.

Al-Fassam is leading the Kuwaiti delegation to the GCC 122nd financial and economic committee meeting kicked off earlier in Doha.

The meeting reviewed several key economic topics through which GCC member states seek economic integration, it added.

It also included the outcomes of the 83rd meeting of GCC central banks governors, and the Secretariat's memo on tasking a negotiating team with setting a mechanism

or proposals to deal with commercial deals signed by some members, it stated.

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KUNA photo  
Kuwait's Minister of Finance, Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investment and Acting Minister of Oil Nora Al-Fassam

### NewsWatch

## PACI slashes 457 more addresses

By Mohammed Ghanem  
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Oct 5: According to an announcement by the Public Authority for Civil Information (PACI) in the official gazette Kuwait Al-Youm, the residential addresses of 457 individuals have been deleted, either due to the owner's approval or because the building has been demolished.

PACI clarified that these individuals must visit its office to register their new addresses, as well as provide the necessary supporting documents within 30 days of this announcement. Failure to do so will result in a penalty as stipulated in Article 33 of Law No. 32/1982, which imposes a fine of up to KD 100, multiplied by the number of individuals involved.

KUWAIT CITY: The Ministry of Health has issued a statement clarifying that the "emergency plan" currently circulating on various social media platforms is false, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The ministry emphasized that the messages being shared, which detail supposed circulars and health procedures related to this alleged plan, are not legitimate and were not issued by any official authority within the ministry.

### Local

'Visit visas for expats open, violators face tough action'  
— See Page 2

### Business

Oil price increases amid escalating Mideast crisis  
— See Page 8

### Features

Nobel Prizes to be announced amid wars, famine  
— See Page 11

## Prayer Timings

Fajr ..... 04:24 Asr ..... 14:59  
 Sunrise .. 05:43 Maghrib .. 17:30  
 Zohr ..... 11:37 Isha ..... 18:46

# Local

**Expected weather for next 24 hrs:**  
**By Day:** Hot with light to moderate northwesterly wind to light variable wind, with speeds of 08-30 km/h.  
**By Night:** Rather hot to mild

## Weather

with light to moderate north-westerly wind to light variable wind, with speeds of 08-28 km/h.

Station	Max Exp	Min Rec
Kuwait City	35	23
Kuwait Airport	38	26

Abdaly	38	20
Bubyan	37	15
Jahra	38	25
Failaka Island	36	21
Salmiyah	35	28
Ahmadi	34	19
Jal Aliyah	37	22
Nuwaisib	37	28



KUNA photo  
 Assistant Undersecretary for Educational Facilities and Planning at the Ministry of Education, Mohammad Al-Khalidi, at the Conference of Ministers of Education of the Islamic World Countries (ICESCO) in Muscat.

## Kuwait refining education system to generate competent workforce

MUSCAT, Oct 5, (KUNA): The visiting Kuwaiti Minister of Higher Educational Dr. Nader Al-Jalal recently affirmed the Kuwaiti Government's concern for investing in human resources and reforming the educational system.

Dr. Al-Jalal, also the Minister of Scientific Research and the Acting Minister of Education, affirmed necessity of tackling the "challenges and hazards" hampering efforts for attaining development in the Muslim nations.

Dr. Al-Jalal's statement was addressed on his behalf by the assistant undersecretary for educational installations and planning at the Ministry of Education Mohammad Al-Khalidi at the two-day conference of education ministers in the Muslim World (organized by ISESCO) that kicked off on Wednesday.

The State of Kuwait is steadily seeking to form a promising generation, under command of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, within framework of the neo-Kuwait vision 2035, he said.

He alluded to the Amir's Address to the Nation, where he affirmed the leadership's concern for the human factor as the country's key capital, re-affirming that the State of Kuwait is engaged in reforming the educational system to generate a skilled and competent labor force at the national level.

Moreover, Dr. Al-Jalal, in his words read by the assistant undersecretary Al-Khalidi, also referred to His Highness the Amir recommendation that the concerned quarters remain abreast of the rapid changes and informed about the technological innovations and the artificial intelligence.

## Kuwait eyes global expertise to boost women creative capacity

KUWAIT CITY, Oct 5, (KUNA): Chairwoman of Kuwait Union for Women Association Sheikhha Fadia Saad Al-Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah stressed the importance of exchanging expertise and views on various innovative practices to support women and enhance their role to contribute effectively to community development.



Sheikha Fadia

In a press statement on Saturday, after receiving Uzbekistan Ambassador to Kuwait Ayubkhon Yunusov, Sheikhha Fadia Al-Sabah noted the significance of interna-

tional cooperation to develop women's creative capacities in various fields, learn and exchange experiences on how to increase women's participation in senior leadership positions in various sectors.

She noted the union's fruitful cooperation with relevant organizations in Uzbekistan to provide support and assistance between the two parties in protecting women's legitimate rights in accordance with the legislation in force in both countries and strengthening bilateral relations.

The well-considered steps taken by the Union towards building a balanced and cohesive society based on respect for women's rights, enhancing their role in building the country's future, and working to empower them in various fields by promoting a culture of participation and equality in rights and duties.



KUNA photo  
 Workers cleaning the East Doha beach after reporting the oil spill.

### Fire station, gas plant linked

## Lowest bidder wins KOTC tender

By Najeh Bilal

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Oct 5: The Higher Purchasing Committee for Tenders at Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) and its subsidiaries has announced the awarding of the tender of Kuwait Oil Tankers Company (KOTC) for the construction, completion and maintenance of an emergency road to link the fire station in North Kuwait affiliated with Kuwait Oil Company (KOC) and the liquefied gas filling plant in Umm Al-Aish affiliated with KOTC.

The decision, which was published in the official gazette 'Kuwait Al-Youm', stated that the tender was awarded to a company that bid KD149,500 based on the lowest price principle, and complied with the required terms and specifications of a contract for a period of 18 months, excluding the preparation and equipment period.

On the other hand, KOTC announced the extension of the closing date for the submission of bids for the tender for the rehabilitation of buried gas tanks and the development of gas networks until Oct 22, instead of Oct 1.

The Higher Purchasing Committee for Tenders at KPC and its subsidiaries also disclosed that as per the request of Kuwait Foreign Petroleum Exploration Company (KUFPEC), the tender for providing consulting services to evaluate quantitative risk models and their feasibility was awarded to a company that bid KD145,000 and complied with the terms and specifications.

The committee revealed as well the list of companies invited to participate in the limited tender for cleaning the KPC tower and the common areas in the oil sector complex building.

## Doha beach oil leak under control – EPA

KUWAIT CITY, Oct 5, (KUNA): The Environment Public Authority (EPA) affirmed on Saturday oil spills observed at Eastern Doha beach have been controlled, in collaboration with the Kuwait National Petroleum Company (KNPC).

Speaking to KUNA, Abdullah al-Zaidan, EPA deputy director general for technical affairs, said concerned bodies would continue observing maritime environment and beaches.

Upon a complaint received on Friday regarding oil pollution at the Eastern Doha beach, the site was inspected on Saturday, he said, elaborating that oil spills spread on the beach were found, and their sources were 'unknown'.

After inspecting the area, he said, the national plan was activated to face maritime oil pollution and coordinate with the dangerous factors' committee affiliated to the Ministry of Interior's directorate general of civil defense.

All bodies were informed about the plan to deal with oil leaks, he noted, elaborating that concerned bodies will clean up the beach. The KNPC is eliminating oil leaks and rehabilitating beaches within 24 hours, he said.

In addition, there was coordination with regional organizations to protect maritime environment and know the spread level of the leak, he said.

Inspecting the site will be completed to make sure of possible sources, in addition to observing and following maritime environment and beaches to make sure of their safety, he pointed out.

# 'Visit visas for expats open, violators face tough action'

New residency law soon: Interior Minister

By Munif Naif

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, Oct 5: The First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef affirmed that the new residency law is currently under review by the Legal Committee and will be approved soon.**

During his presence in Khaitan while an extensive security campaign was ongoing, the minister said, "Visit visas for expatriates are open but based on specific terms and conditions. Strict legal measures will be implemented against those who violate these conditions."

He highlighted that security campaigns are ongoing in all areas to apprehend wanted individuals, violators, and outlaws, adding, "These campaigns will continue and are aimed at reducing violations of the residency law."

The Ministry of Interior announced that it conducted an intensive security and traffic campaign in Khaitan area under the direct supervision of the First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense, and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef.

The ministry explained that the campaign involved officers from various field sectors, including the General Traffic Department, the General Department of Rescue Police, and the Public Security Sector, with support from the Special Security Forces and participation of the Women's Police.

The campaign resulted in the issuance of 2,831 traffic citations, and the arrest of 34 individuals who were either reported as absconding or had outstanding arrest warrants, and 17 violators of residency and labor laws. Also, 22 wanted vehicles were seized, three vehicles were impounded, two cases of narcotic possession were found, and four individuals were referred to the traffic police.

The ministry affirmed the importance of following the example set by the country's political leadership in completing the biometric procedures, as these government measures apply to everyone without exception.

It called on everyone who has not yet completed the biometric procedures to do so as soon as possible, warning that all banking and govern-

ment transactions will be suspended until compliance is achieved, and necessary actions will be taken accordingly.

The Ministry of Interior conducted an intensive security and traffic campaign in Farwaniya under the direct supervision of the First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense, and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yusef Saud Al-Sabah and with the participation of the Traffic, Rescue, Public Security, Special Forces, and Women's Police sectors.

The campaign resulted in the issuance of 2,833 traffic citations, and arrest of nine individuals without any identification document, 23 violators of the residency and labor laws, 16 individuals who were reported as absconding, and three individuals in drug-related cases. The officers referred three wanted individuals to the Criminal Enforcement Department and three to the General Traffic Department.

Also, 11 wanted vehicles were seized, and six vehicles and three motorcycles were confiscated.

The ministry affirmed that these campaigns are part of ongoing efforts to enhance security and order throughout the country. It also affirmed the continuation of the plan to arrest violators and wanted individuals and ensure public safety.



Participants at the forum.

KUNA photos

### Kuwaiti women's achievements highlighted

## Forum marks 24th 'versary of UN resolution '1325'

KUWAIT CITY, Oct 5, (KUNA): The National Committee to Implement UNSC Resolution No. 1325, titled "Women, Peace and Security", chaired by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, organized recently a forum on the 24th anniversary of the resolution.

The forum was held in cooperation with the Office of the United Nations (UN) Coordinator, and the Delegation of the European Union (EU), with the participation of the Ministries of Interior, Defense, Justice, Media, and Public Prosecution.

The forum, held in the UN House, aimed at highlighting the achievements of Kuwaiti women in various fields, and the sectors that have witnessed development through women's efforts. Assistant Foreign Minister for Human Rights Affairs Ambassador Jawaher Ibrahim Al-Duaij Al-Sabah said in her speech that Kuwait has achieved great progress in promoting the women, peace and security agenda, as established in December 2023.

This is clear evidence of our continued commitment to the relentless pursuit of systematic and sustainable integration of women in all efforts related to peace and security, she affirmed.

Kuwait cooperates with prestigious regional and international organizations, such as ESCWA, UN Women, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to raise awareness and implement critical training programs on women's rights, she stated.

"We believe that teamwork and shared commitment are essential to achieving a future in which women are strong agents of peace and security," said the Assistant Minister.

She praised the pivotal role of His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah in strengthening the strategic partnership with NATO, and raising it further.

### Accomplishments

Regarding Kuwaiti women accomplishments, women's participation in the police forces has gone up to 900 women, as well as 19 new women recruits in the National Guard, which is a historical milestone in Kuwait and the region.

Women participation in the justice field has grown, with the employment of 19 women judges, in addition to four directors of public prosecution offices, enhancing progress in these fields. Kuwaiti women contribution has expanded to include the diplomatic field, as women constitute 22 percent of the diplomatic corps and work in international capitals, and organizations.

Sheikha Jawaher Al-Sabah said that we have made great progress, but much work is still needed, as women are the most affected by conflict, facing the highest rates of displacement, injury, and loss.

She urged the international community to continue efforts to renew commitments, meet challenges ahead, promote gender equality and peace, and ensure women's voices are heard and valued in all aspects of decision making, and the impact conflict has on women.

On her part, UN Secretary-General Representative to Kuwait Ghada Al-Tahir praised in a speech Kuwait's role and commitment to the agenda.

She stressed that Kuwait's ranking in the Women, Peace and Security Georgetown Institute Index rose from 123rd to 61st globally, from 2021-2022 to 2023-2024.

She added that Kuwait has advanced ten points in the global gender gap, as Kuwait ranks third at the Arab level in the Women, Peace and Security field.

Kuwait has a leading role in the Arab region, the Gulf countries, and at the global level, referring to the speech of the Representative of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.

In His Highness's speech he encouraged countries to recommit to promoting international peace and security during a speech at the Future Summit in New York.

EU Ambassador to Kuwait Anne Koistinen said in a similar speech, that the Union places the agenda at the heart of its priorities for the Foreign and Security policies, stressing that the agenda is an essential tool to ensure respect and security for women.



Sheikha Al-Sabah



Anne Koistinen



Ghada Al-Tahir

## Continued instability leaves SMEs Fund's operations in total disarray

KUWAIT CITY, Oct 5: Khalifa Al-Ajeel, the Minister of Commerce and Industry, has issued a decision to terminate the assignment of the Director-General of the National Fund for Small and Medium Enterprises Development, along with five deputies, reports Al-Jarida daily.

In the interim, Hiba Al-Rifai has been appointed to serve as the Acting Director General, while continuing her duties as Director of the Financial Department.

Since its establishment in 2013, the National Fund has experienced a lack of stability in leadership, with multiple directors assuming the position over short periods, none exceeding five years.

This frequent turnover has led to inconsistent policies, administrative confusion, and a lack of long-term planning, which has disrupted the fund's operations and exposed it to risks of irregularity.

Since the Fund's establishment in 2013, the position of Director General has lacked

stability, with multiple individuals rotating through the role, each bringing different policies and methodologies.

The inability to retain leadership for more than five years points to a broader issue within the Fund's organizational structure. This turnover has led to inconsistent decision-making and operational disruptions, hindering the long-term continuity necessary for the Fund's success.

The decision highlights the ongoing challenges in ensuring stable governance at the Fund, which is vital for supporting Kuwait's small and medium-sized enterprises.

Stability in leadership is crucial for building trust, executing a coherent strategy, and ensuring sustainable support for SMEs.

This move will likely be seen as part of broader efforts by Al-Ajeel to address structural weaknesses and enhance the functioning of key economic institutions in Kuwait. However, long-term stability remains a critical issue that will need further attention.

## Two Kuwaitis among Gulf artists honored at Doha cultural event

DOHA, Oct 5, (KUNA): GCC Ministers of Culture honored several Gulf artists and cultural figures including two Kuwaitis, Nabil Shuaib and Thuraya Al-Baqsmi.

The recognition took place on the sidelines of the 28th meeting of the GCC Ministers of Culture, attended by Kuwait's Minister of Information and Culture and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi.

During the honoring ceremony, Khaled Al-Sunaidi, the Assistant Secretary-General for Economic and Development Affairs at the GCC, stated that Doha has always been a hub of creativity and a beacon of culture. Omani writer Yahya Al-Mondhari, speak-

ing on behalf of the honorees, said that the honoring is an appreciation of their contribution of these prominent cultural figures and it would motivate them to give even more.

Al-Mondhari commended Qatar for its successful organization of this cultural event and acknowledged the efforts of the GCC General Secretariat in supporting culture and art in the member states.

The honorees included Ali Al-Fayadh and Mohammad Al-Marzouqi from Qatar, Sheikhha Al-Nakhi and Marai Al-Halyan from the UAE, Dalal Al-Shrouqi and Abdullah Al-Khan from Bahrain, Nabila Al-Bassam and Marzouq bin Snaitan from Saudi Arabia, and Yahya bin Al-Mondhari from Oman.



## 'Is political influence sole cause of the student union's decline?'

"THE recent suspension of the Student Union at Kuwait University has sparked a heated debate among students and commentators, with many using this incident to criticize the Muslim Brotherhood," columnist **Yaqoub Abdulaziz Al-Sanea** wrote for **Al-Qabas** daily.

"If I were a student at Kuwait University, I would oppose the suspension decision, regardless of my affiliation with any political list, because the freedom and independence of the student movement have always been central to the conflict with the university administration.



Al-Sanea

"The elections at Kuwait University are split into two main categories: scientific societies and electoral associations, both of which operate under the administration's strict regulations. The university has mechanisms in place to prevent manipulation of budgets and has taken measures to halt any expressions of racism, sectarianism, or tribalism among students. The administration has actively monitored student behavior, with any unusual actions potentially leading to investigations or even expulsion from college.

"While I do not excuse any potential financial misconduct or deviations from the union's constitution, the broader question remains: can we truly attribute the suspension of the union's activities and the decline of critical thinking among students solely to the control exerted by the 'coalition' or the 'Muslim Brotherhood' over the union's leadership for 45 years?"

"To understand the current climate, we must look at the historical context of student politics at Kuwait University. Following the invasion of Kuwait and before my enrollment in 1995, the prevailing sentiment among students was distinctly anti-Brotherhood.

"The Democratic Center was once a formidable force, particularly in the elections for scientific societies and associations. What has led to the decline of the national student movement's influence over time?"

"One factor may be the coalition's decision to unite with elements from the Islamic Union, which led to a merger that bolstered their numbers. However, this cooperation was met with challenges, as leadership within the Democratic Center became contentious, with some members aligned with the Democratic Forum. This division and internal strife weakened the Democratic Center and, consequently, the broader national movement.

"The collapse of the Democratic Center can be attributed to several factors, including a failure to adapt to the changing political landscape and a loss of key figures. The late MP Dr. Sami Al-Munais was a symbol of national work whose passing signaled a significant shift in the dynamics of student politics.

"The 2004 collaboration between the National Gathering and the Minbar Group was meant to invigorate the movement, but ultimately, it led to fragmentation and disillusionment among the youth, especially in light of mass resignations and political disagreements.

"The establishment of the coalition in the 1970s was a direct response to the dominance of the Democratic Center. Following the dissolution of the National Assembly and the suspension of the constitution in 1976, the Muslim Brotherhood capitalized on the resulting political vacuum. The fall of the

union and the halt of its activities did not benefit the national movement; rather, it highlighted a misunderstanding of the long-term student movement dynamics.

"It is essential to recognize that all political movements, regardless of their affiliations, have historically contributed to union work and the student body. The Muslim Brotherhood has faced skepticism and demonization both locally and internationally since its founding in 1928. Despite political turmoil and organizational challenges, its ideology and institutional framework, including the Coalition List, have endured.

"The history of the student movement at the Kuwait University is rich with archives and narratives. However, when examining the decline of the national idea and the shifting political allegiances, it becomes evident that mere nostalgia for past symbols and heroes will not suffice. To genuinely assess the current political landscape, we must first clarify the identities and influences of the national forces present today.

"In light of the recent developments, it is crucial for students to critically engage with these issues rather than allowing political narratives to overshadow the core values of independence and freedom within the student movement. Thank you for your attention to this important matter."

### Also:

"We hope we are mistaken in our assessment and that Iran or others can truly liberate Palestine, returning it to its people free from foreign interference," columnist **Fahd Al-Bassam** wrote for **Al-Jarida** daily.

"However, our skepticism of Iran's intentions doesn't imply support for Israel or acceptance of its actions. Rather, it reflects our belief that the conflict between Iran and Israel is one of regional domination, not liberation.

"This perspective stems from our unwillingness to blindly follow those who profit from the cause after learning harsh lessons from past failures.

"We have seen, especially in recent days that Iran's rhetoric often overshadows real action in response to Israel's aggression. Despite grand promises of resistance, Iran's actions seem aimed at securing negotiations with the US and advancing its nuclear agenda, while slogans of liberation dissipate.

"We oppose Zionists because of their crimes against humanity, not because of their identity or religion. Many Jews around the world are unaffiliated with the criminal Israeli regime; some even stand with Palestinians and oppose the existence of Israel.

"Yet, the conduct of some Arab and Muslim leaders toward their own people in recent decades has diminished the perceived criminality of Zionists in the media and public discourse. Arab Zionists are those who serve the Jewish Zionists by using the same methods of oppression against their own brothers, cloaking it in political and ideological justifications to make it palatable.

"Anyone who condones atrocities like barrel bombings in Idlib or downplays bombings and hijackings in Kuwait should reassess their stance before accusing others of Zionism for merely holding a different opinion -- an opinion that is unlikely to change the reality of the Palestinian issue.

"Hostility toward Israel does not absolve one of other sins. True principles do not allow for twisting facts to fit personal biases. A crime remains a crime, regardless of the perpetrator's background, whether they claim noble lineage or not."

— Compiled by PFX Fernandes



Major General Pilot Sabah Jaber Al-Ahmad during his visit to the DGCA.

Al-Rai photo

## Aviation readiness vital for future growth: Deputy Army Chief

Major General Pilot Sabah Jaber Al-Ahmad, Deputy Chief of Staff of the Kuwaiti Army and Acting Commander of the Air Force, emphasized the critical need for continued coordination among all relevant parties to achieve the highest levels of readiness in aviation, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

His statement came following a visit to the Directorate-General of Civil Aviation, where he was received by the Director-General, Sheikh Eng. Hamoud Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

The visit marked an important step in the

ongoing collaboration between the Ministry of Defense and various government ministries, institutions, and bodies. Major-General Al-Sabah praised the significant efforts made by the DGCA to enhance Kuwait's aviation sector. He underscored that close cooperation between military and civilian authorities is essential for ensuring sustainable progress in this vital industry.

During the visit, a meeting was between both sides focused on upgrading technological systems that support air operations and

ensure passenger safety and security.

In addition, the Chief of Staff announced the successful conclusion of the field leadership course, organized by the DGCA in partnership with Abdullah Al-Mubarak Air Base, representing the Air Force.

The course was designed to exchange experiences and develop the skills and competencies of Air Force personnel as part of the broader cooperation framework between the Kuwaiti Army and other state ministries and institutions.

# Kuwait temporarily suspends health insurance for retirees

Court rules revocation of property gift to children invalid

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

**KUWAIT CITY, Oct 5: The Commercial Court ruled that a citizen's revocation of the gift he gave to his children -- a property he owns -- is invalid and ordered the director of the Real Estate Registration Department to issue a new property document to prove the percentage of the gifted property.**

According to the case files, the lawsuit was filed by a citizen through his lawyer, Attorney Ali Al-Ali, stating that pursuant to a notarized contract, his client's father gave the latter and the rest of his siblings 50 percent of the property that the father owns -- 10 percent for each of them.

