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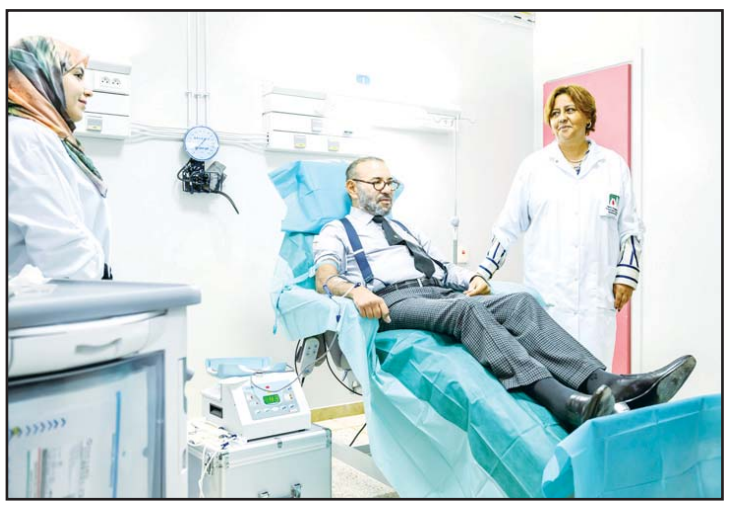
King of Morocco visits patients, donates blood



Above: In this photo released by the Royal Palace, Morocco's King Mohammed VI, goes to the 'Mohammed VI' University Hospital in Marrakech, Morocco. Sept 12, 2023. Below: Morocco's King Mohammed VI, (center), makes a blood donation for the needs of victims of the Sept 8 earthquake. (AP)

Toll 2,901

MARRAKECH, Sept 13, (AP): Morocco's king showed solidarity with his suffering nation Tuesday as it counts the dead from a powerful earthquake, visiting some of the injured at a hospital not far from the epicenter and rolling up a sleeve to donate his royal blood.

King Mohammed VI inspected the hospital bearing his name in the city of Marrakech, where he inquired about the recovery services and care being provided for those injured in the Friday night temblor and the conditions of survivors, the official MAP news agency said.

A video shows the king - whose public appearances are normally limited to special occasions - at the bedside of several patients, bending over a young boy to bestow a kiss on his head and at the side of an older man.

In a surprising gesture, the bespectacled monarch was seen seated in a chair, coat off, suspenders showing, and shirt-sleeve rolled up, with his arm at the ready to donate blood.

Blood donations have become a national gesture of solidarity, with Moroccans lining up in Marrakech and other cities to donate blood for the injured.

Meanwhile, the stench of death wafted through the village of Imi N'Tala high up in Morocco's Atlas Mountains four days after a deadly earthquake struck,

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Libya flood toll 5,100

Authorities struggle to get in aid

DERNA, Libya, Sept 13, (AP): Search teams combed streets, wrecked buildings and even the sea for bodies in a devastated eastern Libyan city on Wednesday, where authorities said massive flooding had killed at least 5,100 people, with the toll expected to rise further.

Authorities were still struggling to get aid to the Mediterranean coastal city of Derna after Sunday night's deluge washed away most access roads. Aid workers who managed to reach the city described devastation in its center, with thousands still missing and tens of thousands left homeless.

"Bodies are everywhere, inside houses, in the streets, at sea. Wherever you go, you find dead men, women, and children," Emad al-Falah, an aid worker from Benghazi, said over the phone from Derna. "Entire families were lost."

Mediterranean storm Daniel caused deadly flooding in many towns of eastern Libya on Sunday, but the worst-hit was Derna. Two dams outside in the mountains above the city collapsed, sending floodwaters washing down the Wadi Derna river and through the city center, sweeping away entire city blocks. Waves rose as high as 7 meters (23 feet), Yann Fridez, head of the delegation of the International Committee of the Red Cross in Libya, told broadcaster France24.

Mohammed Derna, a teacher in the city, said he, his family and neighbors rushed to the roof of their apartment building, stunned at the volume of water rushing by. It reached the second story of many buildings, he said. They watched people below, including women and children being washed away.