The recipients accepted the part of the property from the donor in its condition at that time and took possession of it equally among them.

Pursuant to the document, his client purchased his sisters' share of the gifted property, so the father now owns 50 percent of the property, his client owns 40 percent of the same property, and a brother owns 10 percent with the right to reside for each of the sisters. As per the notarized contract, each of the sisters waived the right to reside and the condition of non-disposal.

He continued that since his client developed the house and obtained the title deed for it, he found out that his father revoked the gift, and this was confirmed to him in a letter from the assistant undersecretary for Real Estate Registration Affairs, which prompted him to file his lawsuit with the aforementioned requests.

Al-Ali demanded before the court the invalidation of the third defendant's revocation of the gift subject to the notarized contract, with all the consequences that would result from

that, most notably obligating the first and second defendants, in their capacity, to issue a new document.

□ □ □

**Life insurance law:** The official gazette, "Kuwait Al-Youm," published Decree-Law No. 105/2024 on temporarily suspending Health Insurance for Retirees Law No. 114/2014 for a period of one year, starting from the date of the implementation of this Decree-Law, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The explanatory note to the decree stated that since the State of Kuwait has been keen on providing healthcare to citizens, especially retirees, without financial compensation due to the State's belief in the necessity of providing healthcare to this segment as they are most in need of health insurance. Law No. 114/2014 was issued with the aim of providing healthcare to retirees and expanding the base of private sector participation in providing health services to retired citizens.

It was also decided for the same considerations to add other seg-

ments to insurance coverage, which necessitated a legislative amendment to Law No. 114/2014, pursuant to Law No. 71/2023.

It added that the practical application of Law No. 114/2014 showed during its implementation the small number of competing insurance companies qualified to provide health insurance services.

This yielded negative results like the failure to provide the necessary health services to those covered by the law and controlling the health insurance market by providing a service that is not commensurate to the amount paid through the public treasury.

In light of the above, Law No. 114/2014, as amended by Law No. 71/2023, must be suspended until other options or alternatives are researched and studied in order to provide the best healthcare to those entitled to it in a way that achieves balance between the amount paid through the public treasury on one hand, and the interest of the State and that of the target groups of the health insurance system on the other hand.

## 'Royal' arrested on money laundering charges

**KUWAIT CITY, Oct 5:** The Ministry of Interior has announced the arrest of a member of the ruling family who had been evading a prison sentence related to serious charges of money laundering and usury, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The arrest was successfully executed by relevant security services following an extensive search and investigation operations, which involved tracking the suspect's movements.

Authorities were able to determine the suspect's location

before apprehending him. He has since been referred to the appropriate authorities for further legal action.

The ministry emphasized that this operation underscores its commitment to upholding the rule of law, ensuring that it is ap-

plied uniformly to all individuals, including members of the ruling family.

This initiative aims to promote justice and equality in the application of the law without exceptions, reinforcing the principle that no one is above the law in Kuwait.

## 110 inmates 'enrolled' in correctional institutions

By **Abdulrahman Al-Shammari**

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, Oct 5:** Acting Assistant Undersecretary for Educational Development and Activities at the Ministry of Education Maryam Al-Enezi revealed that 110 inmates have enrolled in classes in correctional institutions, including 70 male inmates who started their studies last year in various educational stages and 40 female inmates who are in their first year of education.

In a statement to the newspaper, Al-Enezi confirmed that the Farwaniya Educational District assigned teachers from the Adult Education Department for these inmates. She said these inmates will receive academic certificates accredited by the ministry, without discrimination or indication that they are students in correctional institutions in order to guarantee their educational rights and achieve equality.

She also affirmed the ministry's commitment to provide an appropriate educational environment for students in correctional institutions in order to develop their academic and cognitive skills to help them reintegrate into society upon completion of their prison term.

She added education is an acquired right for inmates who wish to continue their studies, regardless of the judicial rulings issued against them. She emphasized the importance of continuing educational support as a means of reforming them.

She disclosed that the semester and end-of-year exams are organized in coordination with the Directorate General of Correctional Institutions through special committees in charge of supervising the exams, as well as the provision of study materials and tools.

She pointed out that education plays a vital role in reforming inmates and preparing them for a new life after their release, indicating that providing equal educational opportunities contributes to rebuilding their lives and directing them towards a better future that enables them to participate effectively in society.



Municipality photo

A file photo of the encroachments removal in desert areas.

## KM to remove encroachments in desert areas

Kuwait Municipality is set to launch a campaign on Monday to remove encroachments on State properties in the southern part of the country, reports Al-Anba daily.

In a statement on its official social media accounts, the Municipality announced that this field campaign will focus on removing violations in desert

areas. The Municipality stressed the need for violators to be proactive in removing encroachments in order to avoid penalties.

It is also important to note that the campaign will not target camel and livestock herders who are authorized by the relevant authorities.

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### Crown Prince, PM extend greetings

## Kuwait's HH Amir congratulates King of Lesotho on National Day

KUWAIT CITY, Oct 5, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a cable on Friday to King Letsie III of Lesotho, extending congratulations on the occasion of his country's National Day. His Highness expressed his heartfelt wishes for the King's continued well-being and for further progress and prosperity for the people of Lesotho.

Similarly, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent a cable, conveying his congratulations to King Letsie III and wishing him lasting health and happiness.

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah also sent a congratulatory cable to the King, sharing his best wishes on Lesotho's National Day.

# Ahmadi Council OKs Mangaf land expansion, Mahboula fuel station

5 items approved, key proposals referred to exec body

By Inaas Awadh  
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff  
KUWAIT CITY, Oct 5: In a meeting chaired by Nas-

sar Al-Azmi, the Ahmadi Governorate Committee of the Municipal Council approved five out of seven agenda items.

Key decisions included the approval of a request to add a section of land adjacent to Plot No. 13 in Mangaf, as well as the allocation of a site for fuel station No. 49 in Mahboula at Plot No 3, requested by Kuwait National Petroleum Company.

The committee also approved a request from the Public Authority for Roads and Land Transport to allocate basins, water channels, and drainage connections to manage rainwater in the Maqwa area, which will serve both Ahmadi and Mangaf.

Additionally, the committee endorsed two requests from the Ministry of Social Affairs: one to amend a previous Municipal Council decision regarding a miniature central market in Hadiya, and another to develop a walkway, playgrounds, children's play areas, lighting, landscaping, and an irrigation network in Fahaeel.

The committee referred to the executive body a letter from the Integrated Petroleum Company concerning the allocation of an air defense



Al-Seyassah photo  
Photo during the Ahmadi Governorate Committee of the Municipal Council meeting chaired by Nassar Al-Azmi, seated right.

site for the Al-Zour refinery, requesting a detailed report.

The proposal to establish a joint market for fodder, livestock sales, and a slaughterhouse in Sabah Al-Ahmad residential city was also sent back to the executive body for an updated response and consultation with the Public Authority for Food and Nutrition.

In a related meeting, the Municipal Council's Reform and Development Committee, headed by Abdul Latif Al-Da'i, referred Dr. Hassan Kamal's proposal to beautify and maintain public beaches to the executive body for further review.

The committee maintained on its

agenda a proposal regarding the allocation of truck gathering sites in the country, pending additional input from the executive body regarding parking heavy vehicles in residential areas.

Two questions posed by council member Sherifa Al-Shalfan regarding road and bridge design guidelines, and the role of the executive body in traffic planning, were also kept on the agenda for further discussion and visual presentations.

Additionally, the committee recommended conducting a comprehensive traffic study to address issues raised in response to Dr. Hassan Kamal's question about the entrances and exits in the Sabah Al-Salem area.



Participants at the meeting pose for a photo.

Al-Seyassah photo

### Governor Al-Habashi calls for greater engagement

## Jahra gears up for cultural season

KUWAIT CITY, Oct 5: During a preparatory meeting for the Jahra Cultural Season, Governor Hamad Al-Habashi highlighted the significance of engaging in cultural events and activities, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The meeting brought together various stakeholders involved in the upcoming season, which is set to kick off early next month and run until December 21 at the Red Palace.

Governor Al-Habashi underscored the essential role that cultural participation plays in fostering community engagement and enriching the local cultural landscape.

He expressed his hopes that the diverse activities

planned for the season would attract a wide audience and encourage greater involvement from residents.

The meeting saw the participation of notable figures, including Dr. Laila Al-Hais, head of the volunteer team dedicated to establishing healthy cities in Jahra Governorate; Dr. Wajdan Al-Aqab, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Kuwait Environment Protection Society; Abeer Al-Jafra, the official representative of the Red Palace at the National Council for Culture, Arts, and Letters; and representatives from the Kuwait Teachers Society (Jahra Branch) and the Saad Al-Abdullah and Al-Naeem Cooperative Societies.

## CSC nominates candidates for 5 MoH jobs

KUWAIT CITY, Oct 5: The Civil Service Commission (CSC) has notified the Ministry of Health about a number of candidates registered in the central employment system who hold a high school diploma or lower and are available to fill five positions in the ministry, reports Al-Anba daily.

CSC's letter specified that the positions include Laboratory Records Clerk, Housing Supervisor, Recovery Counselor, Ward Manager, and one additional position that the ministry intends to create based on these qualifications.

CSC has requested the Ministry of Health to provide details on its needs

for these positions and the required number during the current fiscal year. This information will enable CSC to announce the positions and communicate with interested candidates, who will need to visit CSC to sign a declaration and pledge to fill the positions for a period of five years.



# October

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Al-Seyassah photo  
Photo during the meeting by Public Authority for Roads and Transportation with the Saudi delegation.

### New road closures for upgrades

## PART, Saudi authorities explore joint ventures for transport and roadwork

By Mohammad Ghanem

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Oct 5: Director of the Public Authority for Roads and Transportation (PART) Eng. Khaled Dhawi Al-Asimi welcomed the Saudi delegation currently visiting the country.

The delegation consists of representatives from the Export Development Authority, Public Authority for Transport and Public Authority for Contractors in the Kingdom. It is headed by Deputy CEO for Services Exports at the Saudi Export Development Authority Saud Al-Qablan.

They discussed ways to strengthen relations and cooperation between the authority and the Saudi side to open the way for various companies to participate in the projects that the authority intends to implement in the coming period.

Al-Asimi confirmed that the Saudi market has pioneering experience in road and land transport projects that extends for decades, stressing that PART is committed to overcome obstacles and open the door for

all companies to enhance competition and to provide the best services.

On the other hand, PART announced the complete closure of Jamal Abdel Nasser Road tunnel, going towards Jahra, for 48 hours to implement the final layer of asphalt works — starting at dawn on Friday until dawn on Sunday. This is in cooperation with the General Traffic Department at the Interior Ministry.

The authority also announced the alternative route throughout the specified period — the service road parallel to the tunnel going towards Jahra and leading to the Second Ring Road roundabout, intersecting with Jamal Abdel Nasser Street and to the main bridge of Jamal Abdel Nasser Street.

Moreover, it announced the opening of the intersection of the Second Ring Road with Cairo Street as a traffic diversion in three directions according to the attached plan in order to complete the remaining stages of work, starting at dawn on Friday, in cooperation with the General Traffic Department.

## Envoy lauds tourism ties with Kuwait

KUWAIT CITY, Oct 5: The Ambassador of Turkey to Kuwait Tuba Nur Sonmez says, "Our relations with Kuwait are founded on mutual respect, friendship, and shared values. We are pleased to see our strong bilateral ties evolving in all sectors, including tourism," reports Al-Jarida daily.

This was stated by Ambassador Sonmez during a promotional event organized by the Turkish Tourism Agency (TGA) in Kuwait for enhancing cooperation with travel agencies and showcasing Turkey's tourism potential.

The ambassador said, "Last May, His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad visited Turkey. It was his first trip outside the Arab world. Many agreements were signed during that visit, and two more are currently being prepared. We are pleased to see that our bilateral relations, which we describe

as excellent, are developing in nearly all areas, including tourism.

"I frequently encounter Kuwaitis who travel to Turkey almost every year. Some of them even own homes there. Turkey has increasingly become a sought-after tourist destination, as it has been witnessing remarkable growth in the tourism and hospitality sectors over the past few decades. This growth reflects not only our country's natural and cultural wealth but also the strategic initiatives undertaken by our government."

As Ambassador Sonmez concluded, "Tourism between Turkey and Kuwait transcends mere business; it serves as a vital link between our two brotherly countries. Turkey has been one of the main destinations preferred by Kuwaitis every year. In 2023, around 400,000 Kuwaiti tourists visited Turkey, and we are fully prepared to cooperate to increase this number even further."



Sonmez



## INTERNATIONAL



Democratic presidential nominee US Vice President Kamala Harris, (right), and former Congresswoman Liz Cheney, R-Wyo, greet attendees during a campaign event at Ripon College in Ripon, Wis on Oct 3. (AP)

## Trump rallies in Michigan

## Cheney joins Harris in Wisconsin rally

RIPON, Wis., Oct 5, (AP): US Vice President Kamala Harris rallied with Republican Liz Cheney in the birthplace of the modern Republican Party on Thursday as the pair delivered a double-barreled denunciation of GOP nominee Donald Trump as a dire threat to democracy.

With some people hoisting signs "Country over Party," Harris told the crowd that "people of every party must stand together" to reject Trump, citing his refusal to accept the results of the 2020 election and his failure to quell the insurrection of Jan. 6, 2021.

It was an improbable moment - a Democratic nominee giving a nod to a rival party member and to the origins of the opposing party in the closing weeks of a presidential campaign - and it demonstrated how much Harris is attempting to win over moderate and crossover Republican voters.

Harris said of Trump, "He refused to accept the will of the people and to accept the results of an election that was free and fair."

"The president of the United States

must not look at our country through the narrow lens of ideology or party partisanship or self-interest," she added. "Our nation is not some spoil to be won. The United States of America is the greatest idea humanity ever devised."

Cheney is one of Trump's most ardent antagonists. She is the daughter of former Republican Vice President Dick Cheney and was the top GOP lawmaker on the House committee that investigated the Jan. 6, 2021, insurrection, earning Trump's disdain and effectively exiling herself from her own party.

"Violence does not and must never determine who rules us. Voters do," Cheney told the crowd as she recounted Trump refusing to act as he watched the violent attack on television. Someone in the crowd yelled "coward!" Others booed.

Adding to the surreal nature of the event, the crowd cheered references to Dick Cheney and to another Republican former vice president: Mike Pence, who refused to bow to pressure from Trump and attempt to stop the certification in

Congress of Biden's 2020 victory.

"He praised the rioters. He did not condemn them. That's who Donald Trump is," Liz Cheney said, while urging the crowd to "meet this moment. I ask you to stand in truth. To reject the depraved cruelty of Donald Trump."

In an interview Thursday night with Fox News Channel, Trump said of Harris and Cheney: "I think they hurt each other. I think they're so bad, both of them."

Cheney lost her Wyoming seat to a Trump-endorsed candidate two years ago and endorsed Harris, the Democratic nominee, last month. The two women appeared together in Ripon, home to a white schoolhouse where a series of meetings held in 1854 to oppose slavery's expansion led to the start of the Republican Party.

"I know that she loves our country, and I know she will be a president for all Americans," Cheney said of Harris. Noting that she herself remains conservative, Cheney said she was "honored to join her in this urgent cause."

'I'm confident it will be free and fair'

## Biden talks election, economy and Middle East in surprise news briefing

WASHINGTON, Oct 5, (AP): After 1,080 days as president, Joe Biden on Friday decided to pop in and take questions in the White House briefing room for the first time, striding in with a grin after a strong monthly jobs report and the temporary settlement of a strike by ports workers.

The president has been less available than his recent predecessors to questions from White House press corps, making his surprise appearance welcome to the gathered reporters who waited as his press secretary's daily briefing was moved up 15 minutes, then delayed for nearly one hour.

The president stepped through the press room's blue door in a dark gray suit and red tie and proceeded to make news in response to questions about comments on the 2024 presidential election, the latest jobs numbers and the escalating conflict in the Middle East.

The 81-year-old stepped aside from the Democratic nomination this summer, backing Vice President Kamala Harris instead. He acknowledged doubts about whether the November election would be peaceful, given comments by former president Donald Trump that the results could be rigged. "I'm confident it will be free and

fair. I don't know whether it will be peaceful," Biden said. "The things that Trump has said, and the things that he said last time when he didn't like the outcome of the election, were very dangerous."

Biden has tried to rebut a political movement that has at times openly trafficked in conspiracy theories, with the latest revolving around the government reporting Friday that employers added 254,000 jobs last month and the unemployment rate ticked down to 4.1%.

"Another fake jobs report out from Biden-Harris government today," Sen Marco Rubio, R-Fla., posted on social media. "But all the fake numbers in the world aren't going to fool people dealing with the Biden-Harris economic disaster every day."

The jobs reports are legitimate and have capped a solid run for the US economy. Growth has stayed solid even as the inflation rate has dropped from a four-decade high in 2022 to an annual rate of 2.5%.

Consumer confidence has been weak relative to overall economic growth, a sign that many people still don't feel the strength seen in the latest jobs and inflation numbers. But Biden stressed that he was operating on valid data

despite unfounded claims of falsification by supporters of Trump's Make America Great Again movement.

"If you notice, anything the MAGA Republicans don't like they call 'fake,'" Biden said. "The job numbers are what the job numbers are. They're real. They're sincere."

The president also highlighted the deal reached Thursday to suspend a strike by 45,000 dockworkers on East and Gulf coast ports until Jan 15, creating time to try to hash out a new contract.

Still, challenges remain for Biden as his final months as president involve the risk of a wider war in the Middle East.

Since Hamas attacked Israel nearly a year ago, Israel has retaliated by bombarding the Gaza region in ways that have raised human rights concerns, as well as killing Hezbollah leaders and launching airstrikes in Lebanon. On Tuesday, Iran fired at least 180 missiles into Israel and there are concerns about additional retaliation that could cause the conflict to deepen.

When asked, Biden clarified his comments from a day earlier about Israel possibly striking Iranian oil facilities, which caused the price of the commodity to jump on the prospect of supplies being squeezed.



US President Joe Biden speaks at the top of the daily briefing at the White House in Washington on Oct 4. (AP)



Ukrainian servicemen examine fragments of a Russian military plane that was shot down on the outskirts of Kostyantynivka, a near-front line city in the Donetsk region, Ukraine on Oct 5. (AP)

## Moscow claims gains in east

## Ukraine downs Russian fighter plane

KYIV, Ukraine, Oct 5, (AP): Ukrainian forces said they shot down a Russian fighter plane on Saturday while Russia claimed it made gains in Ukraine's east.

The Russian bomber was shot down near the city of Kostyantynivka in the Donetsk province, head of the Kostyantynivka Military Administration Serhiy Horbunov was quoted as saying by Ukraine's public broadcaster, Suspilne. Photos showed charred remains of an aircraft after it landed on a house that caught fire.

Also in the partially occupied Donetsk province, Russia's Defense Ministry claimed Saturday that it had taken control of the village of Zhelanne Druhe.

If confirmed, the capture would come three days after Ukrainian forces said they were withdrawing from the front-line town of Vuhledar, some 33 kilometers (21 miles) from Zhelanne Druhe, following a hard-fought two-year defense. Although unlikely to change the

course of the war, the loss of Vuhledar is indicative of Kyiv's worsening position, in part the result of Washington's refusal to grant Ukraine permission to strike targets deep inside Russian territory and preventing Kyiv from degrading Moscow's capabilities.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Saturday that he will present his "victory plan" at the Oct. 12 meeting of the Ramstein group of nations that supplies arms to Ukraine. "We will present the victory plan - clear, concrete steps towards a just end to the war. The determination of our partners and the strengthening of Ukraine are what can stop Russian aggression," he wrote on X, adding that the 25th Ramstein meeting would be the first to take place at the leaders' level.

Zelenskyy presented his plan to US President Joe Biden in Washington last week. Its contents have not been made public but it is known that the plan includes Ukraine's membership of

NATO and the provision of long-range missiles to strike inside Russia.

Meanwhile, two people died in Russian shelling in Ukraine's southern Zaporizhzhia region, regional Gov. Ivan Fedorov said.

Ukraine's air force said that Russia had launched three guided missiles and 13 attack drones at Ukraine overnight on Saturday. It said the missiles were intercepted, three drones were shot down over the Odesa region and 10 others were lost.

Nine people were wounded when a Ukrainian drone struck a passenger bus in the city of Horlivka in the partially occupied Donetsk region, the city's Russian-installed Mayor Ivan Prikhodko said.

Russia's Defense Ministry said Saturday that air defenses shot down 10 Ukrainian drones overnight in three border regions, including seven over the Belgorod region, two over the Kursk region, and one over the Voronezh region.

## America

**WH isn't extending program:** The Biden administration will not extend a two-year program that allows migrants from certain nations into the US if they come by plane with sponsorship.

The program began in 2022 with Venezuelans and was an effort to provide an alternative legal pathway for migrants who were increasingly coming to the US-Mexico border while the administration simultaneously cracked down on illegal crossings. It later expanded to Cubans, Haitians and Nicaraguans - the nationalities of the migrants who most frequently tried to cross the border. The program allowed them to live and work in the US for two years while they sought other legal status.

The decision comes just a month before the 2024 presidential election, as Democrat Kamala Harris has worked to project a tougher stance on immigration. Republican Donald Trump has derided the administration's immigration policies and has increasingly insulted and spread lies about migrants in the US, particularly Haitians, in recent weeks.

Homeland Security officials said Friday that those at the two-year mark must apply for another type of legal status, depart the country or face deportation. There are multiple different pathways for many of the nationalities, including what's called "temporary protected status" for Venezuelans and Haitians, which allows them to stay in the US because of extreme violence, unrest or devastating natural disasters in their home countries.

"This two-year period was intended to enable individuals to seek humanitarian relief or other immigration benefits for which they may be eligible, and to work and contribute to the United States," Homeland Security spokesperson Naree Ketudat said.

New migrants to the border may

still apply for the program, and it does not affect those from Afghanistan or Ukraine. (AP)

**Idaho man gets life:** An Idaho man who prosecutors said ambushed and shot correctional officers at a Boise hospital in a plot to help a fellow white supremacist gang member escape from prison was sentenced to life behind bars on Friday.

**Nicholas Umphenour,** 29, pleaded guilty earlier this year to several felonies, including aiding and abetting escape and aggravated assault and battery on law enforcement officers in connection with the March 20 attack at Saint Alphonsus Regional Medical Center.

Umphenour's attorney, Bryan Marx, said Umphenour is also expected face charges in a separate case connected to death of a man who police say was killed while Umphenour and the escaped inmate, Skylar Meade, were on the run.