"They were screaming, help, help," he said over the phone from a field hospital in Derna. "It was like a Hollywood horror movie."

S&P sees high profitability for Kuwaiti banks this year

KUWAIT CITY, Sept 13: A report issued by Standard & Poor's (S&P) global credit ratings agency expected that the profitability of Kuwaiti banks will remain high during the current year, indicating that the banking sector is in a good position to benefit from the high interest rate environment in the long term, reports Al-Anba daily.

The report added that the rise in net interest income will be offset to some extent by the move from non-interest deposits to interest-bearing deposits and the increase in credit losses. However, financing in the banking sector continues to benefit from a strong domestic deposit base and a net external asset position, and this translates into positive investor sentiment.

In terms of lending growth, the agency expected it to remain weak, as banks' lending books expanded at an annual rate of 3% in the first half of 2023, which is much lower than loan growth of 8% in 2022.

S&P expects that higher interest rates will lead to lower demand from corporate and individual borrowers, which will translate into low single-digit growth in banking sector loans.

Overall, the agency expects the cost of risk to rise and normalize by about 60-70 basis points in 2023 and 2024, from 40 basis points in the first half of 2023 and at the end of 2022. However, high provision margins, which could offset the potential increase In non-performing loans, it will enable banks to maintain broad stability of the non-performing loan ratio.

Regarding the situation of the region's banks, the agency said that rising interest rates will reduce credit growth at Gulf banks, but the performance of Saudi and Emirati banks will be more flexible. We expect that the rise in interest rates will lead to a decline in credit growth at Kuwaiti banks to about 3% from about 8% in 2022, and a decline in the total lending growth of Saudi banks to about 10% in 2023, from 14% in 2022.

On the other hand, UAE banks will benefit from continued strong non-oil GDP growth, which will somewhat mitigate the negative impact of higher interest rates on credit growth. We expect credit growth at UAE banks to improve to about 7% in 2023, compared to 5% in 2022.

But prolonged high interest rates and a slowdown in the oil economy may pose challenges. Qatari banks, unlike their counterparts in the Gulf countries, will continue to face a sharp decline in credit growth, because the country's major infrastructure projects, which are the main driver of credit demand through contractors, have been completed before hosting the 2022 FIFA World Cup.

A general view of the city of Derna is seen on Sept. 12, 2023. Mediterranean storm Daniel caused devastating floods in Libya that broke dams and swept away entire neighborhoods in multiple coastal towns, the destruction appeared greatest in Derna city. (AP)

Opinion

Minister of Finance: We said it and we reiterate: Knowledge has come to you

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

WE speak directly to His Excellency the Minister of Finance Fahad Al-Jarallah, who is known to be experienced in investment and financial affairs. This means that he is aware of people's needs, and also knows the causes of the problems that the public finances suffer from. Therefore, when we speak without flatteries, we are addressing one of the most important financial experts in the country.

Your Excellency the Minister, Kuwait is a plundered country. You know best who has committed and is still committing these crimes against our nation. You know how the deep state has extended its tentacles into all institutions, as it maliciously charts the course of the state's decisions by surrounding the decision-makers and proposing what suits its interests, even if it leads to provoking popular resentment against the government and the leadership.

This is due to the fact that it is more concerned about accumulation of wealth, and this has a great price that has begun to appear in various institutions, and in society.

There is no doubt that reducing the burden on the state budget requires taking the steps that we talked about previously. We repeat them to your excellency, with the hope that it will perhaps benefit you, and also prevent you from repeating the mistakes of your predecessors.

Loan sharks, members of the deep state, and greedy merchants do not want justice for the Kuwaitis because that would be of no benefit to them. This is why they adopt the slogan of "social justice" in order to mislead. They act mercilessly towards people with limited income, who have been suffering for more than 15 years as a result of non-improvement of their salaries, as inflation has risen to a high extent throughout those years. The argument for support to alleviate the burden of the citizens has become a joke, such as the state subsidizing tea, salmon filet, breaded shrimp, electricity, and water.