Fourth District Judge Nancy Baskin described Umphenour as an unremorseful "career criminal" and said he would not be eligible for parole for at least 40 years.

"You present a clear danger to the community, and I'm not convinced that any rehabilitation will reduce your risk," Baskin said. "The only thing I can do is give you a very long sentence."

Umphenour met Meade in prison and both men were members of a white supremacist gang, Ada County Deputy Prosecutor Heather Reilly said. They

grew close while at the Idaho Maximum Security Institution, with Umphenour describing Meade as "like family," in recorded phone calls.

Umphenour was released from prison in January, and it wasn't long before he agreed to help Meade plot his escape, Reilly said. Meade had a contraband cellphone, Reilly said, and Umphenour repeatedly texted Meade to let him know he'd bought ammunition, obtained a gun, and purchased other supplies for the escape.

"When it comes to cops, let's only do it if we have to," Meade wrote in one text, apparently referring to the possibility of shooting an officer.

"I'm feeling dangerous," Umphenour texted back, later continuing that, "secretly, I'm ready to snatch a life." (AP)

**Businessman convicted:** A Georgia businessman was convicted Friday of scamming former NBA star Dwight Howard out of millions of dollars in a bogus scheme to buy the WNBA's Atlanta Dream.

The jury returned its verdict against Calvin Darden Jr on Friday afternoon after a trial in New York City. Darden was also convicted of cheating former NBA forward Chandler Parsons in a separate ruse.

Howard - one of the NBA's most dominant centers during the prime of his 18-year professional career - testified during the trial that Darden fooled him into giving him \$7 million by convincing him that it was an investment toward the purchase of the Dream. In reality, a three-member investor group that included former player Renee Montgomery bought the team in 2021.

When a prosecutor asked him if he got anything in return for his \$7 million, Howard testified that he got "a slap in the face." (AP)



Rescuers search for missing people after floods and landslides in the village of Donja Jablanica, Bosnia on Oct 5. (AP)

## Rescue teams search for missing after floods kill 16 in Bosnia

Rescue teams on Saturday searched for those still missing after flash floods and landslides hit parts of Bosnia, killing at least 16 people and injuring scores more.

Construction machines worked to remove piles of rocks and debris covering the central town of Jablanica after the rainstorm early on Friday.

Huge quantities of rain fell in the area around Jablanica and nearby Konjic, causing sudden floods that broke into people's homes as they were sleeping.

Surging waters also triggered landslides that collapsed roads and hills, covering villages in mud and

cutting off entire areas.

Bosnian media are reporting that rocks from a nearby quarry fell on the village of Donja Jablanica, burying houses.

Alka Gusic, a resident of Donja Jablanica, lost her brother and his entire family while her own son has been hospitalized. Overnight on Friday, she said, a frightening rumble woke her up from her sleep.

"I thought it was an earthquake," said Gusic. She waited until morning to venture out. "I saw my brother's son being pulled out. He was lying on the ground - it was obvious (he was dead)."

"God help us," she cried. "I lost

four of them, house destroyed completely, no one stayed alive, no one."

Officials have said that at least 16 people are confirmed dead so far, including a baby. At least 10 are still missing while dozens are injured.

Rescuers sealed off Jablanica, banning any entry for outsiders while the search took place. Some houses were submerged up to their roofs and as the water withdrew, rescuers could be seen walking over piles of rubble left behind.

Near the town of Konjic that was also hit by the storm, officials said some villages remained cut off on Saturday. (AP)

### Authorities order evacuations

## Floods inundate Thailand's northern city

BANGKOK, Oct. 5, (AP): Chiang Mai, Thailand's northern city popular with tourists, was inundated by widespread flooding Saturday as its main river overflowed its banks following heavy seasonal rainfall.

Authorities ordered some evacuations and said they were working to pump water out of residential areas and clear obstructions from waterways and drains to help water recede faster.

Dozens of shelters were set up across the city to accommodate residents whose home were flooded. The Chiang Mai city government said the water level of the Ping River, which runs along the eastern edge of the city, was at critically high levels and was rising since Friday.

However, the provincial irrigation office on Saturday forecast that the water level was likely to remain stable and recede to normal in about five days.

Thai media reported that efforts to evacuate elephants and other animals from several sanctuaries and parks on

the outskirts of the city were continuing Saturday. About 125 elephants along with other animals were taken to safety from the Elephant Nature Park, from where some escaped on their own to seek higher ground. About 10 animal shelters in the area have been flooded.

Chiang Mai Gov. Nirat Pongsitthavorn said that the latest flooding, the second in six weeks, exceeded expectations.

Thailand's state railway suspended service to Chiang Mai, with trains on the northern line from Bangkok terminating at Lampang, about 1 1/2 hours ride to the south. Chiang Mai International Airport said it was operating as usual on Saturday.

Flooding was reported in 20 Thai provinces on Saturday, mostly in the north. At least 49 people have died and 28 were injured in floods since August, the Department of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation said.

In the Thai capital Bangkok, the government said Saturday it will

let more water flow out of the Chao Phraya Dam in the central province of Chai Nat over the next seven days, as it risks exceeding its capacity. The release of the water may affect residents downstream who live near waterways in Thailand's central region, including Bangkok and surrounding areas.

Meanwhile, police in Thailand on Friday said they have filed criminal charges against a bus operator in connection with a bus fire that killed 23 young students and teachers on a school trip earlier this week, as investigations suggested a gas leak may have caused the blaze.

The owner of the bus, identified by police only by her first name, Panisara, was charged with negligence causing death, according to a statement from Pathum Thani Provincial Police.

Public outrage over the tragedy has put officials under scrutiny over safety standards after information emerged that the bus had passed an inspection about four months before the fire.



Tourists evacuate from a flood-hit area in Chiang Mai Province, Thailand on Oct 5. (AP)

### Exchange of rhetoric between Koreans nothing new

## Kim warns of nuclear response if sovereignty breached

SEOUL, South Korea, Oct. 5, (AP): North Korean leader Kim Jong Un threatened to use nuclear weapons and destroy South Korea permanently if provoked, state media reported Friday, after the South's leader warned that Kim's regime would collapse if he attempted to use nuclear arms.

The exchange of such rhetoric between the rival Koreas is nothing new, but the latest comments come during heightened animosities over the North's recent disclosure of a nuclear facility and its continuation of missile tests. Next week, observers say North Korea's rubber-stamp parliament is expected to constitutionally declare a hostile "two-state" system on the Korean Peninsula to formally reject reconciliation with South Korea and codify new national borders.

During a visit to a special operation forces unit on Wednesday, Kim said his military "would use without hesitation all the offensive forces it possesses, including nuclear weapons," if South Korea attempts to use armed forces encroaching upon the sovereignty of North Korea, according to the North's official Korean Central News Agency.

"If such a situation comes, the permanent existence of Seoul and the Republic of Korea would be impossible," Kim said, using South Korea's official name.

Kim's statement was a response to South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol's speech at his country's Armed Forces Day on Tuesday. Unveiling South Korea's most powerful Hyunmoo-5 ballistic missile and

other conventional weapons that could target North Korea, Yoon said the day that North Korea tries to use nuclear weapons would be the end of the Kim government because Kim would face "the resolute and overwhelming response" of the South Korean-US alliance.

Kim responded that Yoon's address fully betrayed his "bellicose temerity" and showed "the security uneasiness and irritating psychology of the puppet forces."

In a derisive comment, Kim called Yoon "an abnormal man," saying that "the puppet Yoon bragged about an overwhelming counteraction of military muscle at the doorstep of a state that possesses nuclear weapons." On Thursday, Kim's sister and senior official, Kim Yo Jong, also ridiculed South Korea's showcasing of the Hyunmoo-5 missile, saying there's no way for South Korea to counter the North Korea's nuclear forces with conventional weapons.

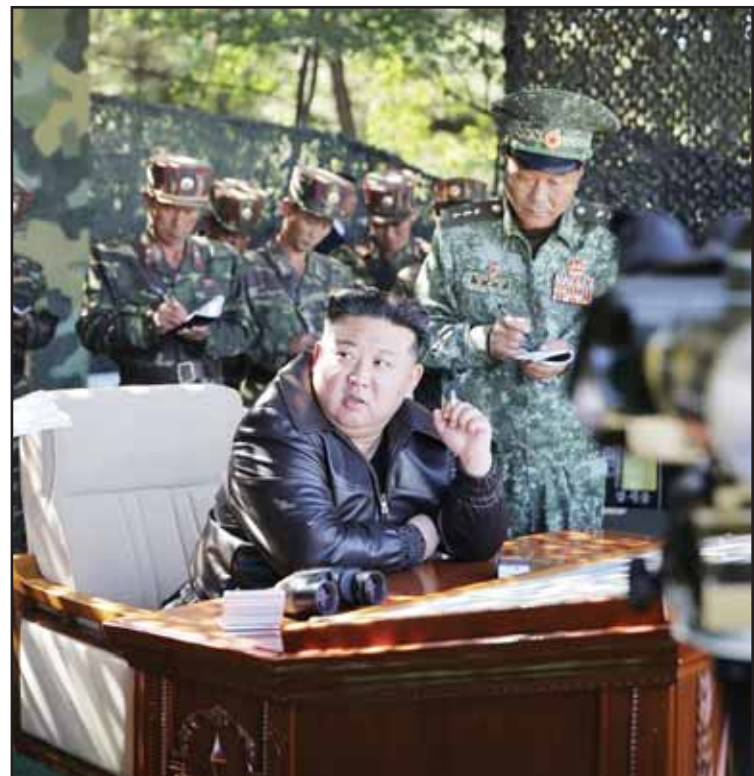
Since adopting an escalatory nuclear doctrine in 2022, Kim has repeatedly threatened to use nuclear weapons preemptively. But many foreign experts say it's still unlikely that he would use his nuclear arms first because his military is outmatched by the US and its allied forces. In July, South Korea and the US signed a defense guideline on integrating South Korea's conventional capabilities with the U.S. nuclear forces to better deal with North Korea's advancing nuclear program. South Korea has no nuclear weap-

ons. Animosities between the Koreas are at the worst point in years with Kim's provocative run of missile tests and the South Korean-US military exercises intensifying in a cycle of tit-for-tat. All communication channels and exchange programs between the rivals remain stalled since 2019, when a broader US-North Korea diplomacy on ending the North's nuclear program collapsed.

In January, Kim called for rewriting North Korea's constitution to eliminate the idea of a peaceful unification between the war-divided countries and to cement the South as an "invariable principal enemy."

He also reiterated that his country does not recognize the Northern Limit Line, a western sea boundary that was drawn by the US-led UN Command at the end of the 1950-53 Korean War. He called for the new constitution to include a clear definition of the North's territories. North Korea has traditionally insisted upon a boundary that encroaches deeply into waters currently controlled by South Korea.

On Friday, South Korea's military said North Korea was again flying balloons likely carrying trash across the border into South Korea. Since late May, North Korea has launched thousands of rubbish-carrying balloons toward South Korea, prompting South Korea to resume anti-Pyongyang propaganda loudspeaker broadcasts at border areas.



In this photo provided by the North Korean government, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, (center), visits a special operation forces unit at a western district in North Korea on Oct 2. (AP)

### 'We are horrified'

## Gang attack on Haitian town killed 70: UN

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti, Oct. 5, (AP): The tally of victims killed in this week's brutal attack on a small town in central Haiti by heavily armed gang members has risen to at least 70, the UN human rights office said Friday.

Bodies lay strewn on the streets of Pont-Sondé following Thursday's attack in the Artibonite region, many of them killed by a shot to the head, Bertide Harace, spokeswoman for the Commission for Dialogue, Reconciliation and Awareness to Save the Artibonite, told Magik 9 radio station.

Initial estimates put the number of those killed at 20 people, but activists and government officials have been gradually accessing areas of the town and discovering more bodies. Among the victims is a young mother, her newborn baby and a midwife, Harace said.

"We are horrified by Thursday's gang attacks," the UN Human Rights Office of the Commissioner said in a

statement.

It said 10 women and three infants were among those killed, and at least 16 others seriously injured, including two gang members hit during an exchange with police.

The office said gang members reportedly set fire to at least 45 homes and 34 cars.

Rumors of an attack had circulated for about two months throughout the town, which gang members approached using canoes, according to a report released Friday by Haiti's National Human Rights Defense Network.

"That strategy allowed them to take self-defense groups by surprise," it said.

The rights group said gunmen had accused the people of Pont-Sondé of colluding with members of a self-defense group known as "The Coalition" to limit gang activity and prevent the gang from profiting off a makeshift toll

it had recently established nearby.

After killing dozens in Pont-Sondé, the gunmen fled by foot through a nearby farm, killing anyone they encountered along the way, the group said.

"Entire families were decimated," it said, adding that "many others" remain missing.

Hundreds of families who survived the attack are now sheltering in an outdoors plaza in the nearby coastal city of Saint-Marc.

"To save their lives, these victims had to hide, walk for several hours and pass by many corpses on their way," the group said.

It is one of the biggest massacres in Haiti's central region in recent years. Attacks of that kind have taken place in the capital of Port-au-Prince, 80% of which is controlled by gangs, and they typically are linked to turf wars, with gang members targeting civilians in areas controlled by rivals.



A child sleeps inside a school where displaced people have been taking refuge from gang violence for over a year ago in Port-au-Prince, Haiti on Oct 4. (AP)

### Subcontinent

**India troops kill 31 rebels:** At least 31 suspected Maoist rebels were killed in a battle with Indian troops in central India, police said Saturday.

The fighting erupted on Friday when counterinsurgency troops, acting on intelligence, cornered nearly 50 suspected rebels in the Abhujmaad forest area along the border of Narayanpur and Dantewada districts in Chhattisgarh state, said state police Inspector General Pattilingam Sundarraj.

Sundarraj said the operation was launched on Thursday, and the battle began the next day, lasting about nine hours. He said search operations were continuing in the area and that the troops had recovered some arms and ammunition, including automatic rifles. There were no reports of casualties among the troops.

There was no immediate statement from the rebels.

Indian soldiers have been battling the Maoist rebels across several central and northern states since 1967, when the militants, also known as Naxalites, began fighting to demand more jobs, land and wealth from natural resources for the country's poor indigenous communities. The insurgents are inspired by Chinese revolutionary leader Mao Zedong.

Years of neglect have isolated many local villagers, who face a lack of jobs, schools and health care clinics, making them open to overtures by the rebels. The rebels speak the same tribal languages as many local villagers and have promised to fight for a better future especially in Chhattisgarh, one of India's poorest states despite its vast mineral riches.

Authorities say at least 171 militants have been killed so far this year in Chhattisgarh. Friday's fighting was the deadliest clash this year.

In April, government forces killed at least 29 suspected Maoist rebels in Chhattisgarh, three days ahead of the start of India's national election.

The rebels have ambushed police, destroyed government offices and abducted officials. They've also blown

up train tracks, attacked prisons to free their comrades and stolen weapons from police and paramilitary warehouses to arm themselves. (AP)

**6 Pakistani soldiers killed:** Militants killed six Pakistani soldiers during a shootout in the northwest, the army said Saturday. It's the latest unrest in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, which borders Afghanistan and is a base for armed groups including the Pakistani Taliban.

The troops died in an overnight operation in North Waziristan on Saturday, according to an army statement. The statement also said six militants were killed.

The army said a separate operation killed two militants in Swat, also in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. One of them was said to be involved in an attack on a convoy of foreign ambassadors in the area earlier this month.

Also Saturday, cellphone services remained suspended in Islamabad as it entered a second day of a lockdown aimed at thwarting rallies in support of ex-leader Imran Khan. He is in prison on multiple charges.

Shipping containers have blocked off the city's entry and exit points, but videos from Khan's political party showed his supporters piled into vehicles and attempting to head toward Islamabad.

The chief minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ali Amin Gandapur, and others in the convoy worked throughout the night to remove shipping containers from the road, the party said.

Khan's PTI party said it plans to hold a rally in Lahore. (AP)

**B'desh seeks Malaysia support:** Bangladesh's interim leader, Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus, on Friday sought Malaysia's help in engaging a regional Southeast Asia bloc on raising the issue of repatriating Rohingya refugees home to Myanmar.

Malaysia takes over the chair of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, known as ASEAN, next year.

The appeal came as visiting Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim met with Yunus in Dhaka, Bangladesh's capital - the first visit by a foreign leader to Bangladesh since Yunus took over on Aug. 8 and the first state visit by a Malaysian leader to Bangladesh in 11 years.

Yunus took over after Bangladesh's former prime minister Sheikh Hasina fled the country during a mass uprising that accused her of corruption, violation of human rights and excessive use of force against the protesters. He has pledged reforms and a push for reviving Bangladesh's troubled economy.

Bangladesh has been hosting 1 million Rohingya refugees who fled violence by Myanmar's military. They live in destitute sprawling camps in Bangladesh and have long been demanding a safe return home.

Yunus told a news conference after the two leaders held talks that he asked for Malaysian prime minister's help in raising the Rohingya repatriation issue at ASEAN.

"Malaysia will be supporting us in raising that," Yunus said. "This is something we have to resolve as soon as possible."

Yunus said that they also discussed boosting bilateral trade and finalizing a free trade agreement between their Muslim-majority nations, as well as political cooperation, investment, cultural and humanitarian ties.

They stressed the need for exploring new opportunities in sectors such as agriculture, energy, education, the semiconductor industry and connectivity, Yunus said. (AP)



Members of the public react during a public forum for an impeachment motion against Kenya's deputy president Rigathi Gachagua, at Bomas of Kenya, in Nairobi on Oct 4. (AP)

### 'Impeachment motion against deputy prez'

## Clashes erupt during Kenya's public forums

NAIROBI, Kenya, Oct. 5, (AP): Supporters and opponents of Kenya's deputy president clashed Friday at public forums over an impeachment motion against him, which was introduced in parliament by the ruling alliance this week. Rigathi Gachagua is accused of supporting anti-government protests in June and of being involved in corruption and other irregularities, charges he denies.

A motion for the impeachment of Gachagua was proposed in parliament on Tuesday and Kenyans were given until Friday to fill out public participation forms at their constituencies. Public forums are being held across the country to discuss the impeachment.

In the capital, Nairobi, a public forum at the Bomas of Kenya turned violent as supporters of President William Ruto clashed with those supporting Gachagua. Chairs were thrown in the auditorium and an activist Morara Kebaso, known for exposing stalled government projects, said he had been injured.

In central Kenya's Nyeri county, police clashed with supporters of the deputy president as they chanted that there would be no president if his deputy is impeached. The two were elected on a joint ticket.

In Nyandarua county, opponents were called out as being traitors and were chased out of the community hall. Some 291 legislators, more than the

117 constitutional requirement, signed the impeachment motion before it was introduced, but a number of them from the deputy president's home turf say they no longer support the motion after hearing contrary views from their constituents.

"If the deputy president is guilty, then his boss the president is equally guilty," a woman supporter told Citizen TV.

Gachagua is facing impeachment on 10 grounds that include corruption, ethnic discrimination and contradicting government policies.

He has maintained that he is innocent and has vowed to fight the impeachment motion.

		Change	Closing pts			Change	Closing pts
↑	DUBAI	-	DFMGI	+7.61	4,405.85		
	JAPAN	-	Nikkei 225	+83.56	38,635.62		
	PHILIPPINES	-	PSEi	+79.00	7,467.92		
	PAKISTAN	-	KSE 100	+745.68	83,589.81		
	EUROPE	-	Euro Stoxx 50	+33.61	4,954.94		
	BRITAIN	-	FTSE 100	-1.89	8,280.63		

# Business

## Boursa Kuwait endures significant losses amid geopolitical tensions

General index falls 34.4 points, closing at 7,036 points

By Mahmoud Shendi  
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, Oct 5: The Boursa Kuwait experienced substantial losses for the second consecutive session, driven by growing geopolitical tensions in the region due to the Iranian military response to the Israeli occupation.**

The market's value plummeted by KD 204 million, bringing it down to KD 41.604 billion from KD 41.808 billion in the previous session.

The general index fell by 34.4 points, or 0.4 percent, closing at 7,036 points. A total of 368.2 million shares were traded across 22,028 transactions, with a turnover amounting to KD 61.7 million (approximately \$188 million).

The Boursa Kuwait has been grappling with the broader effects of negative developments in global financial markets. Over the past week alone, losses have reached KD 951 million. The general market index has dropped by 161 points, closing the week at 7,036, down from 7,197 points in the previous week.

The market analysts are warning that if the geopolitical conflict escalates, it could severely impact both regional and global financial markets. Investors are particularly concerned about potential disruptions to oil supplies from the Gulf, which could cause a sharp rise in prices, similar to past periods of conflict.

In Wednesday's session, the Premier Market Index also took a hit, declining by 47.4 points (0.62 percent) to 7,582 points, with 81.6 million shares traded through 9,955 transactions, valued at KD 31.9 million (around \$97.2 million).

However, the Main Market Index recorded a slight uptick, rising by 8.2 points (0.13 percent) to 6,254 points, with 286 million shares exchanged in 12,073 transactions, worth KD 29.7 million (approximately \$90.5 million). Additionally, the Main 50 Index gained 24.5 points (0.40 percent) to reach 6,171 points, trading 212.4 million shares through 8,363 transactions, valued at KD 21.6 million (\$65.8 million).

Leading the trading volume was Al-Oula stock, with 42.53 million shares, while Baytak topped liquidity with a transaction value of KD 11.26 million. Companies like Imtiyazat, Senery, Al-Oula, and AIE'adah registered the most significant gains, while Tahseelat, Al-Nawasim, Cinema, and Al-Ma'athar led the list of decliners.

Sector-wise, three sectors experienced gains, with insurance rising by 0.46 percent. In contrast, eight sectors saw declines, with technology taking the hardest hit, dropping by 7.54 percent. Two sectors remained unchanged.

Despite recent volatility, the Boursa Kuwait had a strong performance during the first nine months of 2024, buoyed by foreign investment. Net foreign buying reached KD 169.62 million (\$556.12 million), driven by institutional investors and investment funds.

The market value of stocks at the end of September reached KD 42.197 billion, marking a 4.81 percent increase compared to the end of December 2023.

Foreign investors were responsible for 15.85 percent of purchases and 14.19 percent of sales, while local Kuwaiti investors accounted for the majority of transactions, purchasing 82.45 percent and selling 83.23 percent. Gulf investors contributed to 1.70 percent of purchases and 2.58 percent of sales.