Does this waste, which costs the state more than six billion dinars annually, serve the citizens? Or is it merely aimed to benefit the importing companies and merchants? Does subsidized gasoline represent a social justice that benefits the wealthy more than the needy?

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Day by Day

THE repugnant individual remains utterly contemptible. He continues to propagate falsehoods, fabricate stories, engage in theft, and moves through life like a cumbersome log, especially now that his true nature has been unveiled.

The deplorable character of this individual is not destined to persist indefinitely. His true colors have been revealed, and even though he attempted to disperse his ill-gotten gains among his former spouse and the accounts of his children, the documents submitted to the appropriate authorities will ultimately grab the fox and his puppies by the tail.

The plane thief who robbed us through deceit will find no lasting satisfaction. We will pursue him relentlessly, even to the grave, and we will also pursue his accomplices.

… Yet tomorrow is another day.

Zahed Matar

Newswatch

BEIRUT: Security guards from the Syrian president's Baath party on Wednesday fired shots at protesters trying to raid its local headquarters in southern **Syria**, wounding at least three people, activists said.

The incident marked a major escalation in anti-government protests over the past month that have otherwise been calm.

Anti-government protests have rocked the Druze-majority **Sweida** province over the past month. Hundreds continue to gather in demonstrations that were initially driven by the war-torn country's spiraling economy and skyrocketing inflation but quickly shifted focus to calling for the fall of President **Bashar Assad**'s government. (AP)

❑ ❑ ❑

HANOI: A fire in a nine-story apartment building in **Vietnam**'s capital killed at least 56 people, including at least four children, and injured at least 37, authorities said Wednesday

The fire started just before midnight Tuesday in a building housing about 150 residents. Firefighters contained the blaze, but the building's location at end of a narrow alley made rescue operations difficult. (AP)

US sanctions Hezb financing network

US House targets Iran over Amini, missiles

WASHINGTON, Sept 13, (AP): The U.S. House overwhelmingly approved measures Tuesday targeting Iran for its human rights record and placing restrictions on the country's ability to import or export its expanding arsenal of weapons.

The measures would impose a series of sanctions on Iran's supreme leader, president and other individuals as Washington seeks to further punish the Islamic Republic ahead of the one-year anniversary of nationwide protests. The resolutions will now go to the Senate, where it is unclear if the Democratic-controlled chamber will take them up.

The first bill takes aim at Iran's production and exports of missiles and drones by sanctioning individuals involved in the process, while the second imposes sanctions on high-ranking government officials for "human rights abuses and support for terrorism." The third resolution specifically condemns the government's persecution of the Baha'i minority.

The near-unanimous passage of all three represents a renewed condemnation by Congress against Iran's government, which engaged in a brutal crackdown of its citizenry after the September 2022 death of Mahsa Amini in police custody.

Rep. Jim Banks, R-Ind., the co-sponsor of the second bill, posted on social media that it was past time "to sanction those responsible for Mahsa's murder and the repression of brave Iranian protestors."

Amini had been detained for allegedly wearing her hijab too loosely in violation of strictures demanding women in public wear the Islamic headscarves. The 22-year-old died three days later in police custody. Authorities said she had a heart attack but hadn't been harmed. Her family has disputed that, leading to the public outcry.

The protests that ensued represented one of the largest challenges to Iran's theocracy since the 1979 Islamic Revolution. A security force crackdown that followed saw over 500 people killed and more than 22,000 people detained.

The unrest only further complicated any attempt by the Biden administration to restart negotiations between Washington and Tehran - after former President Donald Trump abruptly withdrew U.S. from the Iran nuclear deal in 2018.

And it has remained a point of contention for Republicans in Congress, who have sought to use the power of their majority in the House over the past several months to introduce or pass a series of binding and nonbinding resolutions related to the country's abuse of human rights as well as its nuclear and missile programs.

The passage of the resolutions also comes a day after the Biden administration cleared the way for the release of five American citizens detained in Iran by issuing a blanket waiver for international banks to transfer $6 billion in frozen Iranian money without fear of U.S. sanctions.

Also:

BEIRUT: The U.S. Treasury on Tuesday slapped terrorism sanctions on a family network of seven individuals and businesses in **Lebanon** and **South America** accused of financing the militant group Hezbollah, including a Lebanese man who officials say was involved in two deadly attacks in **Argentina** in the 1990s.

Amer Mohamed Akil Rada was described as "one of the operational members" who carried out the attack on the Argentine-Israelite Mutual Association in **Buenos Aires** in 1994, which killed 85 people and wounded hundreds. A 1992 attack on the Israeli Embassy in Argentina killed 29 people.

"Today's action underscores the **U.S.** government's commitment to pursuing Hezbollah operatives and financiers no matter their location," said **Brian Nelson**, the Treasury's under-secretary for terrorism and financial intelligence, in a statement.

The **Iran**-backed group is designated a "foreign terrorist organization," and **Washington** also claims that the group has been involved in drug trafficking in Latin America to generate revenue.

Rada, according to the Treasury, spent over a decade in **South America** before relocating to **Lebanon**.

Prayer Timings

Fajr	04:11	Asr	15:14
Sunrise	05:31	Maghrib	17:56
Zohr	11:44	Isha	19:14

Local

Expected weather for the next 24 hours:
By Day: Very hot with light to moderate northwesterly wind with speeds of 10-38 km/h.
By Night: Hot to rather hot with light to moderate freshening at times northwesterly wind to northerly wind with speeds of 12-40 km/h.

Weather

Station	Max Exp	Min Rec
Kuwait City	47	35
Kuwait Airport	48	28
Abdaly	47	28
Jahra	49	31
Salmiyah	41	34
Ahmadi	40	35
Nuwaisib	45	28
Wafra	47	25

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

'HH Crown Prince China visit vital for ties'

KUNA photo
The first vanguards of the Kuwaiti air bridge surround Libya carrying 40 tons of aid.

Arab world sends aid supplies

First KRCS plane arrives in Libya

CAIRO, Sept 13, (KUNA): Kuwait's plane arrived in Libya carrying 40 tons of equipment, food, medical supplies, power generators and tents on board, in addition to rescue boats provided by Kuwait Fire Force.

In remarks to KUNA, Libyan Foreign Minister Dr. Abdul Hadi Al-Hawaij expressed his thanks and appreciation for Kuwait's humanitarian efforts in relieving those afflicted by Storm Daniel, appreciating the immediate response.

The Minister said that the disaster exceeds the available capabilities, calling for concerted humanitarian relief efforts from all parties to help Libya overcome this unprecedented ordeal.

In turn, the head of the KRCS mission, Dr. Musaed Al-Enezi, said that the Kuwaiti Air Force plane landed in Benghazi, northeastern Libya, carrying a shipment of various relief materials commensurate with the basic needs required by such conditions.

The KRCS said in a statement that the plane of Kuwait Air Force took off from Abdullah Al-Mubarak Air Base flying to Libya with 40 tons of equipment, food, medical supplies, power generators and tents on board, in addition to rescue boats provided by Kuwait Fire Force.

The Kuwaiti aid supplies are destined for victims of the ravaging hurricane Daniel that caused floods on large swaths of the Libyan territories, claiming more than 5,000 lives and inflicting wide scale destruction.

KRCS Deputy Chairperson Anwar Al-Hasawi affirmed in remarks to KUNA that the supplies were dispatched in line with instructions by the political leadership to relieve the floods' victims rapidly.

Also:

Egypt sends aid: Egypt on Tuesday sent three military cargo planes, carrying a large quantity of humanitarian aid to the victims of the recent flooding in Libya.

The assistance includes medical supplies, tents, search and rescue equipment and an ambulance, as well as teams of aid workers from the Egyptian Red Crescent to back up the rescue operations in hard-hit area in eastern Libya.

The assistance falls in the frameworks of solidarity with the Libyan people to help alleviate the effects of the recent Storm Daniel, according to a press release from Egypt's Defense Ministry.