### Agreement focuses on workshops

## CMA signs 'cooperation pact' with Kuwait Economic Society

**KUWAIT CITY, Oct 5:** In a significant step toward advancing Kuwait's economic development and promoting financial inclusion, the Capital Markets Authority (CMA) signed a memorandum of cooperation with the Kuwait Economic Society (KES), reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The signing ceremony took place in the presence of key representatives from both organizations. Prof. Dr. Ahmed Abdul Rahman Al-Malhem, Chairman of the Board of Commissioners and Executive Director, signed on behalf of the CMA, while Mishari Abdullah Al-Abdul Jalil, Chairman of the Board of Directors, signed on behalf of the Kuwait Economic Society.

The memorandum aims to establish a framework of joint cooperation between the two entities, aligning their efforts to serve Kuwait's economy, enhance national economic growth, and foster a stronger economic and investment culture within society.

The agreement underscores the importance both organizations place on coordinating their initiatives to support the country's broader economic and social development goals, while also strengthening financial inclusion.

Key areas of collaboration outlined in the agreement include the organization of joint awareness initiatives, such as workshops, seminars, discussion forums, and other educational activities. These events will be held as part of the CMA's national project to promote investment

awareness and financial inclusion.

Moreover, the two parties will exchange knowledge, expertise, and research in areas such as economic studies, consultations, and training programs.

The CMA emphasized its commitment to expanding partnerships with civil society institutions, building cooperative bridges in areas of shared interest, and supporting initiatives that align with its mission.

These efforts will contribute to achieving the goals of both the CMA and the Kuwait Economic Society, particularly in terms of developing the national economy and enhancing public understanding of economic and financial matters.

The CMA plays a critical role in regulating and supervising securities activity, developing the Kuwait Stock Exchange system, and growing capital markets, with a focus on protecting investors and fostering market confidence.

Meanwhile, the KES, as a public benefit organization composed of experts in the field of economics, contributes by promoting economic knowledge, raising professional standards, and providing the foundations for economic development in Kuwait.

This new partnership is expected to have a positive impact on Kuwait's economy by supporting initiatives that encourage informed investment and financial literacy, furthering the nation's economic growth and stability.

### Innovative social media strategies highlighted in award ceremony

## Gulf Bank awarded Best Bank in Marketing and Social Media Services by Global Finance for 2024

**KUWAIT CITY, Oct 5:** Gulf Bank has garnered prestigious awards in 2024, being recognized as the Best Bank in Marketing and Social Media Services by Global Finance magazine. This award highlights the bank's effective initiatives in engaging and communicating with customers through innovative digital channels.

Mrs. Najla Aleisa, Chief Marketing Officer (CMO) of Gulf Bank, expressed her joy at receiving the award during a recent ceremony held in London. "This recognition highlights the significant digital transformation that Gulf Bank is undergoing across all areas," she remarked. "It showcases our ability to leverage social media to enhance the customer experience."

Gulf Bank is committed to providing exceptional services to its customers, meeting their needs promptly and efficiently through various channels, including branches, the mobile app, and social media channels. Aleisa emphasized the bank's reliance on social media as a key platform for delivering services, marketing products, and engaging with the community.

Additionally, Aleisa noted the impressive improvements at Gulf Bank's call center, which has adopted advanced automated response technology. The average response time for customer calls is now under 20 seconds, with the call center managing over 5,000 calls each day.

"Gulf Bank has prioritized social media for several years to align with customer expectations and deliver exceptional services," she added. "We have assembled a highly trained team committed to providing tailored support through text-based communication, efficiently addressing customer needs across multiple platforms."

The bank's call center has set a record response



Best Bank in Marketing and Social Media Services Award by Global Finance magazine.



**Najla Aleisa:**  
 ■ A new global recognition for the bank's significant digital transformation and its ability to enhance the customer experience.  
 ■ Gulf Bank's call center has set a record response time for social media messages.  
 ■ We are dedicated to delivering exceptional services to our customers while promptly addressing their needs with the highest quality.

time for social media messages, averaging under three minutes – well below the global average of around one hour.

Aleisa noted that Gulf Bank's continuous efforts



Best Bank in Marketing and Social Media Services Award by Global Finance magazine.

to engage with the community have resulted in a substantial increase in followers across its social media channels, reflecting the bank's commitment to transparency and open communication.

"We are committed to introducing new quality initiatives and fostering deeper relationships with our customers through year-round events and meaningful content shared on our social media platforms," Aleisa concluded.

### Confirming its commitment to adopting ESG principles

## Burgan Bank signs strategic partnership with DHL Express to join 'GoGreen Plus' initiative

**KUWAIT CITY, Oct 5:** Burgan Bank announced signing a strategic partnership with DHL, the world's leading logistics company, marking the Bank's participation in the DHL Express "GoGreen Plus" initiative, in its latest effort to foster a cleaner environment with reduced carbon emissions. As a participant in the GoGreen Plus initiative, Burgan Bank will reduce its shipment-related carbon emissions by supporting DHL's adoption of sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) and choosing the DHL Express greener courier services across its value chain. This agreement comes as part of Burgan Bank's commitment to raising environmental awareness and adopting global Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) standards in its operations.

"As a responsible corporate citizen and a committed contributor to the fulfillment of Kuwait's Vision 2035 goals, we are delighted to take yet another step toward actively minimizing our carbon footprint by participating in the DHL Express 'GoGreen Plus' initiative," said Mr. Fadel Abdullah, Chief Executive Officer - Kuwait at Burgan Bank. "In our pursuit of excellence, we continue to analyze every component of our value chain against the highest global standards, guaranteeing that our success reflects positively on our environment and everyone in our community. We firmly believe that positive change is possible when we all collaborate and opt for sustainability."

"Striving to offer outstanding service is among many merits that DHL shares with Burgan Bank, and today we are delighted to partner in adopting greener alternatives that will have a massive impact on the health of our planet and the communities we serve," said Mr. Makram Raad, Country Manager - Kuwait at DHL. "A core aspect of our customers' loyalty is based on trust and innovative solutions that guarantee premium service fulfillment and maximum positive impact on our social and natural ecosystems. As a champion of environmental awareness in Kuwait, we are honored to have Burgan Bank among the progressive adopters of our 'GoGreen Plus' service, and we look forward to more future collaborations with Burgan that pave the path toward a greener Kuwait."

As a "GoGreen Plus" partner, Burgan Bank, through its steady investment in the initiative, will help DHL Express achieve its goal to have 30% of its aviation fuel blended with SAF – a green alternative to traditional jet fuel that reduces lifecycle emissions by up to 70-80% – by 2030. In addition to helping reduce Burgan's Scope 3 emissions linked to air cargo by utilizing SAF-infused fuels, DHL Express will also contribute to offsetting the Bank's carbon emissions through approved environmental protection programs.

Burgan Bank's commitment to raising awareness about environmental consciousness is deeply rooted in its culture and operations, which shows in the Bank's

commitment since 2019 to publishing its annual sustainability report, detailing its yearlong ESG efforts. In addition, the Bank was recently awarded the prestigious Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) v4.1 O+M: EB (Operations and Maintenance - Existing Buildings) Gold Certification for operations and maintenance at its head office building in Kuwait City, which underscores the Bank's commitment to sustainability, operational excellence, and international standards for sustainability.

In recent years, the Bank has introduced several eco-friendly banking innovations including biodegradable and virtual cards. It has also expanded and advanced its online banking experience, reducing the need for customers to commute to the physical branches as well as significantly cutting down on paper consumption. These services include SMS and digital onboarding, eKYC (digital know-your-customer protocol), and the option to open numerous bank accounts, such as Kanz and Al Rateb, online in less than a minute.

**About Burgan Bank**  
 Established in 1977, Burgan Bank is a Kuwait-based conventional bank with a significant focus on the corporate and financial institution sectors. From its earliest days, the Bank has significantly sought to diversify its offering to cater to its growing retail and private banking customer base.

### OPEC+ to boost supplies in Dec

## Oil price increases amid escalating Mideast crisis

**DUBAI, Oct 5, (AP):** Oil prices climbed this week as tensions in the Middle East escalated. Iran launched missiles at Israel and the Israelis threatened retaliation, raising the possibility of a disruption to the flow of oil from the region. A jump in oil prices automatically spurs fear of a spike in gas prices, but experts see reasons that may not happen.

Here's a look at the current situation and the outlook for oil and gas prices:

Oil prices rose more than \$6 per barrel (5.47 euros) this week and prices at the pump moved higher as well. The average price for a gallon of gas rose 5 cents from last week. Any major escalation of tensions in the Middle East conjures up memories of the oil embargo that followed the start of the Yom Kippur war in 1973, which quadrupled oil prices.

However, the global supply of oil has been altered radically since the 1970s, with the U.S. becoming the world's largest oil producer. Months of war between Israel and Hamas and Hezbollah, two Iranian proxies, did little to boost prices for OPEC and its 12 oil-producing nations. Only the possibility of a direct confrontation between Israel and Iran moved the needle.

U.S. gas prices typically rise along with crude because the price of oil makes up half the cost of a gallon of gasoline.

The national average for gas has risen to about \$3.18 per gallon, according to AAA. But that's still 13 cents less than a month ago and 60 cents less than a year ago. The record national average high of \$5 per gallon was reached in June 2022.

"Despite the threat of war and a hurricane season that is still percolating, domestic gasoline prices are edging lower," AAA spokesperson Andrew Gross said in a statement on Thursday. "There are now 18 states east of the Rockies with averages below \$3 a gallon."

AAA also estimates that approximately 1.2 million of its members live in households with one or more electric vehicles. The organization believes that tepid gas demand and low oil costs will likely keep prices at gas pumps sliding.

The long-term expectation is for oil prices to move lower, not higher. That's because the balance between supply and demand has tilted toward supply, a dynamic that typically weighs on oil prices.

In its most recent update on the energy markets, the International Energy Agency said demand for oil in the first half of this year rose by the small-

est amount since 2020. Meanwhile, supplies have continued to increase and the OPEC+ alliance, made up of members of the producers cartel and allied countries including Russia, has said it plans to release more oil into the market starting in December.

"Geopolitical tensions have soared of late and yet fundamentals seem to be moving in the opposite direction with Iranian oil exports trending close to the highest level in years," Barclays analyst Amarpreet Singh said in a note to clients. "The jury is out on the primary driver of the geopolitical drift, but it warrants caution against taking a strong view on a sustained disruption."

The country produces 3.99 million barrels per day, which is 4% of the world total. By comparison, Saudi Arabia produces about 9 million barrels a day.

Despite sanctions imposed by the West that have hampered production and export levels, Iran continues to find ways to maintain its oil sector, sometimes using creative methods like blending and re-labeling oil for sale to markets like China. As of the middle of this year, Iran was exporting about 2 million barrels of oil a day, up from 500,000 in 2020 but below the 2.5 million barrels it exported each day in 2018.

Export terminals like Kharg Island in the Persian Gulf could be a target for an Israeli strike. They play a key role in shipping crude oil abroad, primarily to Asian countries, including China.

Oil prices rose Thursday after President Joe Biden said U.S. and Israeli officials were discussing a possible Israeli strike on Iranian oil facilities. On Friday, Biden said the exact nature of any retaliatory action by Israel was "under discussion." But he added, "I think if I were in their shoes, I'd be thinking about other alternatives than striking oil fields."

Tom Kloza, global head of energy analysis with the Oil Price Information Service, believes oil prices are approaching a top, with U.S. crude oil at \$74.38 and Brent crude, the international benchmark, at \$78.05. "Perhaps Brent may have a cup of coffee at \$80 a barrel or higher," he wrote in an email, but the long-term outlook is for lower prices.

"As soon as things calm down, oil traders will concentrate on 2025 and 2025 looks very problematic for high prices with supply almost certainly outpacing demand by 500,000 to 1 million barrels a day," Kloza said.



Mr. Fadel Abdullah, Chief Executive Officer - Kuwait at Burgan Bank, Mr. Makram Raad, Country Manager - Kuwait at DHL, and Mr. Mohamed Najeeb Al Zanki, General Manager - Corporate Banking at Burgan Bank, during the signing ceremony.





# For 2nd year in a row, NBK named 'Best in Innovation' globally, outdoing all conventional and Islamic banks

Nine accolades from Global Finance reaffirm bank's leadership in digital consumer banking

- The bank monopolized the awards locally with 6 wins out of the 10 awards presented by the magazine to Kuwaiti banks
- A new achievement reflecting the bank's leadership and brand strength
- NBK invested heavily in its technology infrastructure to foster digital transformation
- The new awards add to the bank's record of global achievements, reflecting its local and regional leadership



Officials pose for a group photo after receiving the award.



NBK headquarters



Best Bank for Innovation

**KUWAIT CITY, Oct 5: In a new achievement underscoring its leadership and brand strength, National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) has won 9 prestigious awards from Global Finance magazine. The accolades come in recognition of the bank's remarkable strides in innovation, digital transformation, and providing the best banking solutions catering to customers' needs and coping with the rapid technological advancement in the banking industry.**

For the second consecutive year, Global Finance honored NBK's achievements by naming it "Best in Innovation- Global Winner" for 2024, outdoing conventional and Islamic banks. The bank also

bagged 2 awards on the Middle East level and 6 awards locally, proving once again its supremacy in innovation and digitization.

The awards were announced at the annual awarding ceremony "The World's Best Digital Banks 2024" held by Global Finance in London, and received by Mohamed Al-Othman, CEO - Consumer and Digital Banking Group, and Mohammad Al-Kharafi, COO - Head of Group Operations and Information Technology on behalf of NBK, in the presence of a number of prestigious economists and bankers from around the world.

**Monopolizing Locally, Leading Regionally**

Regionally, NBK was named "Best in Innovation - Middle East", and "Best Online Product Offerings - Middle East"

Locally, NBK monopolized Global Finance awards, with 6 wins out of the 10 awards presented by the magazine to banks in Kuwait. In addition to "Best in Innovation - Kuwait" and "Best Online Product Offerings - Kuwait", the awards included: "Best Bill

Payment and Presentment - Kuwait", "Best Mobile Banking App - Kuwait", "Best in Lending - Kuwait", and "Best Information Security and Fraud Management - Kuwait" won by "Weyay", NBK's subsidiary digital bank.

These awards are a testament to the efforts made by NBK employees throughout a whole year to deliver a range of digital banking initiatives, services and solutions, which distinguished NBK as a global leader in innovation and digitalization, outdoing major global financial institutions.

These accolades from Global Finance are also an incentive for NBK to move forward in providing more innovative banking services by investing in technology, leveraging AI, Big Data and process automation, capitalizing on NBK's huge technological infrastructure and innovation-friendly work environment.

NBK is keen on enhancing customer banking experience to keep pace with their changing needs. In this context, the NBK Mobile Banking App serves as a use-friendly daily platform for different customers, encompassing a wide range of services and features

that exemplify NBK's understanding of customers' needs and expectations.

NBK has also worked on increasing payment solutions using cutting-edge technologies, in addition to introducing a variety of innovative products and cards catering to the needs of customers from different segments, ages, and lifestyles, which contributed to enriching their banking experience.

**Large investments**

NBK firmly believes that digital transformation is an ongoing journey that requires more research, development, and keeping up with the latest technology. To this end, the bank made large investments in developing its technological infrastructure to support its goals on this level, which contributed significantly to providing market-leading products and services, and offering customers a banking experience that is the best locally and among the best regionally and globally.

NBK has a long record of achievements and international awards that prove its excellence in the digital transformation. This reflects the bank's belief in the pivotal role played by the

workforce in digital transformation and fostering continuous innovation.

NBK continues to strengthen its presence in key regional markets by offering digital banking services that cater to the needs of customers regardless of their geographical location, further solidifying its position as a highly trusted brand.

Meanwhile, NBK continues to collectively enjoy one of the highest credit ratings among most major banks of the Middle East from the top three international credit rating agencies: Moody's, Fitch and Standard & Poor's. The bank's ratings are supported by its strong capitalization, prudent lending policies, disciplined approach to risk management, as well as its highly experienced and very stable management team. The bank also stands out with broad global geographical footprint, with branches and subsidiaries covering key regional and global financial and business capitals in China, Geneva, London, Paris, New York and Singapore, in addition to its regional presence in Lebanon, Egypt, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Iraq and the UAE.

Global Finance, founded in 1987

and headquartered in New York, is one of the most reputable magazines specialized in finance and economics. It has a circulation of 50,000 readers in 193 countries, including senior corporate and financial officers responsible for making investment and strategic decisions at multinational companies and financial institutions.

The magazine conducts various surveys annually about innovation and profitability for banks and financial institutions all over the world, based on which it selects top performers on the regional and international levels.

List of awards won:  
 Best in Innovation- Global Winner  
 Best in Innovation - Kuwait  
 Best in Innovation - Middle East  
 Best Online Product Offerings - Kuwait  
 Best Online Product Offerings - Middle East  
 Best Bill Payment and Presentment - Kuwait  
 Best Mobile Banking App - Kuwait  
 Best in Lending - Kuwait  
 Best Information Security and Fraud Management - Kuwait (Weyay)

## Unemployment dips to 4.1%

# US adds robust 254,000 jobs in September

WASHINGTON, Oct 5, (AP): America's employers added a surprisingly strong 254,000 jobs in September, easing concerns about a weakening labor market and suggesting that the pace of hiring is still solid enough to support a growing economy.

Last month's gain was far more than economists had expected, and it was up sharply from the 159,000 jobs that were added in August. And after rising for most of 2024, the unemployment rate dropped for a second straight month, from 4.2% in August to 4.1% in September, the Labor Department said Friday.

The latest figures suggest that many companies are still confident enough to fill jobs despite the continued pressure of high interest rates.

In an encouraging sign, the Labor Department also revised up its estimate of job growth in July and August by a combined 72,000. Including those revisions, September's job gain - forecasters had predicted only around 140,000 - means that job growth has averaged a solid 186,000 over the past three months. In August, the three-month average was only 140,000.

"There's still more momentum than we had given it credit for," Stephen Stanley, chief economist at the banking company Santander, said of the job market. "I would call it solid - certainly



An employee scans incoming items at a receiving station at the Amazon OXR1 fulfillment center in Oxnard, Calif., on Aug. 21, 2024. (AP)

not as explosive as what we were seeing last year or the year before, when we were catching up from the pandemic. But the pace of job growth overall is very healthy."

The September job gains were fairly broad-based, a good trend if it continues. Restaurants and bars added 69,000 jobs. Healthcare companies gained 45,000, government agencies 31,000, social assistance employers 27,000 and construction companies

25,000. A category that includes professional and business services added 17,000 after having lost jobs for three straight months.

Average hourly raises were solid, too. They rose by a higher-than-expected 0.4% from August, slightly less than the 0.5% gain the month before. Measured from a year earlier, hourly wages climbed 4% in September, up a tick from a 3.9% year-over-year gain in August.

The economy's progress in taming inflation led the Federal Reserve last month to cut its benchmark interest rate by a sizable half-point, its first rate cut in more than four years, and said further cuts were likely in the coming months. The Fed said it wanted to ease the cost of borrowing to help bolster the job market. In light of Friday's strong jobs report, the Fed is now likely to reduce its key rate by more typical quarter-point increments.

"The September jobs report shows a nice bump in labor demand at the beginning of the fall," said Bill Adams, chief economist at Comerica Bank. "The U.S. economy is growing solidly in 2024 even as inflation slows to near the Fed's target."

The resilience of the economy has come as a relief. Economists had long expected that the Fed's aggressive campaign to subdue inflation - it jacked up interest rates 11 times in 2022 and 2023 - would cause a recession. It didn't. The economy kept growing even in the face of ever-higher borrowing costs for consumers and businesses.

Most economists say the Fed appears to have achieved the once-unlikely prospect of a "soft landing," in which high interest rates help vanquish inflation without triggering a recession.

# EU's push to impose tariffs on Chinese EVs faces a backlash

BRUSSELS, Oct 5, (Xinhua): European countries and auto industry leaders have criticized the EU's push for punitive tariffs on Chinese electric vehicles (EVs), warning the move could boomerang and, in turn, hurt the EU's competitiveness.

Though the European Commission said it had secured necessary support from member states, 12 EU members abstained and five voted against the decision. Meanwhile, the Commission also called on the two sides to explore an alternative solution.

**Opposition from member states**

The loudest outcry against the tariff came from Germany. "Tariffs on Chinese electric cars would be wrong ... We have to speak plainly and negotiate with China - but trade wars only have losers," said German Finance Minister Christian Lindner Thursday on X, former Twitter, in the wake of Chancellor Olaf Scholz's call for continuing negotiations with China on Wednesday.

Echoing these concerns, Hungary voted against the imposition. "What they are making us do right now, or what the EU wants to do, is an economic Cold War," Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban told state radio in a Friday interview, referring to the proposed EU tariffs.

Matjaz Han, Slovenia's minister of economy, tourism and sport, also

voiced opposition to the tariffs, warning of "too high a price" for Europe. Instead, he advocated for more practical economic and trade cooperation between the EU and China.

Finland abstained from the Friday vote. Jukka Kurma, a senior Finnish foreign ministry official, told local media that there was not enough proof of damage caused to the EU by the "so-called" Chinese state support to the EV industry. "We are not quite convinced that the import tariffs would be in the overall interest of the Union," Kurma said.

Spain was also among the countries that abstained from the vote. Spanish Minister for Economy, Trade and Business, Carlos Cuerdo, said the decision to abstain was to keep the negotiation with China open and find a negotiated solution.

**Industry outcry**

The Commission's announcement on the controversial tariffs has provoked an outcry from the European automotive industry. They warned that the move may hurt the competitiveness of local carmakers and undermine the interests of consumers.

In a statement released on Friday, Hildegard Muller, president of the German Association of the Automotive Industry, depicted the vote as a further step away from global cooperation.

# Hong Kong wins global acclaim as one of top places to do business

HONG KONG, Oct 5, (Xinhua): Hong Kong has been winning global acclaim for its ever-improving business and investment climate underpinned by its status as a global financial hub and relentless efforts to nurture industries and firms.

A pilot Business Ready 2024 Report published by the World Bank Group has named Hong Kong one of the best-performing economies in business environment out of the 50 economies it surveyed worldwide, according to a spokesperson for the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) government.

The report gauges business and investment climate from 10 topics with three pillars under each topic. Hong Kong ranks fifth in the pillar of "Operational Efficiency" with a score of 78.52 points out of 100 points. Among the 10 topics, Hong Kong scored 90.77 points for "International Trade," 85.49 points for "Business Entry," and 77.71 points for "Utility Services."

The report also highlighted that Hong Kong has few restrictions on international trade in services and implements good practices in terms of information provision and regulations relating to company registration, the spokesperson said.

legislation." Hong Kong ranks among the top five globally in "business environment," "human capital" and "infrastructure" according to the latest Global Financial Centers Index.