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AIPU solidarity: The Arab Inter-Parliamentary Union expressed solidarity with Libya after the deadly flooding that ravaged the eastern region of the country.

In a statement on Tuesday, the AIPU appealed for the Arab countries and the international community to joint forces immediately to provide urgent aid to Libya and help alleviate the impacts of this natural disaster.

The AIPU Presidency offered sincere condolences to the Libyan people and government, expressing sympathy with the families of the victims.

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Qatar field hospital: A Qatari cargo flight, carrying a field hospital, is arriving at Benina International Airport in Benghazi city, north Libya, on Tuesday night to help alleviate the suffering of Libyans from the flooding caused by Storm Daniel.

The aid flight, the first from Qatar, is donated by Qatar Fund for Development (QFFD), Spokesman of the Qatari Ministry of Foreign Affairs Majed Al-Ansari told reporters.

Amir receives letter from S. Sudan Pres.

KUWAIT CITY, Sept 13, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received on Wednesday a handwritten letter from South Sudan President Salva Kiir Mayardit affirming strength of the bilateral relations between the two countries.

The letter was received by Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah during his meeting with visiting Minister of Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management of South Sudan, Albino Akol Atak, and his accompanying delegation.

Meanwhile, Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry discussed in a phone conversation late Tuesday the "map mishap" issue with Shourky revealing that the matter would be investigated, said a Foreign Ministry statement on Wednesday

A statement by the ministry indicated that the incident occurred during the participation of Kuwaiti officers at a training course, in which an unofficial map of the Arab World was used without including the internationally recognized borders of the State of Kuwait.

According to the statement, Shoukry affirmed that this incident was unintentional, vowing a thorough investigation into the matter.

Those responsible for this mishap would be held accountable, added Minister Shourky who said that this mistake did not reflect the strong relations linking Kuwait and Egypt.

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Ties discussed: Kuwait Ambassador to Iraq Tariq Al-Faraj on Tuesday discussed with Iraqi Minister of Defense Thabet Al-Abbasi the bilateral relations and ways to develop them.

The meeting dealt with several files of common interest and the mechanisms for enhancing cooperation between the two countries and serving the interests of the two brotherly peoples, Ambassador Al-Faraj told KUNA.

The Iraqi minister asked Al-Faraj to convey an invitation to Kuwait Minister of Defense Sheikh Ahmed Fahd Al-Sabah to visit Iraq.

'Provide students all they need on return to school'

By Fares Al-Abdan
Al-Seyassah Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Sept 13: Acting Assistant Undersecretary for Social Welfare Affairs at the Ministry of Social Affairs Hamad Al-Khalidi stressed the keenness of the Ministry of Social Affairs to work on providing everything that students need when they return to school, in implementation of the directives of the Minister of Social Affairs Sheikh Firas Al-Saud.

In a press statement issued on the sidelines of the closing ceremony of summer activities and return to school, which was organized by the Family Nursery Administration under the slogan "With You We Continue Success," he stated that the ministry always seeks to activate social partnership, either with the private sector or civil society bodies, in a way that contributes to the integration of children into society.

Sheikh Firas

Al-Khalidi stressed that the summer programs had a great impact by bringing joy to the children and helping them spend their free time during the summer vacation by joining educational programs and visiting entertainment places.

He thanked the administration's employees for providing all the special requirements for the success of this program.

The minister praised the role played by the parties participating in this ceremony and the parties supporting the sector in particular, adding, "This is what we always emphasize, the necessity of activating community-based partnerships. As we are on the threshold of the beginning of a new academic year, we look forward to providing everything that children need during their studies. We wish them success and prosperity, hoping for them to achieve the highest levels of excellence and move to advanced stages in their academic lives.

The means of transporting children from their place of residence to schools are available, and the ministry is fully prepared to overcome any obstacle facing the sector."

Regarding the nutrition contract for the social welfare sector, Al-Khalidi stressed that the contract is valid and did not face any problems.

When asked about the move to the new juvenile complex, Al-Khalidi confirmed that after receiving and preparing the complex, the gradual move will begin according to a timetable agreed upon with the relevant government agencies, the Ministry of Interior and the Juvenile Prosecution.

Meeting on tender bids

By Mohammad Ghanem
Al-Seyassah Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Sept 13: According to informed sources at the Ministry of Public Works, the neutral technical committee responsible for studying the offers of international companies for road repair tenders held its meeting yesterday to negotiate and receive final price offers from companies competing to win ten tenders for road maintenance. These tenders include maintenance work in all six governorates, with a tender for each governorate, three contracts for the northern, southern, and central regions with a contract for each region, and one contract for the Jaber Bridge.

The sources explained that the committee has finished evaluating the companies' price offers with varying percentages of price increases compared to the estimate for street repair, which the ministry is fully committed to.

The evaluation process was carried out through a careful study, which the committee undertook since its formation, of the offers submitted by seven international companies that were qualified by the Ministry of Public Works to carry out various road maintenance works in the country.

The committee will submit its final report in preparation for awarding the best financial and technical offers in accordance with the conditions set by the ministry for road repair soon.

The ministry is scheduled to complete the rest of the awarding procedures and sign contracts with the winning companies within the framework of the budget allocated by the Ministry of Finance, which was later agreed upon to implement the tenders once the committee's work is completed.

The ministry had discussed with the State Audit Bureau the plan to contract with international companies and the reasons that prompted it to offer limited tenders in accordance with Article 18 of the Public Tenders Law, which gives the ministry the right to offer limited practices to international companies without the local agent, which were earlier nominated by the embassies of their ministries.

'Sheikh Mishal to open Games'

By Fares Al-Abdan
Al-Seyassah Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Sept 13: The Chinese Ambassador to Kuwait Zhang Jianwei says the visit of His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad to open the Asian Games will be very important, and he will receive a warm reception from the Chinese side.

He indicated the arrangement for a meeting between His Highness Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad with the Chinese leaders, adding, "This visit is very important for the bilateral relations. We are coordinating with the relevant authorities to make this visit a success."

Ambassador Jianwei said during a press conference held yesterday afternoon at the Chinese Cultural Center.

He met with Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Ahmad Al-Fahad, and they exchanged views on enhancing cooperation between China and Kuwait in all fields, especially since Kuwait is going through a new stage to achieve a new development.

Ambassador Jianwei affirmed that, "China is ready to enhance cooperation in all fields. We touched on issues of common interest. I believe that the exchange of visits between officials plays a positive role in a strategic partnership."

Regarding China's role in mediation in the Durra gas field, Ambassador Jianwei said, "I have not heard any request in this matter from the Kuwaiti, Saudi, or Iranian side. I believe that the countries concerned have the ability and desire to resolve this challenge through negotiation and a political solution. We believe that the countries concerned will find fair and reasonable solutions as always in the end."

Regarding mediation between Saudi Arabia and Iran, Ambassador Jianwei explained that, "China, based on a request from Iran and Saudi Arabia, played a positive mediating role. This is a positive role for China emanating from China's foreign policy. We will continue to call for peace and development, especially since we consider the Middle East region very important to the world and we support the countries of the region in making decisions according to their independent will. Our mediation is consistent with the desires of the countries of the region and the aspirations of their people for security, stability and development."

Belt and Road

Ambassador Jianwei said, "The Belt and Road Initiative, which was proposed by the Chinese President ten years ago, was very popular with the international community. We will continue to exert efforts to enhance cooperation with all countries that desire development and progress, especially since China has now become the largest trading partner for more than 140 countries. China refuses to politicize economic issues.

The world is going through a difficult phase, especially as we face serious challenges. Cooperation and solidarity among the international community is necessary to face these challenges. China will always remain the peaceful force and partner to advance global development, and the Chinese side is ready with all countries to confront every difficulty or challenge."

Regarding Chinese companies in Kuwait, Ambassador Jianwei confirmed that more than 60 Chinese companies have entered Kuwait since the end of 1970s, and played a very important role in its infrastructural development.