"Apart from London and New York, I think there's no other international regulatory environment that is more valuable than Hong Kong's. I'm absolutely confident that I'm in the right place," said French entrepreneur Julien Martin, dubbing Hong Kong one of the most attractive destinations for businesses to grow and thrive.

Having worked in the financial industry in Hong Kong for more than 10 years, Martin founded a green finance startup, as he has every confidence that Hong Kong's strong regulatory regime, free flow of capital, as well as abundant sources of technological innovation will help his company thrive.

Many foreign firms share Martin's upbeat sentiment for growth. According to a latest business confidence survey conducted by the German Industry and Commerce Ltd. and the German Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong, 86 percent of respondents stated their company was not considering a relocation in the immediate future, while one in four indicated further investments in Hong Kong in the next two years, suggesting a commitment to maintaining stable operations in Hong Kong.

Adding to Hong Kong's long-standing allure including a transparent regulatory environment, a competitive

tax regime and top-notch professional services and talents, Hong Kong is nurturing its sci-tech innovation sector as a cradle of startups as well as offices of leading firms.

"Aside from enjoying a long legacy as one of the most important international business centers and logistics hubs in the world, Hong Kong is also committed to becoming a leader in the innovation and technology industry and is well-placed to achieve such a status," said Yang Ming, global strategic affairs vice president of WestWell, an autonomous-driving developer founded in Shanghai.

Hong Kong's strategic location at the center of Asia enables innovation and technology companies to establish extensive connections with the regional market and achieve deep insights, Yang added.

Entrepreneurs also say that Hong Kong's supportive ecosystem for startups can come in handy, with government-backed initiatives, incubators, accelerators, and funding schemes in place to help startups navigate regulatory frameworks, access capital, and connect with potential partners or clients.

Heartened by Hong Kong's efforts to make its business environment more appealing, leading firms are pivoting increasingly to Hong Kong. Artificial intelligence (AI) and intelligent speech giant iFLYTEK and its subsidiary iFLYHEALTH announced plans in July to set up their international headquarters in Hong Kong's flagship incubator Cyberport.

# Solar power companies growing in Africa, where 600m lack electricity

FREETOWN, Sierra Leone, Oct 5, (AP): Companies that bring solar power to some of the poorest homes in Central and West Africa are said to be among the fastest growing on a continent whose governments have long struggled to address some of the world's worst infrastructure and the complications of climate change.

The often African-owned companies operate in areas where the vast majority of people live disconnected from the electricity grid, and offer products ranging from solar-powered lamps that allow children to study at night to elaborate home systems that power kitchen appliances and plasma televisions. Prices range from less than \$20 for a solar-powered lamp to thousands of dollars for home appliances and entertainment systems.

Central and West Africa have some of the world's lowest electrification rates. In West Africa, where 220 million people live without power, this is as low as 8%, according to the World Bank. Many rely on expensive kerosene and other fuels that fill homes and businesses with fumes and risk causing fires.

At the last United Nations climate summit, the world agreed on the goal of tripling the capacity for renewable power generation by 2050. While the African continent is responsible for hardly any carbon emissions relative to its size, solar has become one relatively cost-effective way to provide electricity.

The International Energy Agency, in a report earlier this year, said small



A young man stands by a community radio station solar setup sponsored by a German NGO in Gushegu northern Ghana, Friday Sept. 6, 2024. (AP)

and medium-sized solar companies are making rapid progress reaching homes but more needs to be invested to reach all African homes and businesses by 2030.

About 600 million Africans lack access to electricity, it said, out of a population of more than 1.3 billion.

Among the companies that made the Financial Times' annual ranking of Africa's fastest growing companies of 2023 was Easy Solar, a locally owned firm that brings solar power to homes and businesses in Sierra Leone and Liberia. The ranking went by compound annual growth rate in revenue.

Co-founder Nthabiseng Mosia grew up in Ghana with frequent power cuts. She became interested in solv-

ing energy problems in Africa while at graduate school in the United States. Together with a U.S. classmate, she launched the company in Sierra Leone with electrification rates among the lowest in West Africa.

"There wasn't really anybody doing solar at scale. And so we thought it was a good opportunity," Mosia said in an interview.

Since launching in 2016, Easy Solar has brought solar power to over a million people in Sierra Leone and Liberia, which have a combined population of more than 14 million. The company's network includes agents and shops in all of Sierra Leone's 16 districts and seven of nine counties in Liberia.

# What's On

Empowering the younger generation through innovative programs

## stc concludes its sponsorship of 2024 World Robot Olympiad

KUWAIT CITY, Oct 5: Kuwait Telecommunications Company – stc, a world-class digital leader providing innovative services and platforms to customers, enabling the digital transformation in Kuwait, announced that it has concluded its sponsorship of the 2024 World Robot Olympiad (WRO) Kuwait qualifiers hosted by the World Robot Olympiad Association – an independent non-profit organization that promotes robotics in STEM education worldwide. stc's sponsorship of the tournament aligns with the Company's extensive corporate social responsibility framework with the objective of empowering the youth and providing them with platforms to explore their creativity, problem-solving, and technological skills.

As the Excellence Sponsor of the WRO, stc played a contributing role in supporting the youth foster innovation, creativity, and the ability to develop technological skillsets through a globally recognized platform. The event saw enthusiastic participation from young innovators, while families and supporters gathered to cheer on the teams as they worked together to build robots capable of meeting the competition's complex requirements. stc's role as a key sponsor helped provide these young minds with the opportunity to explore ad-

vanced technology, develop essential skills, and collaborate on impactful projects.

The WRO Kuwait qualifiers, with the theme this year being "Earth Allies", took place between October 2nd till the 3rd at the Ahmad Al-Jaber Oil & Gas Exhibition in Al-Ahmadi, welcoming teams from across Kuwait to compete for a chance to represent the country in the global finals that will be held in Turkey. The qualifiers consisted of two categories, the first titled "Robomission", where participants in groups of 2-3 were provided with Lego pieces to build and program a robot that solves challenges on a field. The second category was titled "Future Innovators" and had participants in groups of 2-3 develop a robot project that helps solve real world problems.

The Company's involvement in the WRO is part of its ongoing commitment to cultivate a culture that relies on innovation and technology to solve some of the challenges of tomorrow. In a statement, stc expressed that the introduction of such platforms in the local community aligns with the Company's approach to enabling digital transformation in Kuwait. stc also highlighted that it will continue to collaborate with organizations, whether locally or internationally, to host programs and platforms that promote education, a key pillar under the Company's CSR program.

It is worth noting that the World Robot Olympiad is an international robotics competition that witnesses the participation of over 100 countries held for over 20 years. The competition provides a platform for young innovators to tackle real-world challenges through technology, inspiring them to apply their skills toward building a more sustainable and technologically advanced future.

### About stc

Kuwait Telecommunications Company (stc) is a Kuwaiti shareholding company incorporated pursuant to Amiri Decree No. 187 on 22 July, 2008, to operate and manage the third GSM mobile network in Kuwait as per Law No. 2 of 2008. Accordingly, stc launched its operations in December 2008 and was listed on Boursa Kuwait in December 2014.

stc Kuwait is a world-class digital leader providing innovative services and solutions to customers, both for individuals and enterprises, enabling the digital transformation in Kuwait, and is a subsidiary of stc Group. stc Kuwait has expanded its portfolio by acquiring companies such as Qualitynet General Trading and Contracting Company (solutions by stc) in Kuwait, and e-portal Holding Company and its subsidiaries.



Company was honored by the organizing committee for the championships.



A glimpse of the activities during the qualifiers.

## Bollywood Star Anil Kapoor inaugurates showroom for Malabar Gold & Diamonds

Malabar Gold & Diamonds unveils renovated showroom at Al Rai

KUWAIT CITY, Oct 5: Malabar Gold & Diamonds, the world's 6th largest jewellery retailer with an expansive presence of 360 showrooms across 13 countries, has just launched their expanded and renovated showroom at Lulu Hypermarket in Al Rai. The showroom was inaugurated by Bollywood actor and brand ambassador of Malabar Gold & Diamonds, Anil Kapoor. Mr. Shamal Ahmed, MD-International Operations, Malabar Gold & Diamonds, Mr. Abdul Salam K.P., Vice Chairman of Malabar Group, Mr. Afsal Khan M. Zonal Head of Malabar Gold & Diamonds in Kuwait, Mr. Ali Hamdan Zaid Al-Daihani, Mr. Shahil, P-Branch Head of Malabar Gold & Diamonds, other senior management team members, customers and well-wishers were present for the occasion.

"Our entire operation at Malabar Gold & Diamonds is centered around delivering an unparalleled jewellery shopping experience to our customers, while upholding the highest standards of responsibility and sustainability. To achieve this, we have continually refined our processes to ensure that every piece of jewellery in our showrooms is not only 100% pure in terms of metal quality, but also ethically sourced. The newly revamped showrooms in Kuwait exemplify our unwavering commitment to being a responsible jeweller. We are confident that our customers will appreciate and embrace the enhanced experience offered at this world-class showroom," said Mr. M.P. Ahammed, Chairman of Malabar Group.

The newly revamped showroom will showcase an extensive selection of over 20,000 exquisite designs in gold, diamonds, and precious gems curated from 20 countries. Catering to every jewellery lover's taste, the showroom features a vast array of options for daily wear, office wear, special occasions, and bridal collections. In ad-



Acclaimed bollywood actor Anil Kapoor has inaugurated Malabar Gold & Diamonds expanded & renovated showroom at Lulu Hypermarket, Al Rai. Mr. Shamal Ahmed, MD-International Operations, Malabar Gold & Diamonds, Mr. Abdul Salam K.P., Vice Chairman of Malabar Group, Mr. Afsal Khan M. Zonal Head of Malabar Gold & Diamonds in Kuwait, Mr. Ali Hamdan Zaid Al-Daihani, Mr. Shahil, P-Branch Head of Malabar Gold & Diamonds, other senior management team members, customers and well-wishers were present for the occasion.

dition to an exclusive 'Zoul-lifestyle jewellery' corner and dedicated Mine area, the showroom proudly showcases Malabar Gold & Diamonds' various exclusive brands such as Era-Uncut diamond jewellery, Viraaaz-Royal Polkijewellery, Ethnix-handcrafted designer jewellery, Precia-Gem jewellery, Divine-Indian Heritage jewellery and Starlet-Kids jewellery.

"We are thrilled to unveil our newly expanded and reimagined showrooms in Kuwait for our valued customers in the region. The showroom at Al Rai was our first ever outlet in Kuwait and now with an impressive presence of 8

world-class showrooms in the country, the momentous occasion of the showroom relaunch marks the impressive strides we have made in Kuwait. The showroom has undergone a tremendous transformation to meet the evolving preference of our customers. The enhancement that has been brought to the showroom in terms of both jewellery design and amenities will make their jewellery shopping experience a truly unforgettable one. I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to all our customers in Kuwait for the continued trust and support they have placed in us over the years", said Mr. Shamal

Ahmed, Managing Director – International Operations.

Malabar Gold & Diamonds has an expansive presence of 8 world-class showrooms in Kuwait, located across Al Rai, Dajeej, Mailya, Fahaheel, Mahboula, Salmiya, Jeleeb Al Shuyoukh and Jahra.

In line with the brand's aim of expanding its retail footprint across the globe, Malabar Gold & Diamonds has charted an expansive expansion plan for the coming months, with 20 new showrooms launches planned before Diwali across the UAE, Qatar, KSA, USA & India.

## As part of its social responsibility program and its support for education

## KIB signs MoU with KCST to boost innovation program

KUWAIT CITY, Oct 5: Kuwait International Bank (KIB) announced the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Kuwait College of Science & Technology (KCST) for collaboration on its Innovation Program. The partnership will establish a robust framework for innovation incubation and acceleration, providing valuable development opportunities for students. The new agreement underscores the Bank's commitment to its comprehensive social responsibility strategy, offering dedicated support to educational institutions and strengthening the education sector's contribution to sustainable social and economic growth in Kuwait.

KIB will spearhead the organization and management of the innovation program, supported by the expertise of a globally renowned innovation consultant. The agreement is set to allow KCST students to engage in projects that foster innovative ideas and solutions. The students will gain invaluable experience through internships and cooperative education programs at KIB, allowing them to apply their academic knowledge in a real-world banking environment. Moreover, KIB will consider top students and graduates for future employment opportunities, based on their performance during their internships and co-op programs, thus further demonstrating the Bank's commitment to nurturing local talent.



KIB, KCST sign MoU.

Commenting on the new partnership, Mohamed Atef El-Shareef, General Manager of the Digital Innovation and Data Intelligence Department at KIB, said: "We are proud to partner with Kuwait College of Science & Technology in this innovative endeavor, providing a unique opportunity for its students to engage with the banking industry and develop skills critical to their future success. By combining KIB's commitment to innovation with the talent and creativity of KCST stu-

dents, we aim to drive growth in both the banking sector and the innovation ecosystem in Kuwait. We are excited to see the positive impact this partnership will have on both students and the broader community."

El-Shareef added: "This agreement reaffirms our dedication to advancing the Human Intelligence Innovation Program 'H.I.I.', launched by the Bank in 2023 as a cornerstone for fostering future innovation in Kuwait. Collaborations such as this one set the stage

for greater cooperation with higher education institutions, creating more opportunities for local talents to shine, and having a positive impact on the country's development."

From his side, Professor Khalid Al-Begain, President of Kuwait College of Science and Technology said: "We are delighted to sign this MoU and partner with Kuwait International Bank (KIB), one of the leading banking institutions in Kuwait. The partnership will definitely serve the common goal of both parties in developing a technologically skilled workforce that are well-equipped with the knowledge and experience in the latest developments in cybersecurity, artificial intelligence and data science."

He added: "KCST was established with a focus on cutting-edge technology programs. This allowed it to provide in-depth education that is complemented with strong hands-on training in its state-of-the-art labs and facilities."

It serves to note that this MoU highlights KIB's dedication to supporting educational initiatives, fostering young talent, and driving innovation across Kuwait's banking and technology sectors. The Bank remains committed to enhancing the country's development by creating new, long-term strategic agreements and partnerships with institutions like KCST, which share its vision for a bright future.

## Win up to KD 1000, gold bars

## Warba announces winners of the salary transfer campaign

KUWAIT CITY, Oct 5: Warba Bank continues its salary transfer campaign for the year 2024, which gives the clients a chance to obtain different benefits, most notably an exceptional travel experience and cash prizes of up to KD 1,000, a 25-gram gold bar, and 35,000 miles provided by Warba Bank in cooperation with the Oasis Club of Kuwait Airways, in addition to a cash gift of up to KD 15,000.

The Bank stated that this year's salary transfer campaign will grant all Kuwaiti clients of Warba Bank whose salaries exceed KWD 500 exceptional benefits and entry into the monthly and weekly draws for the 2024 Salary Transfer Campaign.

The weekly draw was held and three clients won. The first winner was: Shahad Suleiman Shebib, who won a prize worth KD 1,000, while the second winner was Sarah Sabry Al-Hajri, who received a 25-gram gold bar. The third prize, went to Sarah Abdullah Al-Mutairi, who received 35,000 miles provided by Warba Bank in cooperation with the Oasis Club of Kuwait Airways.

On this occasion, Ahmed Mohammad Al-Mutawa – Area Manager Retail Banking Group, said: "We are always keen to provide the best distinctive offers and exclusive benefits to our clients that suit different segments and ages of Kuwaitis whose salaries exceed KD 500, so we launched this year's salary transfer campaign with exceptional benefits and rewards."

Al-Mutawa added: "Salary transfer gives clients the opportunity to enjoy the distinguished banking solutions provided by Warba Bank, including innovative digital services and the most advanced payment solutions using the latest technology, which contributes to providing clients with banking experience on the highest levels of luxury, security and peace of mind."

He stressed that all the offers included in the salary transfer campaign this year were carefully designed in line with clients' needs and seasonal requirements, with the aim of always



Ahmed Al-Mutawa

providing the most valuable and suitable offers for our clients.

Al-Mutawa pointed out that transferring the salary gives clients the opportunity to obtain special benefits such as other banking and investment solutions, indicating that Warba clients obtain many exceptional benefits when transferring their salary to the Bank, which include benefiting from the largest banking networks in Kuwait, whether in terms of branches or ATMs.

Al-Mutawa explained that Warba clients can complete their banking transactions quickly, easily and at any time through the Bank's electronic channels, most notably the Warba mobile service, which the Bank is constantly developing and updating, and which is always highly demanded by clients, as it has come to account for the largest share of banking transactions.

Warba Bank is one of the banks that have achieved great successes in a short period of time, as it has occupied a leading position by providing innovative digital banking services in accordance with Islamic Sharia for individuals and companies, and is one of the local banks with the largest number of shareholders, and these are among the most prominent elements that make the Bank close to all members of society.

## 'Range of exclusive deals'

## KFH offers customers discounts of up to 40%

KUWAIT CITY, Oct 5: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) provides exclusive discounts for its credit and prepaid cardholders, along with international offers from Visa and MasterCard, offering benefits to card users both locally and globally. The discounts, reaching up to 40%, cover hotels, tourist attractions, furniture stores, clothing and sports equipment, in addition to medical care.

The discounts include a 10 percent discount in Reebok, Nike, and Puma stores for sporting supplies, Ali Abdulwahab AlMutawa Company and other furniture supplies, and Al-Mutawa pharmacies except for medicines, while the discount rate reaches 15 percent in Alpha Store, and 40 percent at Blando Company for Al Ruwad, Al-Sundus, Al Tamayoz and Al Rubban customers.

The KFH Visa Signature credit card provides a wide range of benefits in travel rewards, dining, shopping, personal assistance service, and unlimited protection service, ensuring that customers experience the utmost comfort and security. With this card, customers have unlimited complimentary access to over 1,100 airport lounges worldwide.

Furthermore, the KFH Visa Signature credit card provides extensive travel insurance for all family members while traveling abroad from Kuwait, offering insurance coverage of up to 500,000 US dollars. Simply booking the travel trip using the card automatically enrolls the customer in personal accident insurance coverage during travel.

The KFH Visa Signature card delivers exceptional value, granting customers access to over 900 luxurious destinations worldwide through the Visa luxury hotel group. With KFH Visa Signature credit card, customers will experience an extraordinary stay at a meticulously curated selection of renowned boutique hotels and resorts. Cardholders will benefit from a range of exclusive privileg-

es, including VIP service, the best available room rates, automatic room upgrades subject to availability, and numerous additional perks.

In addition, KFH offers a discount of up to 10 percent with Emirates Airlines to all KFH cardholders on travel tickets to all destinations departing from Kuwait only on Emirates Airlines (excluding taxes and additional fees). Customers can benefit from the discount more than once.

The offers allow the possibility of obtaining points within the KFH rewards program, up to 100,000 points that can be exchanged for purchases in major stores, in addition to earning 10 points for every purchase worth 1 KD at stores participating in the program. Customers can earn numerous rewards by utilizing their KFH points for purchases at participating stores within the program. Additionally, they can take advantage of a range of exclusive deals and special offers available through online shopping.

KFH seeks to offer its credit card holders a range of benefits and added value as part of its strategy to enhance customer loyalty and reward its customers. This initiative is designed to increase KFH's market share in the local banking cards market, strengthening the competitiveness of its cards by linking them to many benefit programs and services to meet customers' aspirations.

Moreover, the variety of discounts further demonstrates KFH's commitment to ensuring that its advantages cater to the diverse interests and aspirations of its customers.

KFH credit cards are recognized as some of the finest in the industry, receiving commendations from prominent organizations such as Visa and MasterCard. Additionally, KFH cards consistently earn awards for their outstanding performance and efficiency within the banking sector.



KFH banner.

## Nobel

### Should Peace Prize be withheld?

# Nobel Prizes to be announced amid wars, famine and AI

STAVANGER, Norway, Oct 5. (AP) - Wars, a refugee crisis, famine and artificial intelligence could all be recognized when Nobel Prize announcements begin next week under a shroud of violence.

The literature and science prizes could be immune. But the Peace Prize, which recognizes efforts to end conflict, will be awarded in an atmosphere of ratcheting international violence - if awarded at all.

"I look at the world and see so much conflict, hostility and confrontation, I wonder if this is the year the Nobel Peace Prize should be withheld," said Dan Smith, director of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute.

As well as events roiling the Middle East, Smith cites the war in Sudan and risk of famine there, the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, and his institute's research showing that global military spending is increasing at its fastest pace since World War II.

"It could go to some groups which are making heroic efforts but are marginalized," Smith said. "But the trend is in the wrong direction. Perhaps it would be right to draw attention to that by withholding the peace prize this year."

Withholding the Nobel Peace is not new. It has been



Mourners cry during the funeral of 18 Palestinians who were killed in an Israeli attack in Tulkarem, Friday, Oct. 4, 2024. (AP)

suspended 19 times in the past, including during the world wars. The last time it was not awarded was in 1972.

However, Henrik Urdal, director of the Peace Research Institute Oslo, says withdrawal would be a mistake in 2024, saying the prize is "arguably more important as a

way to promote and recognize important work for peace."

Civil grassroot groups, and international organizations with missions to mitigate violence in the Middle East could be recognized.

Nominees are kept secret for 50 years, but qualified nominators often publicize their picks. Academics at the Free University Amsterdam said they have nominated the Middle East-based organizations EcoPeace, Women Wage Peace and Women of the Sun for peace efforts between Israelis and Palestinians.

Urdal believes it's possible the committee could consider the Sudan Emergency Response Rooms, a group of grassroots initiatives providing aid to stricken Sudanese facing famine and buffeted by the country's brutal civil war.

The announcements begin Monday with the physiology or medicine prize, followed on subsequent days by the physics, chemistry, literature and peace awards.

The Peace Prize announcement will be made on Friday by the Norwegian Nobel Committee in Oslo, while all the others will be announced by the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences in Stockholm. The prize in economics will be announced the following week on Oct. 14.

New technology, possibly artificial intelligence, could be recognized in one or more of the categories.

Critics of AI warn the rise of autonomous weapons shows the new technology could mean additional peace-shattering misery for many people. Yet AI has also enabled scientific breakthroughs which are tipped for recognition in other categories.

David Pendlebury, head of research analysis at Clarivate's Institute for Scientific Information, says scientists from Google Deepmind, the AI lab, could be among those under consideration for the chemistry prize.

The company's artificial intelligence, AlphaFold "accurately predicts the structure of proteins," and is already widely used in several fields, including medicine, where it could one day be used to develop a breakthrough drug.