He explained that the companies have the ability and rich experiences to participate in the country's infrastructure. They are accustomed to the Kuwaiti market and therefore want to enhance cooperation in the field of infrastructure development of roads, bridges, housing, etc.

Five years ago, there were no Chinese cars on the streets in Kuwait, but now Chinese cars can be seen everywhere in the Kuwaiti market. There are 28 Chinese brands in the car market. The Chinese industry is known to be excellent in quality, and Chinese designs and standards are used in Kuwait. This may help accelerate the pace of development in this field.

Public Investment Authority

Regarding the Public Investment Authority's investments in China, Ambassador Jianwei said the opening of the second office in China confirms the Kuwaiti side's interest in Chinese cooperation and economic and banking investment, adding that this cooperation is considered an important part of our relations, and the Kuwaiti sovereign fund has been investing in China for years and has yielded excellent returns, especially after the development of Chinese-Arab and Chinese-Gulf relations.

Sheikh Mishal

Zhang Jianwei

Regarding China's efforts to present itself as an alternative to America in the region, he stressed that China did not seek to close any vacuum left by any party, "as we devote our efforts to developing ourselves and improving the lives of the Chinese people. This is the main mission of the ruling Chinese Communist Party and the Chinese government. We are working to enhance cooperation with Arab countries and the Gulf."

The Chinese ambassador stressed that Kuwait is the first Arabian Gulf country to establish diplomatic relations with China, and the first Arab country to take the initiative to sign a memorandum of understanding with China for the joint construction of the Belt and Road Initiative, in addition to being the Arab country that provides China with preferential government loans.

Ambassador Jianwei revealed that China, since 2015, has maintained its position as Kuwait's largest trading partner, adding that in 2022, the total volume of bilateral trade between the two countries reached USD 31.48 billion, an annual increase of 42.3 percent.

He stressed that Kuwait is the seventh largest source of crude oil imports to China, as China imported 33.28 million tons of crude oil from it, an annual increase of 10.34 percent.

Ambassador Jianwei indicated that the total Chinese direct investments in Kuwait are worth a total of about USD 550 million, making it the second largest source of foreign investment in Kuwait, adding that the Public Investment Authority established its second office abroad in Shanghai in 2018.

Parliament panel discusses cross-gender & segregation

By Saeed Mahmoud Saleh
Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Sept 13: The parliamentary Values Enhancement Committee met with Minister of Education, Higher Education and Scientific Research Adel Al-Mane and the representatives of Kuwait University on Tuesday during which they discussed cross-gender and segregation issues.

Meanwhile, MP Dawoud Ma'arafi forwarded queries to Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Talal Khalid Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah about the institution tasked to nationalize jobs in cooperative societies.

He wants to know the number of Kuwaitis who applied for supervisory positions in the cooperatives; reasons for the nationalization of jobs since it was announced in February 2023; number of vacancies; procedures followed in filling up vacancies; number of days that the Fakhruna platform functioned after its launching as per the decision issued by the Public Authority for Manpower (PAM) on July 25, 2023 to receive the applications of citizens looking for jobs in cooperatives through this platform; reasons for closing the platform; and legal basis for authorizing PAM to conduct interviews and exams for the applicants.

MP Abdullah Fehad asked Minister of Commerce and Industry and State Minister for Youth Affairs Muhammad Othman Al-Aiban about the collection of fees for citizens' shipments valued at less than KD100 by the company that signed a contract with Kuwait General Administration for Customs (KGAC). He pointed out this is a violation of KGAC decision number 94/2020, which is based on law number 42/2013.

He requested for a copy of the contract between KGAC and the company, including the tasks of the company and average completion rate. He wants to know the number of complaints filed by citizens against the company, measures that KGAC took to address these complaints, and if the penalties stipulated in the contract were imposed on the company.