Pendlebury spearheads Clarivate's list of scientists whose papers are among the world's most cited, and whose work it says are ripe for Nobel recognition.

"AI will increasingly be a part of the panoply of tools that researchers use," Pendlebury said. He said he would be extremely surprised if a discovery "firmly anchored in AI" did not win Nobel prizes in the next 10 years.

## Variety

**BEIJING:** Chen Kaige's war epic "The Volunteers: The Battle of Life and Death" continued its reign at the top of China's box office during the National Day holiday, maintaining its lead for the fourth consecutive day on Saturday.

Starring Zhu Yilong, Xin Baiqing and Zhang Zifeng, the second installment of Chen's "The Volunteers" trilogy has raked in more than 600 million yuan (85.6 million U.S. dollars), accounting for around 36.7 percent of the holiday's total box office revenue.

According to movie data platform Maoyan, the film is on track to finish its run with over 1.4 billion yuan, potentially placing it among the top six highest-grossing films in China this year.

The film's predecessor also found success at the box office, earning 868 million yuan

following its release during last year's National Day holiday.

The lucrative week-long National Day holiday kicked off

on Oct. 1, and has been seen as a potential catalyst for a box office rebound following a weaker-than-expected summer season. (Xinhua)

**LOS ANGELES:** Eminem killed off his alter ego Slim Shady with his latest album, but he's making way for a new nickname: Grandpa.

The rapper announced his daughter Hailie Jade is pregnant through a touching music video that is a tribute to their relationship. Home videos dating back to 1999 and photos of the father-daughter duo, along with videos from her May wedding, are underscored by the emotional song "Temporary" in the video released Thursday.

In one clip of a recent home video, his daughter hands Eminem a jersey with the name "Grandpa" emblazoned on the back with the number 1. She also hands him ultrasound photos, and he looks shocked.

The social media influencer confirmed the news of her pregnancy hours after the video was released Thursday, with an Instagram post. "Mom & dad est. 2025," she captioned the post. (AP)

**ASHEVILLE, N.C.:** A well-known Asheville musical tradition returned Friday night, in a sign of hopefulness a week after Helene battered the mountain city.

The Asheville Drum Circle had its first regular Friday night session since the powerful storm blew in. The wind and flooding caused catastrophic damage throughout the mountains.

Amid the post-storm chaos, the sound of drums echoed across Pritchard Park and through nearby streets in downtown Asheville.

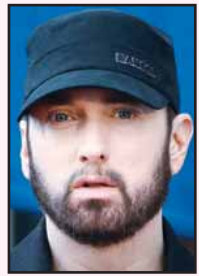
Drummer Mel McDonald said he hopes the smaller-than-usual gathering will spread cheer during the trying time.

"Now is the most important time for people to see that it's not over, there's things to look forward to and enjoy yourselves," McDonald said. (AP)

**ZAGREB:** A concert of pipa, a traditional Chinese musical instrument, was held in Zagreb on Friday evening, as part of the China Art Festival, the first of its kind in Croatia.

This special musical night, held at the Culture and Information Center Maksimir, was organized by the China-Croatia Economic and Cultural Cooperation Association. The festival runs from Oct. 1 to 6 with exhibitions, tea art, pipa performances, and chaogans shows.

"We are very happy to be here to have the chance to show the Chinese culture," said Bai Xiaoting, president of the association. (Xinhua)



Eminem



This image released by Warner Bros. Pictures shows Joaquin Phoenix, (left), and Lady Gaga in a scene from 'Joker: Folie à Deux.' (AP)

## Film

Phoenix and Gaga dazzle in musical madness

# 'Folie à Deux' reckons with 'Joker'

Let's put on a happy face, at least to start, for "Joker: Folie à Deux."

If there's one undeniably compelling thing about both Todd Phillips' divisive 2019 original and his new follow-up, it's that these movies are best when they dance. The first movie might have been a muddled attempt to retrofit a "Taxi Driver"-styled '70s realism into a Joker origin story, but, man, when Joaquin Phoenix is on his toes, it's hard to look away.

Just the image of a gaunt Phoenix decked out in the red suit, with his green-streaked hair slicked back, was enough to give "Joker" a kick. The role gave Phoenix, a full-bodied actor, a day-glo canvas on which to unleash torrents of movement, cycling between wounded restraint and flamboyant release, in a comic-book genre that usually leaves performers paralyzed by spandex.

He's nearly as captivating in "Joker: Folie à Deux," a musical that closely follows the events of the first film as an imprisoned Arthur Fleck (Phoenix) goes on trial for the murders that occurred at the culmination of "Joker." Even the way Phoenix theatrically smokes as Arthur - which he does quite a lot in "Folie à Deux" - shows you how much he's luxuriating in the limber physicality of the character.

But any sense of forward momentum has gone out the window in "Joker: Folie à Deux," which opened in theaters Thursday. Phillips has followed his very anti-hero take on the Joker with a very anti-sequel. It combines prison drama, courthouse thriller and musical, and yet turns out remarkably inert given how combustible the original was. If "Joker" - which some claimed sympathized the kind of lone gunmen that populate our real world - stirred debate, "Folie à Deux" is a self-conscious rejoinder to all that discussion, spending much of its time interrogating Arthur's actions from the last movie.

That makes it a theoretically interesting film but a curiously dull one, particularly given that

it stars two such incredibly watchable performers in Phoenix and Lady Gaga, who plays a fellow inmate, Lee Quinzel, infatuated with the Joker. Phillips deserves credit for subverting expectations. Most directors would turn Arthur loose for a sequel chock-full of violence and mayhem, not Burt Bacharach song-and-dance sequences. But laudable as the intentions of "Folie à Deux" may be, it feels thoughtfully but tiresomely stuck in the past.

"You gotta joke for us today?" asks an Arkham State Hospital guard (Brendan Gleeson, back inside a jail post-"Paddington 2") as they pull Arthur from his cell. He is seemingly even thinner now, his shoulder blades sticking out. A wan look shows he's jokeless, too, having clearly reverted back to the depression that Arthur earlier stewed in.

### Themes

That interaction, and others that follow, carries on some of the themes of "Joker," which imagined Arthur and the mania that springs from him as the warped product of a cruel urban world and failed social safety net. Arthur is now heading for either the death penalty or life in prison, it's just a matter of whether his attorney (Catherine Keener) can convince a jury that he suffers from split personality syndrome.

We are again asked to consider and weigh how Arthur is treated by those around him, including the guards who at turns mock him, ask him for his autograph or show him a little compassion. Gotham City district attorney, Harvey Dent (Harry Lawtey), believes he should die for killing five, including the late-night talk-show host Murray Franklin live on air. Does Arthur deserve our sympathy? "Folie à Deux" is a little like the "Seinfeld" finale: a moral, courtroom rehashing.

The throngs outside the courthouse clamor not for Arthur but the Joker, who they regard as an anarchist martyr. They crave entertainment, and Arthur, or the Joker, is tempted to give it to

them. One psychology expert claims Arthur's mental illness is "just a show." In many ways - including a mock Looney Tunes cartoon that opens the movie - "Folie à Deux" continues the first movie's interest in considering, and satirizing, what it is we crave in entertainment. Do we want the "real" story of Arthur or the fantasy of the Joker?

I'm not sure "Folie à Deux" always successfully pegs audience desire, though. What I most wanted in "Folie à Deux" was for it to stop playing with the concepts of its characters and instead let them breathe a little more on their own. It's not surprising that the movie works best when Arthur and Lee lock into one other. This is Arthur's first blush with the love he's lacked ("She gets me," he says), but their connection may also have more to do with fantasy. Their time together is actually somewhat limited but, in Arthur's imagination, their emotions soar in songs, mostly old standards ("Get Happy," "For Once in My Life," "That's Life"), they sing tenderly to one another.

These musical interludes break free of an otherwise fairly bleak and belabored narrative, as a legal and penal system that doesn't know how to handle Arthur's pain - or that he's a reflection of their failure - help twist him back into the Joker. Once the Joker does fully emerge, Phoenix's Fleck is visibly aghast at what he's wrought.

All of this wrestling with "The Joker" makes "Folie à Deux" an impressively un-superhero-movie-like, and a deliberate denial of audience expectation. But it's also spinning its wheels. It's not surprising that "Folie à Deux" originated in concept as a stage show. It's stuck in place, with only Phoenix's dazzling contortions to marvel at.

"Joker: Folie à Deux," a Warner Bros. release, is rated R by the Motion Picture Association for some strong violence, language throughout, some sexuality, and brief full nudity. Running time: 139 minutes. Two stars out of four. (AP)

## Lawsuit filed

Brooks accused of rape by his stylist

LOS ANGELES, Oct 5. (AP) - A woman who says she worked as a hair-and-makeup stylist for Garth Brooks alleged in a lawsuit filed Thursday that he raped her in a Los Angeles hotel in 2019.

The woman does not use her name and goes by Jane Roe in the lawsuit filed in Los Angeles Superior Court. An email seeking comment from Brooks' publicist and attorney were not immediately answered.

The woman says in the lawsuit she had worked for Brooks' wife, country singer Trisha Yearwood, since 1999, and had started also working for Brooks in 2017.

She said the assault occurred when she traveled from Nashville to Los Angeles with Brooks, who was performing with soul singer Sam Moore at a Grammy Awards tribute to Moore in October 2019.

Brooks normally traveled with an entourage, but the two were alone on his private jet, and he booked just one hotel suite for both of them, the lawsuit says.

The woman alleges that in the suite, he appeared naked in the doorway to the bedroom and raped her.



Garth Brooks speaks during a groundbreaking ceremony for the Tennessee Titans new NFL football stadium, Feb. 29, 2024, in Nashville, Tenn. (AP)

Women in their 80s learn reading and rap

S. Korean octogenarians make waves

CHILGOK, South Korea, Oct 5, (AP): Wearing an oversized bucket hat, silver chains and a black Miu Miu shirt, 82-year-old Park Jeom-sun gesticulates, her voice rising and falling with the staccato delivery of rhymes about growing chili peppers, cucumbers and eggplants.

Park, nicknamed Suni, was flanked by seven longtime friends who repeated her moves and her lines. Together, they're Suni and the Seven Princesses, South Korea's latest octogenarian sensation. With an average age of 85, they're probably the oldest rap group in the country.

Born at a time when women were often marginalized in education, Park and her friends were among a group of older adults learning how to read and write the Korean alphabet, hangul, at a community center in their farming village in South Korea's rural southeast.

They were having so much fun that they started dabbling with poetry. They began writing and performing rap in summer last year.

Suni and the Seven Princesses enjoy nationwide fame, appearing in commercials and going viral on social media. South Korean Prime Minister Han Duck-soo sent them a congratulatory message last month on their first anniversary, praising their passion for learning.

At a road near their community center in Chilgok on Thursday, Park and her friends were rehearsing for a performance Friday evening in the capital, Seoul, where they were invited to open an event celebrating hangul heritage.

"Picking chili peppers at the pepper field, picking cucumbers at the cucumber field, picking eggplants at the eggplant field, picking zucchini at the zucchini field!" the group rapped along

with Park. "We're back home now and it feels so good!"

Park said the group usually practices two or three times a week, more if they're preparing for a show.

On Friday, hundreds of people applauded and cheered, and then the group lined up for a photo with South Korean Culture Minister Yu In Chon.

Park talked about the joy of learning to read, saying she can now "go to the bank, ride the bus and go anywhere" she wants without someone helping her.

"During and after the Korean War, I couldn't study because of the social atmosphere, but I started learning hangul in 2016," Park said, referring to the devastating war between North and South Korea from 1950 to 1953. "Being introduced to rap while learning Hangul has made me feel better, and I thought it would help me stay healthy and avoid dementia."



Members of Suni and the Seven Princesses pose for a photo at Gwanghwamun square in Seoul, South Korea, Friday, Oct. 4. (AP)

Grammys

Women dominate

Grammys boost diversity with 66% new members

NEW YORK, Oct 5, (AP): For years, the Grammy Awards have been criticized over a lack of diversity - artists of color and women left out of top prizes; rap and contemporary R&B stars ignored - a reflection of the Recording Academy's electorate. An evolving voting body, 66% of whom have joined in the last five years, is working to remedy that.

At last year's awards, women dominated the major categories; every televised competitive Grammy went to at least one woman. It stems from a commitment the Recording Academy made five years ago: In 2019, the Academy announced it would add 2,500 women to its voting body by 2025. Under the Grammys' new membership model, the Recording Academy has surpassed that figure ahead of the deadline: More than 3,000 female voting members have been added, it announced Thursday.



Mason

"It's definitely something that we're all very proud of," Harvey Mason Jr., academy president and CEO, told The Associated Press. "It tells me that we were severely underrepresented in that area."

Reform at the Record Academy dates back to the creation of a task force focused on inclusion and diversity after a previous CEO, Neil Portnow, made comments belittling women at the height of the #MeToo movement.

Since 2019, approximately 8,700 new members have been added to the voting body. In total, there are now more than 16,000 members and more than 13,000 of them are voting

members, up from about 14,000 in 2023 (11,000 of which were voting members). In that time, the academy has increased its number of members who identify as people of color by 63%.

"It's not an all-new voting body," Mason assures. "We're very specific and intentional in who we asked to be a part of our academy by listening and learning from different genres and different groups that felt like they were being overlooked, or they weren't being heard."

Mason says that in the last five years, the Recording Academy has "requalified 100% of our members, which is a huge step." There are voters who have let their membership lapse - and those who no longer qualify to be a voting member have been removed.

There have been renewal review processes in the past, but under the current model, becoming a voting member requires proof of a primary career in music, two recommendations from industry peers and 12 credits in a single creative profession, at least five of which must be from the last five years.

Privileges

Comparisons might be made to the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, which announced in 2016 that it would restrict Oscars voting privileges to active members - ineligible parties included those who haven't worked in three decades since joining the Academy, unless they themselves are nominated - as a response to #OscarsSoWhite criticisms of its lack of diversity. As a result, some members protested that the new measures unjustly scapegoated older academy members. The film academy has also grown its membership, adding more women and people from underrepresented racial and ethnic communities.

Music



Musician, actor and filmmaker RZA poses for a portrait near a poster for his 2012 film 'The Man with the Iron Fists' at his office, Wednesday, Aug. 28, 2024, in Los Angeles. (AP)

On 'A Ballet Through Mud' a unique fusion

RZA reflects on classical album roots

LOS ANGELES, Oct 5, (AP): RZA's hoarding habit led to his newest adventure in music: a ballet and surprisingly traditional classical album he calls "A Ballet Through Mud."

Early in the pandemic, the 55-year-old Wu-Tang Clan founder, born Robert Diggs, was rummaging through a bag of old spiral notebooks he found in his library. He pulled out a blue Mead notebook full of rhymes, phone numbers and movie ideas that he'd written as a teenager growing up in Staten Island.

Looking through the books, a series of storytelling raps stood out - ones that he'd deemed too "immature" to use when he started his first group with cousins Russell Jones and Gary Grice, who later took the names Ol' Dirty Bastard and GZA/Genius.

He'd been studying music theory for years and had already composed the scores to 10 films. So, noodling along on the keyboard, he began crafting melodies that matched the emotions of one of his teenage rhyme-stories about six friends, "Joe Is A Nerd." Was it an opera, potentially?

He kept going, finding further inspiration and building out orchestration, until his wife weighed in: No vocals needed. After watching a documentary about Alvin Ailey on a flight, he sought out dancers to visualize his imagined narrative, and eventually collaborated with the Colorado Symphony for two performances in February 2023.

RZA sat down at his office in suburban Los Angeles to speak with The Associated Press about the nostalgic genesis of the project, the growing bridge between the worlds of classical and hip-hop and his hopes for what happens next with his composition and ballet.

high school heartbreak, all that's happening. And I just saw it and ... It's kind of like how Elton John would do with Bernie Taupin lyrics. I started writing music, composing music. And as the music started to have its own voice, its own speaking, all the emotions that I was trying to capture would be captured.

But it was like there was no need to put lyrics over it. And I fought myself about that over and over until maybe after about six songs. Then the music took on a life of its own.

We had a great time when we did the Wu-Tang concert with them. They have all the charts for the Wu-Tang, and so I know that (resident conductor) Chris (Dragon) gets me.

And then I get on with (Chief Artistic Officer) Tony Pierce and Tony's like, "That sounds great. We would love to be a part of it. But also, we have started this program called the Imagination Program, where they're striving to help bring more young people to the orchestra. They're striving to spread the culture."

Genius

It's a synergy there. And so we agreed to do that. And he's like, yo, it's a three-year process. You can develop your own stuff and play with it along the path.

They are balletic. But you think of them in a more macho way than Alvin Ailey did. You have to have a sensitive side now. And that could be the side of hip-hop that I was fighting against. But then you realize as an artist, this is a genius. As I get older, as an artist, my boundaries become more artistic versus more confined to a box.

I created it. I think other people should play with it. I would love to see a high school take it and play it and dance it and share it. That would be the greatest.

Like it actually goes to high schools or go to freshmen in college or go, you know, places where people young can express it and feel it. It's not complicated like Beethoven's Ninth, Tchaikovsky. But yet, because of the proper use of the orchestra, it's still big.

The first intention is that for somebody to listen to this, go through the story that it gives them in their own mind and enjoy. That's the first thing. This is a gift. So that's what feels so good about it. It's like, yo, I could've bought a Bentley or something. Nah.

I made a piece of music that caused some emotions, you know, put people to work, you know, everybody made a few dollars who did it right? Bought back to the community. Music has given me a lot. I gave a gift back.

Wu-Tang performed at Coachella (in 2013). I only agreed to do it if I could have the orchestra back me. Hip-hop samples from orchestras all the time. Barry White, we love Isaac Hayes because he was orchestrating and composing, Quincy Jones - these are my mentors right here. So, it was natural for us.

And I'm happy that the culture is doing it. There was a hip-hop violinist a few years ago that was dope. There's a dope orchestra in Atlanta right now, the all Black (Orchestra Noir). They're bananas with it. They'll drop some Future on you. I think Metro Boomin tried something recently.

I feel like a pioneer of it. Like in 1997, I'm bringing in real violins into my sessions to create "Reunited" and other songs on "Wu-Tang Forever." But the idea is that somebody young could start with it, not end up with it like I ended up here. Start with a violin, cello, trumpet, brass - start with those with that knowledge. So then when you start creating with the technology you have now, the sky's the limit.

Variety

HOUSTON: A black indie film festival debuted on Thursday night in Houston, the fourth largest U.S. city rich in diversity, with an aim to gain global attention and connect people worldwide.

About 20 films from the United States, France and a number of African countries will be highlighted during the Black Independent Filmmakers Association (BIFA) Houston Film Festival, Thomas Carter, CEO and founder of BIFA, told Xinhua at the opening ceremony.

"We have more in common than we don't. So it's very important if we are going to survive as a species, that we learn how to communicate, how to share ideas, and how to help each other right in a time of need," said the African American award-winning filmmaker. "And the only way to get those stories out is by having a global festival."

BIFA Board President Antrone Harris, an actor and a producer, said BIFA, founded last year, hopes the festival can help pave the way for "the generation that's to come," especially young writers and directors. (Xinhua)



Rushdie

MAYVILLE, N.Y.: Jurors picked for the trial of a man who severely injured author Salman Rushdie in a knife attack likely won't hear about the fatwa that authorities have said motivated him to act, a prosecutor said Friday.

"We're not going there," District Attorney Jason Schmidt said during a conference in preparation for the Oct. 15 start of Hadi Matar's trial in Chautauque County Court. Schmidt said raising a motive was unnecessary, given that the attack was witnessed and recorded by a live audience who had gathered to hear Rushdie speak.

Potential jurors will nevertheless face questions meant to root out implicit bias because Matar, of Fairview, New Jersey, is the son of Lebanese immigrants and practices Islam, Judge David Foley said. (AP)

Authentication sought

Italian family believes 1960s dump painting is a Picasso

MILAN, Oct 5, (AP): An Italian family hopes to prove definitively that a painting discarded from a villa on the island of Capri more than 60 years ago is a Picasso, and has been gathering scientific data to persuade Picasso's estate administration in Paris to make the definitive call.

The rolled-up canvas of a female figure was discovered in a pile of trash that a junk dealer was hired to discard in the early 1960s, and it hung innocuously in the family living room and then restaurant in Pompei, near Naples, for years until his son decided to investigate.

"My mother called it ugly," the junk

dealer's son, Andrea Lo Russo, said Thursday. "Here, we are used to landscapes featuring the sea."

Lo Russo said that his first inkling that the painting may be an important work came when he saw a Picasso in a middle school textbook, but neither his teacher nor his father were persuaded. His curiosity persisted, and in his early 20s, he and his brother drove to Paris and brought the painting to the Picasso Museum.

"They looked, and they said, 'It is not possible,'" Lo Russo recalled. He said that he declined their invitation to leave the painting for further examination, not wanting to relinquish it.



A painting is seen at a restoration laboratory in Milan, Italy, Thursday, Oct. 3, 2024. (AP)



Reese Witherspoon

Witherspoon to pen 'first novel'

NEW YORK, Oct 5, (AP): Reese Witherspoon's latest literary news marks a new direction for the Oscar-winning actor, producer and founder of her own book club.

Grand Central Publishing announced Wednesday that the "Legally Blonde" and "Big Little Lies" star is teaming with the bestselling thriller writer and Netflix producer-creator Harlan Coben on a suspense novel, her first work of adult fiction. The book, currently untitled, is scheduled for next fall and is being developed out of an idea - details to come - that Witherspoon came up with.

"To say I am a fan of Harlan's body of work is a massive understatement," Witherspoon said in a statement issued through Grand Central, an imprint of Hachette Book Group. "The fact that he found my idea for this thriller intriguing enough to want to partner with me on it as co-author is a dream becoming a reality. Scheming with Harlan on how to thrill audiences with mysterious characters and complex narrative twists and turns has already been more fun than I can describe. I can't wait for everyone to read what we have been imagining."

Google integrates more AI into search

Google's AI can now answer voice queries on images

SAN FRANCISCO, Oct 5, (AP): Google is injecting its search engine with more artificial intelligence that will enable people to voice questions about images and occasionally organize an entire page of results, despite the technology's past offerings of misleading information.



A sign is shown on a Google building at their campus in Mountain View, Calif., on Sept. 24, 2019. (AP)

The latest changes announced Thursday herald the next step in an AI-driven makeover that Google launched in mid-May when it began responding to some queries with summaries written by the technology at the top of its influential results page. Those summaries, dubbed "AI Overviews," raised fears among publishers that fewer people would click on search links to their websites and undercut the traffic needed to sell digital ads that help finance their operations.

Google is addressing some of those ongoing worries by inserting even more links to other websites within the AI Overviews, which

already have been reducing the visits to general news publishers such as The New York Times and technology review specialists such as TomsGuide.com, according to an analysis released last month

by search traffic specialist Bright-Edge.

But Google's decision to pump even more AI into the search engine that remains the crown jewel of its \$2 trillion empire leaves little doubt that the Mountain View, California, company is tethering its future to a technology propelling the biggest industry shift since Apple unveiled the first iPhone 17 years ago.

The next phase of Google's AI evolution builds upon its 7-year-old Lens feature that processes queries about objects in a picture. The Lens option is now generates more than 20 billion queries per month, and is particularly popular among users from 18 to 24 years old. That's a younger demographic that Google is trying to cultivate as it faces competition from AI alternatives powered by ChatGPT and Perplexity that are positioning themselves as answer engines.

Now, people will be able to use

Lens to ask a question in English about something they are viewing through a camera lens - as if they were talking about it with a friend - and get search results. Users signed up for tests of the new voice-activated search features in Google Labs will also be able to take video of moving objects, such as fish swimming around aquarium, while posing a conversational question and be presented an answer through an AI Overview.

"The whole goal is can we make search simpler to use for people, more effortless to use and make it more available so people can search any way, anywhere they are," said Rajan Patel, Google's vice president of search engineering and a co-founder of the Lens feature.

Although advances in AI offer the potential of making search more convenient, the technology also sometimes spits out bad information - a risk that threatens to damage

the credibility of Google's search engine if the inaccuracies become too frequent. Google has already had some embarrassing episodes with its AI Overviews, including advising people to put glue on pizza and to eat rocks. The company blamed those missteps on data voids and online troublemakers deliberately trying to steer its AI technology in a wrong direction.

Google is now so confident that it has fixed some of its AI's blind spots that it will rely on the technology to decide what types of information to feature on the results page. Despite its previous bad culinary advice about pizza and rocks, AI will initially be used for the presentation of the results for queries in English about recipes and meal ideas entered on mobile devices. The AI-organized results are supposed to be broken down into different groups of clusters consisting of photos, videos and articles about the subject.

WNV kills 6

US sees new bird flu human cases

NEW YORK, Oct 5, (Agencies): Two dairy workers in California were infected with bird flu, the 15th and 16th human cases detected this year in an ongoing outbreak affecting the nation's dairy cows, health officials said Thursday.

The latest cases were found in workers who had contact with infected cattle in California's Central Valley, where more than 50 herds have been affected since August. The workers developed eye redness known as conjunctivitis and had mild symptoms.

California health officials said the workers were employed at different farms and there is no known link between the two cases, suggesting that they were infected through animal contact, not by people.

The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on Thursday confirmed the positive test results, the first for California. CDC officials said new cases of bird flu in people exposed to infected animals is "not unexpected." The risk to the public remains low, they added.

Across the US, more than 250 dairy herds have been infected in 14 states since the outbreak of H5N1 avian influenza was confirmed in March. Avian influenza has been spreading in wild and domestic birds in the U.S. for several years but recently was found in dairy cows.

Before this year, one case of bird flu was detected in a person, a Colorado poultry worker who fell ill in 2022. Most cases this year have been detected in workers who had contact with cattle or poultry in Colorado, Michigan and Texas. A person in Missouri was also infected, but that person had no known contact with animals and the source of that illness has not been determined.

Meanwhile the US state of California has recorded six fatalities among 63 cases of the mosquito-borne West Nile virus (WNV) this year, according to the latest data of the California Department of Public Health (CDPH).

There were four new WNV positive human cases reported in California last week. In Los Angeles County, four people caught dengue in August and September without traveling outside of the country.

A total of 87 new WNV positive mosquito samples were reported in California last week. There have been 1,835 positive mosquito samples reported in the state so far this year, according to CDPH.

Call for treatment

Research links snoring to elevated blood pressure

CANBERRA, Oct 5, (Xinhua): Australian research has found a link between snoring and elevated blood pressure.

According to the study, which was conducted by sleep scientists from Flinders University in South Australia, people who regularly snore at night are more likely to have elevated blood pressure and uncontrolled hypertension.

Hypertension occurs when the pressure in a person's blood vessels is too high. It can cause serious damage to the heart and lead to heart attack, stroke, heart failure and heart disease.

Blood pressure is recorded in millimeters of mercury (mmHg) as two numbers such as 120/80. The first number - the systolic blood pressure - measures the pressure in the arteries as the heart pumps out blood and the second - diastolic blood pressure - the pressure as the heart relaxes before the next beat.

The study found that 15 percent of 12,287 participants snored for more than 20 percent of the night on average over a six-month monitoring period and that those with high snoring levels had a 3.8 mmHg higher systolic blood pressure and 4.5 mmHg higher diastolic blood pressure than participants who did not snore.

The Flinders University study was the first to use multiple night home-based monitoring technologies over a prolonged period to investigate the link between snoring and hypertension. Participants in the study were middle-aged and 88 percent were male.

"For the first time, we can objectively say that there is a significant connection between regular nighttime snoring and high blood pressure," Bastien Lechat, lead author of the research from the College of Medicine and Public Health at Flinders University, said in a media release on Wednesday.

Marburg deaths rise

359 killed as suspected cholera cases exceed 10,000 in Nigeria

ABUJA, Oct 5, (Xinhua): An outbreak of cholera killed at least 359 people in 33 Nigerian states including the southwestern state of Lagos between January and September this year, the Nigeria Center for Disease Control and Prevention (NCDC) said in a new report on Thursday.

In an update on the cholera outbreak in Nigeria obtained by Xinhua in the capital of Abuja on Friday, the public health agency confirmed a surge in the number of suspected cases, which has risen to 10,837 this year.

So far this year, a total of 33 of Nigeria's 36 states have reported suspected cases of cholera. At least 15 new fatal cases, from 198 suspected new cases, were reported in five states last week alone, with a case-fatality ratio of 7.6 percent, the NCDC said.

Leading a multi-sectoral National Cholera Technical Working Group, the NCDC urged state authorities to step up their cholera preparedness and response plan and build capacities to

manage emergencies.

In September, at least "254 rapid diagnostic tests were conducted with 175 positive results, 149 stool culture tests conducted and 103 positive results," read the NCDC report.

**Marburg:** Rwanda has reassured foreign tourists and investors that the country remains a safe destination despite the recent outbreak of Marburg virus disease (MVD).

According to a statement issued late Thursday by the Rwanda Development Board (RDB), a government department responsible for investment and tourism promotion, Rwanda is open for business and tourism while swift and proactive measures have been taken to contain the virus.

Marburg hemorrhagic fever has killed 11 people in Rwanda, health authorities said Thursday, as the East African country searches for the source of an outbreak first traced among patients in health facilities.

DR Congo to start mpox vaccination

WHO approves first 'mpox test' for emergency use as cases rise

GENEVA, Oct 5, (Xinhua): The World Health Organization (WHO) said on Friday that it has approved the first diagnostic test for mpox, marking a significant milestone in expanding global access to mpox testing.

The approval comes as Africa continues to struggle with limited testing capacity, which fueled the spread of the virus. Over 30,000 suspected mpox cases have been reported across the continent in 2024, with the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Burundi, and Nigeria being the most affected.

In the DRC, only 37 percent of suspected cases have been tested this year, according to the global health agency.

The test, known as Alinity m MPXV assay, will boost diagnostic capacity in countries facing mpox outbreaks, where rapid and accurate testing is crucial.

Designed

The Alinity m MPXV assay is a real-time PCR test designed to detect mpox virus DNA from human skin lesion swabs, enabling laboratory and health workers to confirm cases quickly.

Meanwhile, the DRC was to launch its first phase of the vaccination campaign on Saturday, DRC Health Minister Roger Kamba announced on Friday. The vaccination, initially scheduled for Wednesday, will start from Goma, the capital of North Kivu Province, where the most sexually transmissible clade 2b of the virus is rampant. It will soon reach South Kivu, the province most affected by the disease, said the minister, revealing that approximately 265,000 doses of vaccine are available.

"We take into account the doses we have and the strategy taken, that is to say, first vaccinate the most affected



Atumisi Anacllet treats a sex worker who has mpox Wednesday, Sept. 4, 2024 in the general hospital in Kamituga, eastern Congo. (AP)

areas. That is why it will start in the East," he explained, without elaborating on the postponement of the campaign.

Kamba said that given the number of doses available, the current phase of vaccination primarily involves adults. The country plans to vaccinate 2.5 million people with 3.5 million doses of vaccine.

"We will try to vaccinate adults first because the vaccine we received is already approved for adults. Research suggests that it can also be used in children under 17, but for now, given the number of doses we have, we will start with adults," he said.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), the DRC, the epicenter of the ongoing mpox outbreak, accounts for about 90 percent of all

cases of mpox recorded in the African region.

Since the start of 2024, the total number of mpox cases in Africa has risen to 34,297, including 6,806 confirmed cases and 866 deaths, according to the Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC).

Addressing a special online media briefing on the multi-country mpox outbreak in Africa, Africa CDC Director-General Jean Kaseya said on Thursday night that the continent reported 2,490 new cases in the past week alone, including 365 confirmed cases and 26 deaths, bringing the total number of cases reported this year to 34,297.

Data from the Africa CDC showed that the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi accounted for 94.5 percent of all the confirmed cases dur-

Africa CDC aids mpox vaccination in South Sudan

JUBA, Oct 5, (Xinhua): The Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) on Friday donated cold chain equipment to South Sudan's Ministry of Health to strengthen the country's vaccine storage capacity and routine immunization efforts amid the ongoing outbreak of mpox on the continent.

Mazyanga Lucy Liwewe Mazaba, regional director for the Eastern Africa

Regional Coordinating Center of the Africa CDC, said the equipment will help strengthen the immunization program in the world's youngest country.

The donation includes 65 refrigerators, four voltage stabilizers, three thermometers, and various accessories that will ensure the safe storage and transportation of vaccines to the last mile, Liwewe said during the handover ceremony in Juba, the capital of South Sudan.

She also said the donation will enable South Sudan to expand its immunization coverage to remote areas, adding that these efforts are crucial to strengthening the country's preparedness and response to the ongoing mpox outbreak.

South Sudan remains on alert following an outbreak of mpox viral disease in the neighboring Democratic Republic of the Congo in December 2022.

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## 'One more to go boys!'

## Britain is back in America's Cup final for first time in 60 years

BARCELONA, Spain, Oct 5, (AP): A British yacht is back in the America's Cup finals for the first time in sixty years, and the island nation steeped in nautical heritage is one step away from ending the longest wait in international sports.

INEOS Britannia finished off Italy's Luna Rossa Prada Pirelli on Friday with a regatta win to clinch the challengers' final series 7-4. That earned them a date against defending champion New Zealand.

"One more to go boys!" skipper Ben Ainslie told his sailors, who shouted with joy as they crossed the finish line within sight of the Barcelona beachfront.

Despite holding the most Olympic medals in sailing and having a rich maritime tradition, Britain has never won the biggest prize in the sport - a wait that runs back 173 years.

"It's a big moment for British sailing, that's for sure," said Ainslie, a four-time Olympic gold medalist.

"And we are under no illusion about how tough the battle is going to be against New Zealand for the America's Cup, but it has been a long time (since) we've been this far." The last time a British boat raced in the America's Cup final in 1964 the English soccer team was two years away from winning the World Cup and The Beatles were all the rage.

Britannia scored the winning point after a fast and flawless race that it finished 17 seconds ahead of Luna Rossa. Britannia claimed the Louis Vuitton Cup for being the best of five challengers.

The British team now has a week to prepare for Team Emirates New Zealand in their first-to-seven wins series for the America's Cup starting on Oct. 12.

"It's a massive day for our team. I can't say how proud I am over everyone on the water, back on shore and back in the UK," Ainslie said. "There is a lot of pressure on these organiza-

tions, a huge amount of investment and time and money, and so you want to make it count." Ainslie and his crew lifted the challengers' trophy on board after it was delivered on a motorboat by two stewards wearing white gloves who removed it from a Louis Vuitton case. Billionaire backer Jim Ratcliffe, the part owner of Manchester United, then climbed on board to celebrate by spraying champagne.

Britain has been chasing the America's Cup ever since the schooner America won the race's very first edition back in 1851 when it bested Royal Yacht Squadron in a loop around the Isle of Wight, with Queen Victoria herself in attendance. This is the 23rd time it has challenged for the Auld Mug, more than any other nation.

Now, it is the closest it has come to finally winning the cup in sixty decades.

It will face a New Zealand team that has won the past two editions in 2017 and 2021. As defending champion in this truly winner-takes-all competi-

tion, the Kiwis got to choose the rules and the location of the regatta, so in theory they should have an edge that the Brits must overcome.

"Bring on the Kiwis!" Ainslie's co-helmsman Dylan Fletcher said.

The British will have on their side the real racing experience over recent weeks. They have gone from outside threat to the fastest ship of the challenger's fleet. Before racing started, New Zealand leader Grant Dalton said that he put both Luna Rossa and American Magic a notch above Britannia, but warned that the Brits could pull off a surprise.

That they did, delivering a nearly flawless Louis Vuitton finals series, while Luna Rossa's chances were hurt by structural problems to their silver-hulled yacht. Britannia, which is aided by a partnership with the Mercedes Formula 1 team, ran off three straight wins after the series was level at 4-4.

"I think the British out-learned the rest of the challengers, from where



INEOS Britannia's team celebrate their victory against the Luna Rossa Prada Pirelli's sailing team during the Louis Vuitton Cup Final Day 7 at the Barcelona's coast, Spain. (AP)

they started until now, they made the biggest progress," Luna Rossa helmsman Jimmy Spithill said. "We threw everything at them. ... The British are

peaking at the right time." The British win over the Italians avenged a 7-1 loss to Luna Rossa in the same stage of the 2021 event in Auckland.

## Aces stave off elimination



Minnesota Lynx forwards Napheesa Collier, left, and Alanna Smith, right, pressures Connecticut Sun forward Brianna Jones, center, during the first half of a WNBA basketball semifinal game in Uncasville, Conn. (AP)

## Lynx takes 2-1 lead in series with Sun

LAS VEGAS, Oct 5, (AP): On the verge of elimination, the Aces showed Friday night as the two-time defending WNBA champions they weren't ready to go quietly.

Las Vegas took control with a 16-point third-quarter run, held the Liberty without a point over a 7:36 stretch and won 95-81 to cut New York's semifinal series lead to 2-1. The Liberty will get another shot at closing out the Aces on Sunday. If Las Vegas wins that, a winner-take-all Game 5 will be Tuesday in New York.

This was the Aces' 12th consecutive home playoff victory, breaking the WNBA record shared by the Los Angeles Sparks (2001-04) and Sacramento Monarchs (2003-06).

Las Vegas finally beat the Liberty for the first time year. New York won all three regular-season meetings and the first two games of this series.

Jackie Young led the Aces with 24 points, Kelsey Plum scored 20 points, A'ja Wilson had 19 points and 14 rebounds, Tiffany Hayes finished with 11 points and Chelsea Gray totaled 10 points and seven assists. The Aces shot 52.1%, including 40.6% from the 3-point line.

Aces coach Becky Hammon took exception after the game at the officiating when it came to Wilson, this sea-

son's MVP for the third time. Wilson has taken 10 free throws in the three games, including two in this one.

In addition to Stewart, Jonquel Jones and Nyara Sabally each scored 11 points for the Liberty and Leonie Fiebich had 10 points.

Sabrina Ionescu, who entered the game averaging 24.5 points in the playoffs, was held to four points on 1-of-7 shooting. She was shut out until a minute into the fourth quarter when she made a technical free throw.

Las Vegas also turned up the defensive heat on the interior. After getting

outscored by 20 points in the lane in Game 2, the Aces turned it around in this game with a 42-28 advantage.

A back-and-forth first half quickly became one-sided in the third quarter when the Aces turned a 57-53 lead into a 73-53 advantage. New York scored just six points in the period, and coach Sandy Brondello called two timeouts to try to stop the Aces' momentum.

After struggling in the last game offensively, Napheesa Collier wasn't going to let it happen again.

The Lynx's star scored 26 points and Minnesota beat the Connecticut

Sun to take a 2-1 advantage in the best-of-five semifinal matchup.

She has put in the work all season on both ends of the court and the league's runner-up for MVP had the confidence to know the poor shooting game was a one-off.

With Connecticut making a run late, Collier also made three straight plays to change the momentum and seal the win.

Minnesota led 81-73 with 3:03 left when she scored, then got a deflection on the other end and capped it off by hitting Alanna Smith for a 3-pointer to make it a 13-point game.

Game 4 is Sunday in Connecticut with the Lynx looking to advance to the WNBA Finals for the first time since 2017. That season ended in the fourth of Minnesota's championships during a seven-year stretch. Game 5 would be in Minnesota on Tuesday night if necessary.

Collier had 16 in the first half on Friday night and was aggressive from the start. Minnesota led by seven after one quarter and 48-36 at the half thanks to Collier, who made seven of her 10 shots in the opening 20 minutes.

The Sun tried to rally, cutting the deficit to seven on a three-point play by Marina Mabrey midway through the third quarter. But that's as close as they got.

Brianna Jones, who had just eight points combined in the first two games, led Connecticut with 21.



Las Vegas Aces guard Chelsea Gray (12) reacts to a call near New York Liberty forward Breanna Stewart (30) during a WNBA basketball semifinal game in Las Vegas. (AP)

## Uganda has bright future

## Cameroon FA and govt 'settle' differences ahead of qualifier

YAOUNDE, Oct 5, (Xinhua): Cameroon's Ministry of Sports and Physical Education and Cameroon Football Federation (FECAFOOT) agreed to settle differences following months of wrangling.

"Serenity and calm have regained their place between the Ministry of Sports and Physical Education and the FECAFOOT, and we hope for better days ahead," Celine Eko, First Vice President of FECAFOOT told reporters in the country's capital, Yaounde, after a meeting to prepare for Cameroon vs Kenya Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON) qualifier.

The Minister of Sports and Physical Education, Narcisse Mouelle Kombi, expressed hope after the reconciliation and called for "frank collaboration" between the government and FECAFOOT.

The Indomitable Lions of Cameroon should be provided a "harmonious and conducive working environment" before and during the game, he said.

Cameroonian FA has been embroiled in a crisis since April after sports minister Narcisse Mouelle Kombi appointed Belgian Marc Brys as head coach of the national men's football team.

FECAFOOT initially rejected the appointment complaining that it was not involved in the appointment procedure "in disregard of texts" but in early May, the association confirmed Brys as the new head coach but dismissed some members of the technical staff appointed by the minister and appointed new ones to replace them.

The team has since been working with two staff - one for the ministry and another for FECAFOOT.

On Wednesday, Kombi announced that for "the utmost interest of the nation", FECAFOOT and the sports ministry have agreed to appoint a "unified" coaching team with Marc Brys as the head coach.

Cameroon will first host Harambee Stars on Friday at the Ahmadou Ahidjo Stadium in Yaounde, before playing away in the return leg at the

Nelson Mandela Stadium in Kampala, Uganda on October 14.

FIFA president Gianni Infantino has recognized Uganda for the major positive strides they have made in Football development.

Infantino sent his message displayed during the 100th FUFA Ordinary General Assembly that marked celebrations to commemorate 100 years of the existence of the Federation of Uganda Football Associations (FUFA) held at the Maya Nature Resort in Wakiso District, central Uganda.

"In Uganda, the future of Football is bright because of the hard work, forward-thinking and determination of the leadership of the Football Federation led by Moses Magogo. Congratulations on the 100 years of existence and I wish you all the best celebrations as you reflect on all the important milestones," added Infantino.

The FIFA president also thanked the Uganda football body for working well with FIFA. "Education is important for any nation including Uganda to continue developing, and FIFA through Football for Schools will continue to help teach important values to children through this project," he further explained.

John Auka Gecheo, the Executive Director of the Council of East and Central Africa Football Associations (CECAFA), also praised the Uganda Football Federation for the good work they have done over the year. "Uganda continues to be the best Football nation in the CECAFA Zone because of the good work they are doing. We congratulate Uganda on the 100 years of FUFA existing," he added.

Moses Hassim Magogo, the FUFA President, thanked all the delegates, stakeholders and guests for coming to celebrate the 100 years with FUFA. "We don't take your presence for granted and we assure you that we shall continue to plan and work hard to make sure Football in Uganda keeps improving to higher levels," added Magogo.



Australia's Ellyse Perry hits a four during the ICC Women's T20 World Cup 2024 match between Australia and Sri Lanka at Sharjah Stadium, United Arab Emirates. (AP)

## New Zealand tops India

## Australia beats Sri Lanka to launch title defense at World Cup

SHARJAH, United Arab Emirates, Oct 5, (AP): Australia began its title defense at the Women's T20 World Cup with a six-wicket win over Sri Lanka on Saturday.

Medium pacer Megan Schutt picked 3-12 in four overs, while left-arm spinner Sophie Molineux took 2-20, as Sri Lanka was restricted to 93-7 in 20 overs.

In reply, Beth Mooney led Australia's charge as it overhauled the total in only 14.2 overs. It was down to 35-3 at one stage, but Mooney scored 43 not out off 38 balls to lead her side to victory.

Opting to bat, Sri Lanka suffered crucial early blows. Skipper Chamari Athapaththu was out lbw to Ashleigh Gardner for just three runs.

Schutt and Molineux then combined to hit the top-order hard, as Sri Lanka was down to 25-3 in 6.4 overs.

Nilakshi de Silva scored 29 not out off 40 balls, while Harshitha Madavi scored 23 runs. Their 31-run partnership for the fourth wicket saved the Asian champions some

embarrassment.

Molineux broke that partnership in the 13th over, and then Sri Lanka went down to 89-7 within another 6.2 overs. Its innings struggled on either side of that partnership, thus finishing with a below-par total.

In reply, Australia's top-order struggled as well. Skipper Alyssa Healy was dismissed for four, while Georgia Wareham was run out for three runs.

When Sugandika Kumari bowled Ellyse Perry for 17 in the sixth over, there was some trouble.

But Mooney dug in deep, and found support from Gardner, who put in 12 runs. Together they added 43 off only 40 balls as Australia sped up its chase in the second half.

New Zealand dismissed India for 102 to surprisingly win by 58 runs.

Also, South Africa posted the West Indies by 10 wickets.

New Zealand posted a challenging 160-4 and then rolled India in 19 overs for its only second win in 14 T20s this year.

Captain Sophie Devine's unbeaten 57 off 36 balls with seven boundaries propelled New Zealand's total in the last five overs.

A run-out dispute stopped play briefly when India thought it bagged Amelia Kerr, who was trying to sneak a second run in the 14th over. The umpires ruled the run out irrelevant because it was a dead ball. Kerr had walked to almost the rope boundary before the ruling by the fourth umpire.

India protested to no avail. But there was no damage. Kerr was caught in the covers off the next ball.

Devine's strong finish followed a strong foundation of 67 off 46 balls by openers Georgia Plimmer (34) and Suzie Bates (27).

Plimmer and Bates perished while looking for big hits, but India's hope of a comeback was stymied by Devine raising her fourth T20 half-century off 33 balls. New Zealand racked up 51 runs off the last five overs.

Rosemary Mair trapped India captain Harmanpreet Kaur inside the power play in

a scene-stealing 4-19. Mair claimed the last two wickets off successive balls, and fast bowler Lea Tahuhu chipped in with 3-15 to help build out India with an over to spare.

Eden Carson struck off her first delivery with a caught-and-bowled Shafali Verma, and in her next over dismissed Smriti Mandhana on 12. India couldn't recover after the dismissal of its senior pros inside the power play.

Captain Laura Wolvaardt (59 not out) and Tazmin Brits (57 not out) made light work of South Africa's chase, reaching 119 without loss with 13 balls to spare.

Left-arm spinner Nonkululeko Mlaba grabbed a career-best 4-29 as the West Indies was restricted to 118-6.

West Indies tried eight bowlers to try and prise out Wolvaardt and Brits, who struck 13 boundaries between them.

Spinner Karishma Ramharack came closest to the breakthrough but couldn't hold on to a sharp return catch when Wolvaardt was on 33.

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## Landmark ruling from top EU court

## 'Some FIFA rules on transfers are contrary to EU law'

BRUSSELS, Oct 5, (AP): Some FIFA rules on player transfers are contrary to European Union legislation relating to competition and freedom of movement, the EU's top court said.

The ruling will likely lead to a shakeup of the soccer market's global regulations and could change the sport's economy.

The European Court of Justice's ruling came after former France international Lassana Diarra legally challenged FIFA rules following a dispute with a club dating to a decade ago. Diarra argued that FIFA's restrictions meant he was unable to find a new club after his contract with Russian club Lokomotiv Moscow was terminated in 2014.

FIFA's rules state that if a player terminates his contract without "just cause," the player and any club wishing to sign him are jointly liable for paying compensation to the previous club.

"Those rules hinder the free movement of players and competition between clubs," the court said in a statement. "The rules in question are such as to impede the free movement of professional footballers wishing to develop their activity by going to work for a new club."

The ruling is seen as crucial because it could make it easier for players to terminate their contracts and join another team - potentially leading to a scenario where bigger clubs could more easily poach players from smaller rivals.

The global players' union FIFPro, which supported Diarra's case, said the ruling "will change the landscape of professional football."

However, it could take a couple of years before any changes to the system go into effect as Friday's ruling is part of a Belgian court case that is still ongoing.

Although the ruling was seen as a defeat for FIFA, the court recognized that the transfer regulations can also be necessary to help maintain stability within professional squads and guarantee the regularity of competitions.

"It is important to clarify that today's decision does not change the core principles of the transfer system at all," FIFA chief legal officer Emilio Garcia said.

Diarra's lawyers called the ruling a "total victory." He signed a four-year contract with Lokomotiv Moscow in 2013 but the deal was terminated a year later after Diarra was unhappy with alleged pay cuts.

Lokomotiv Moscow applied to the FIFA dispute resolution chamber for compensation and the player countered seeking compensation for unpaid wages.

The Court of Arbitration for Sport ruled in favor of the Russian club and the player was ordered to pay 10.5 million euros (\$11.2 million). Diarra claimed his search for a new club was hampered by FIFA's rules stipulating any new side would be jointly responsible with him for paying Lokomotiv.

The former Real Madrid player also argued that a potential deal with Belgian club Charleroi fell through because of the FIFA rules, and sued FIFA and the Belgian federation at a Belgian court for damages and loss of earnings

of six million euros (\$7 million). With the lawsuit still going through Belgian courts, the case was referred to the ECJ for guidance.

In Friday's ruling, the court added that current rules "impose considerable legal risks, unforeseeable and potentially very high financial risks as well as major sporting risks on those players and clubs wishing to employ them which, taken together, are such as to impede international transfers of those players."

It was not immediately clear what impact the ruling will have on players and leagues more broadly, but some analysts have compared it to the ECJ's 1995 decision on Belgian footballer Jean-Marc Bosman.

That ruling removed restrictions placed on foreign EU players within national leagues and allowed players in the bloc to move to another club for free when their contracts ended.

That ruling ultimately skewed the player trading market in favor of wealthier clubs in western Europe who could lure free agents with big salaries and avoided paying transfer fees that many smaller clubs relied on.

If FIFA introduces rules making it easier for players to terminate their contracts and join new clubs when they want, the whole system of transfers largely based on transfer fees could be challenged, with clubs less tempted to invest millions in players with more freedom to leave.

But it could also give more power to the richest clubs capable of luring players with gigantic salary offers.

"All professional players have been affected by these illegal rules and can therefore now seek compensation for their losses," Diarra's lawyers claimed in a statement.

FIFPro added: "Lassana Diarra - like Jean-Marc Bosman before him - has ensured that thousands of players worldwide will profit from a new system which must guarantee respect of their employment rights. This ruling is not only important for Lassana Diarra but all players, both active and retired."

The Diarra case went through FIFA judicial bodies before the 2016 election of FIFA president Gianni Infantino, who has made it a priority to modernize transfer market rules. FIFA has indicated it is open to a wide-ranging consultation with unions, clubs and leagues to address the courts' opinions.

FIFA said the ruling "only puts in question two paragraphs of two articles of the FIFA Regulations on the Status and Transfer of Players, which the national court is now invited to consider."

The court slammed FIFA's rules for restricting and preventing cross-border competition between European clubs.

"The Court recalls that the possibility of competing by recruiting trained players plays an essential role in the professional football sector and that rules which place a general restriction on that form of competition, by immutably fixing the distribution of workers between the employers and in cloistering the markets, are similar to a no-poach agreement," it said.

The court in Luxembourg also suggested FIFA's compensation rules seemed to protect the financial interests of clubs.

## Napoli maintains Serie A lead



Napoli's Romelu Lukaku, left, and Como's Alberto Dossena vie for the ball during the Serie A soccer match between Napoli and Como at the Diego Armando Maradona Stadium in Naples, Italy. (AP)

## Verona beats Venezia with late own goal

**NAPLES, Italy, Oct 5, (AP): Scottish midfielder Scott McTominay scored after just 25 seconds as Napoli eked out a 3-1 win over Como to consolidate its place at the top of Serie A.**

Napoli wasted no time pulling ahead, when McTominay grabbed his second goal in three games.

Como slowly came into the game and Gabriel Strefezza equalized two minutes before halftime when he rifled a low shot into the bottom corner. It was the first goal Napoli has conceded since Aug. 31.

Romelu Lukaku put Napoli ahead again with a penalty eight minutes into the second half and then his defense-splitting pass allowed substitute David Neres to slip a third under Como goalkeeper Emil Audero with four minutes remaining.

Napoli labored at times, especially in the first half, but the win was in keeping with its good start to the season. It has lost only one of its eight competitive games and has 14 goals in its last five games.

Newly promoted Como remains in 10th place.

A late own goal by Jesse Joronen gave Verona a 2-1 victory over Venezia. Gaetano Oristanio put Venezia 1-0 up in the second minute when he took advantage of poor defending to steal in at the back post and head home a corner kick.

However, the home side replied just seven minutes later when Danish striker Casper Tengstedt finished off a nice move by volleying the equalizer.

Verona got the winner nine minutes from time when Grigoris Kastanos' header was touched into his own net by goalkeeper Joronen.

Venezia stayed second to last, while Verona jumped from 14th to 10th.

## 'Finally the nightmare is over'

## Pogba doping ban reduced from 4 years to 18 months

MILAN, Oct 5, (AP): Paul Pogba has had his four-year ban for doping reduced to 18 months after appealing to the Court of Arbitration for Sport.

The ruling means the France World Cup winner will be free to resume his career in March 2025.

CAS confirmed earlier reports that the ban was reduced when approached by The Associated Press on Friday. CAS did not elaborate on the decision.

"Finally the nightmare is over," Pogba said in a statement. "Following the decision by the Court of Arbitration for Sport, I can look forward to the day when I can follow my dreams again."

The Juventus midfielder tested positive for testosterone in August last year and was handed the maximum punishment by Italy's anti-doping court.

At the time, Pogba said "the verdict is incorrect" and appealed to the Switzerland-based CAS.

Four-year bans are standard under the world anti-doping code but can



French professional soccer player Paul Pogba, right, watches from a VIP suite at the start of an MLS soccer match between Inter Miami and Charlotte FC in Fort Lauderdale, Fla. (AP)

be reduced in cases where an athlete can prove their doping was not intentional, if the positive test was a result of contamination or if they provide "substantial assistance" to help in-

vestigators.

"I always stated that I never knowingly breached World Anti-Doping Agency regulations when I took a nutritional supplement prescribed to

me by a doctor, which does not affect or enhance the performance of male athletes," Pogba said. "I play with integrity, and although I must accept that this is a strict liability offence, I want to place on record my thanks to the Court of Arbitration for Sport's judges who heard my explanation."

"This has been a hugely distressing period in my life because everything I have worked so hard for has been put on hold."

The 31-year-old Pogba was the most expensive soccer player in history when he joined Manchester United from Juventus for a fee of 105 million euros (\$113 million) in 2016.

He starred in France's World Cup triumph in 2018 and returned to Juventus as a free agent in 2022. But injuries limited him to just eight Serie A appearances in his second spell at the club before his ban.

Pogba was suspended after the positive test was announced in September last year.

"I just cannot wait to get back on the pitch," he said.



Leverkusen's Victor Boniface scores during the German Bundesliga soccer match between Bayer Leverkusen and Holstein Kiel at the Bay Arena in Leverkusen, Germany. (AP)

## 'It's not my call'

## Ratcliffe declines to show support for Man U coach

MANCHESTER, England, Oct 5, (AP): Manchester United minority owner Jim Ratcliffe refused to say if he had faith in manager Erik ten Hag.

The British billionaire, who bought a 27.7% stake in the 20-time English champion in February, has overhauled United's soccer department. He said the decision over Ten Hag's future rested in the hands of the executive he has put in place to run the club.

Ten Hag is under intense scrutiny after another troubled start to the season and, asked if he had faith, Ratcliffe told the BBC, "I don't want to answer that question."

"I like Erik. I think he's a very good coach, but at the end of the day it's not my call, it's the management team that's running Manchester United that have to decide how we best run the team in many different respects."

Ratcliffe assumed control of United's soccer operations after investing \$1.3 billion for his minority stake. The sporting side had previously been under the control of the majority owning American Glazer family.

A new CEO, Omar Berrada, and sporting director, Dan Ashworth, have been installed. There's a new technical director, Jason Wilcox, while key figures at Ratcliffe's Ineos Sport, Dave Brailsford and Jean-Claude Blanc,

have been appointed to the board.

"They weren't there in January, February, March or April - Omar, Dan Ashworth - they only arrived in July. They've only been there ... you can count it in weeks almost. They need to take stock and make some sensible decisions," Ratcliffe said.

"Our objective is very clear - we want to take Manchester United back to where it should be, and it's not there yet, obviously, that's very clear."

Ten Hag kept his job only after an extensive end-of-season review, which included winning the FA Cup.

Berrada and Ashworth said in September he had their full backing, but United has lost three of its first six Premier League games this season to sit 13th in the standings. Fans booed and left early as United was humbled by Tottenham 3-0 last week.

On Thursday against Porto in the Europa League, United needed a stoppage-time goal from substitute Harry Maguire to salvage a 3-3 draw.

The Dutchman repeatedly says he believes he has the support of his hierarchy.

"We are in there together - the ownership, the leadership team, the staff," he said on Thursday. "I appointed a new staff, we bought, again, new young players, and we have to integrate them."



Manchester United's Bruno Fernandes, right, reaches for the ball too high and close to the head of Porto's Nehuen Perez to see a second yellow card and be sent off, during a Europa League opening phase soccer match between FC Porto and Manchester United at the Dragao stadium in Porto, Portugal. (AP)



Liverpool's Mohamed Salah, centre, and Crystal Palace's Trevoh Chalobah challenge for the ball during the English Premier League soccer match between Crystal Palace and Liverpool at Selhurst Park in London. (AP)

# Sports

## Liverpool leads the way in Premier League

Rivals Man City and Arsenal trail by a point

**LONDON, Oct 5, (AP):** Arne Slot earned a Liverpool record of nine wins from his first 10 games in charge after the club stayed on the top of the English Premier League on Saturday.

Diogo Jota's ninth-minute goal at Selhurst Park held up to beat Crystal Palace 1-0 and ensure Slot would be looking down on rival managers Pep Guardiola of Manchester City and Mikel Arteta of Arsenal heading into the international break.

Four-time defending champion City is second after beating Fulham 3-2 and third-placed Arsenal won against Southampton 3-1. Both trail Liverpool by a point.

Slot is making light work of filling the void left by Anfield great Jurgen Klopp, with no other manager in the club's history winning so many of his opening games in all competitions.

"It definitely is (very satisfying). And it's actually also quite special if you know how many great managers Liverpool had," Slot said. "But I also said last week I think that I hope they don't only remember me in one, two, three, four, five years only for this. We are hoping to do more special things than this."

Liverpool's only defeat under the Dutchman was a shock 1-0 home loss against Nottingham Forest. Otherwise, it has been a perfect start for a man who had the ominous task of replacing Klopp, who won a full set of major honors including the Premier League and Champions League.

Slot looks likely to be the main challenger to City and Arsenal, who have been first and second respectively in the last two seasons.

Both of those teams survived scares to come from behind to win at home.

It wasn't all good news for Liverpool after goalkeeper Alisson sustained a suspected hamstring injury and was substituted in the second half at Palace.

The Brazil international, who has only recently returned from a muscle injury, was holding the back of his right leg after limping off Selhurst Park and is likely to miss Brazil's World Cup qualifiers against Chile and Peru.

Argentina midfielder Alexis Mac Allister also went off with a groin issue that makes him a doubt for his country's qualifiers against Venezuela and Bolivia.

Manchester City fans hung a giant banner inside Etihad Stadium on Saturday with a special message for Pep Guardiola ahead of their Premier League game against Fulham.

In the manager's native Catalan language, the banner read "Pep Guardiola - Volem Que Et Quedis!" - translating to "We want you to stay!"

Guardiola's contract expires at the end of the season and he has not indicated if he will extend his stay, having joined in 2016.

Freiburg wins at Werder

## Bayern rivals Leverkusen and Dortmund drop points

**BERLIN, Oct 5, (Agencies):** Bayern Munich won without playing on Saturday as Bundesliga rivals Bayer Leverkusen and Borussia Dortmund dropped points to modest opponents.

Dortmund slumped at Union Berlin to a 2-1 defeat without injured forward Karim Adeyemi, who starred in the team's 7-1 rout of Celtic in the Champions League on Tuesday.

Defending champion Leverkusen squandered an early two-goal lead over promoted Holstein Kiel and drew 2-2. It was only Kiel's second point in its debut top-flight season.

Leverkusen played in a special black jersey with red trim to commemorate the club's 120th anniversary, and for Xabi Alonso it was also a special occasion - the Spanish coach

took over exactly two years before.

Leverkusen fans didn't have to wait long to celebrate after Victor Boniface opened the scoring in the fourth minute and Jonas Hofmann made it 2-0 four minutes after that. Leverkusen looked set for a rout.

But the home team failed to make more of its dominance - Boniface had another goal ruled out for offside - and Kiel secured a lifeline before the break when Max Geschwil scored after a corner. Fiete Arp scored an unlikely equalizer from the penalty spot in the 69th.

Also, Freiburg won at Werder Bremen 1-0, and Wolfsburg enjoyed a 3-1 win in Wolfsburg.

Substitute Alexis Claude-Maurice scored on his Augsburg debut to help clinch a 2-1 victory over Borussia Muenchengladbach.

Augsburg scored in each half to get back to winning ways after two consecutive defeats.

It leapfrogged Muenchengladbach into 11th on the table.

A volley from Keven Schlotterbeck six minutes before halftime gave the home side the lead and Claude-Maurice scored eight minutes after coming on as a substitute to double the lead.

Tim Kleindienst's powerful header in the 72nd pulled Muenchengladbach back into contention but the goals from Augsburg's two recent signings proved enough.

Schlotterbeck's rocket was the second goal in three games for the big center half who joined this summer from Freiburg.

Smiles and cheers seem to come as often as his goals as Omar Marmoush is riding a wave out of euphoria and confidence.



Southampton's goalkeeper Aaron Ramsdale stops the shot by Arsenal's Gabriel Jesus during the English Premier League soccer match between Arsenal and Southampton at the Emirates Stadium in London. (AP)

## Third edition of Saudi Games kick off in Riyadh

**RIYADH, Oct 5:** Under the patronage of King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, and on behalf of His Royal Highness Prince Mohammed bin Salman, Crown Prince and Prime Minister, the Minister of Sports and Chairman of the Saudi Olympic and Paralympic Committee, Prince Abdulaziz bin Turki bin Faisal, presided over the opening ceremony of the third edition of the Saudi Games 2024 at "Boulevard Riyadh City." This event, the largest national sporting spectacle, took place in Riyadh.

The ceremony commenced with the royal anthem, followed by a parade of participating athletes and the flags of the Olympic and Paralympic Committees. After the athletes took the sports oath, Prince Abdulaziz officially declared the third edition of the Saudi Games 2024 open, which will run from October 3 to 17, 2024.

The tournament will feature athletes competing in 52 individual and team sports, including seven Paralympic events, ten demonstration sports, and 15 youth sports, with total prize money exceeding 200 million riyals.

The Saudi Games aim to empower athletes by offering opportunities for talents across the country to compete, discover potential, and pursue profes-

sional goals. Athletes qualified for the event through performance trials and qualifiers.

Competitions will be held at multiple venues, including the Prince Faisal bin Fahd Olympic Complex, which will host events like handball, volleyball, basketball, cycling, bowling, swimming, and triathlon. Paralympic sports like goalball, boccia, weightlifting, and wheelchair basketball will be held at the Paralympic Hall.

Riyadh Club will host athletics, Paralympic athletics, futsal, chess, rugby, cricket, darts, squash, and futsal for the deaf. Meanwhile, Boulevard City Stadium will host a variety of sports in five indoor areas, covering Muay Thai, boxing, judo, taekwondo, fencing, gymnastics, MMA, e-sports, and more.

The Fan Zone will feature sports such as 3x3 basketball, beach volleyball, climbing, and skateboarding. Camel racing and show jumping will take place at the Saudi Show Jumping Field in Janadriyah, with other competitions spread across various locations like billiards at Qoz Center, karting at Dirab Field, sailing at Jubail Marine Sports Club, shooting at Public Security Shooting Field, tennis at Saudi Tennis Federation Stadium, and golf at Riyadh Golf Club.



Athletes wave to fans during the opening ceremony of the Saudi Games in Riyadh.

## Sinner and Alcaraz win in Shanghai

## Muchova defeats injured Zheng to meet Gauff in China Open final

**BEIJING, Oct 5, (Agencies):** Karolina Muchova of the Czech Republic will face No. 4 seed Coco Gauff of the United States in the 2024 China Open women's singles final after defeating home favorite and Paris Olympic champion Zheng Qinwen on Saturday.

World No. 49 Muchova, who ended top-seeded Aryna Sabalenka's 15-match winning streak on Friday, made a strong start in the semifinal, taking a 3-2 lead in the first set.

Zheng suffered a painful fall while attempting to save a break point in the sixth game, leaving her sprawled on the court in visible distress. After receiving medical attention and having her injured fingers bandaged, Zheng continued playing, but Muchova capitalized on the moment, winning the first set 6-3.

In the second set, Zheng mounted a determined comeback but struggled

with seven double faults that disrupted her service games. Muchova stayed steady, holding off Zheng's efforts to secure a 6-4 win and a place in the final.

"I am just really tired. No energy. That's it," Zheng reflected. "I know exactly why I fell, because I wasn't focused enough. I was too tired. If I had more sleep yesterday, I could have done better." "Tough battle out there today. I was happy that I was able to hold my serve throughout the match," Muchova said. "I will try my best and challenge her [Coco Gauff]. Hopefully, I'll get the best result tomorrow." Earlier on Saturday, Gauff staged an impressive comeback against Spain's Paula Badosa, overcoming a first-set deficit to win 4-6, 6-4, 6-2.

"I am happy to be in the final. I wasn't expecting it. Karolina, I played her twice, both on hard courts. She is

a tough opponent and one of the best players on tour," Gauff said. "Tomorrow will be a tough match, and this is what makes tennis exciting. I'm excited to play the best of the best," she added.

Carlos Alcaraz and top-ranked Jan-nik Sinner showed no signs of fatigue from their China Open final earlier this week to advance with comfortable straight-set victories in their opening matches.

The second-ranked Alcaraz, who beat the Italian in Beijing on Wednesday for his fourth title of the year, recorded his 10th consecutive win with a 6-2, 6-2 result against 19-year-old Shang Juncheng of China.

The 21-year-old Spaniard won the first nine points of the match and four of seven break points as he rushed into a third-round meeting with another Chinese player, Wu Yibing.

"I'm not used to playing against

players younger than me," Alcaraz said. "He has been playing good ten-

nis lately, lifting his first ATP (title in Chengdu), so I'm pretty sure he's



Karolina Muchova of the Czech Republic returns a shot to Zheng Qinwen of the China Open tennis tournament held at the National Tennis Center in Beijing. (AP)

going to climb the rankings. I'm just happy to be able to win these kinds of matches." Sinner, who is dealing with an ongoing doping case, had a comfortable 6-1, 6-4 outing against Taro Daniel of Japan for his 250th career win.

The Italian, who won the U.S Open last month for his second major of the year, fired 12 aces and 38 winners.

"I felt quite comfortable today," said the 23-year-old Sinner, who next plays Tomas Martin Etcheverry of Argentina. "I feel in good shape also physically, which is very important for me. Of course I will try to improve for tomorrow's performance, but today I was serving really, really well, especially in important moments, and was moving well." No. 65-ranked Jakob Mensik of the Czech Republic broke sixth-ranked Andrey Rublev seven times on his way to an upset 6-7 (7), 6-4, 6-3 victory.