MP Hassan Jawhar asked HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah about the regulations stated in the decision of the Council of Ministers to organize coordination among ministries and public institutions as per Article Three of law number 116/1992; and if the Council of Ministers issued a decision on Sept 4, 2023 to put Kuwait Investment Authority (KIA) and Kuwait Authority for Partnership Projects (KAPP) under the Ministry of Finance. If yes, he inquired about changes in the government's strategy that led to such a decision.

Jawhar forwarded queries to Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al- Sabah about the headline of Al-Jarida daily published on Sept 3, 2023: "Britain to Kuwait: Why not ask for your money?" He confirmed that there is money belonging to Kuwait in British banks due to court decisions against some Kuwaiti citizens.

He demanded for copies of all correspondences between British and Kuwaiti authorities, including the amounts that belong to Kuwait; all correspondences between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Kuwaiti public institutions urging them to collect the money; and all correspondences between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other countries regarding the money, if any.

He also asked the minister about the impact of the decision of the Federal Iraqi Court regarding the constitutionality of the Kuwaiti-Iraqi treaty on marine borders and sailing at Abdullah Bay, and if the minister submitted a request to the Council of Ministers to discuss the consequences of the decision as per the decree mandating the council to decide on sovereign issues. If yes, he demanded for a copy of the request, and if no, he wants to know the reasons for not taking this step.

Other Voices

Scant Kuwait interest in BRICS

By Ahmad alsarraf

The BRICS group was established in 2009, with the aim of creating a new bloc independent of the US-led Western bloc. The founding countries were China, India, Russia and Brazil, before South Africa joined them next.

First, there is no real harmony between the BRICS countries. China and India have long had strong competition, economic problems, and border disputes. Also, what brings these countries together is their dissatisfaction with America's policies, more than their common interests, such as their quest to eliminate poverty among their people, and their technical backwardness from the West, with a complete absence of any comprehensive political outlook, noting that India, South Africa, and Brazil enjoy democracy, while Russia and China are dominated by authoritarianism.

alsarraf

Moreover, what divides them is more than what unites them, which is why every previous statement of these countries' meetings, and after every event and conference, and for nearly 15 years, came diplomatically and is open to various interpretations.

Three of the BRICS countries, India, Brazil, and South Africa, enjoy close relations with Western countries in general, and the United States in particular, and they are not prepared to escalate their relations, which are currently fruitful, with hostile positions towards the West, to please Russia and China.

The relationship between India and the United States is very deep, and the volume of trade exchange between them exceeded $150 billion, according to the latest published data.

America is India's largest trading partner, and the most important market for its exports, and it was not surprising that America strongly supported the new trade line that will depart from it to Europe, passing through the Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Israel, and its implementation will constitute an obstacle to any extreme decisions that the other BRICS countries may decide to take against America in the future.

The United States is also the largest supplier of weapons to the Indian army, and has always stood with it in its wars with its arch-neighbor, Pakistan, with which China has always stood.

What makes India's position, within BRICS, biased towards America is the large number of its citizens who work in the United States, estimated at five million, many of whom occupy very important and critical positions, and their presence constitutes a solid wall against any possibility of deterioration of the relationship between the two countries.

Observers also believe that the United States' relationship with Brazil is no less important than its relationship with India, and even exceeds it in some areas, such as the volume of huge American investments in Brazilian industries.

As for the relationship of the American states with South Africa, it is truly special, for reasons that are too numerous to enumerate. It is sufficient that it is the only African country that has received visits from a remarkable number of American presidents.

The two sisterly countries, Saudi Arabia and the Emirates, may end up accepting the invitation to join the BRICS countries, but it is difficult to imagine that they will one day find themselves in the anti-American camp. Egypt, Argentina, Iran, and Ethiopia may become members of the bloc, but they represent a factor of weakness rather than a factor of strength, due to the weakness of their economies and the near weakness of their political structures.

I also do not personally believe that Kuwait has any interest, near or far, in being even semi-party to BRICS. The weakness of this new system, relatively speaking, lies in it, and its fate of becoming a formality is very likely, as its members disagree on most global issues, the last of which was condemnation.

The countries participating in the G20 summit, which President Putin did not dare to attend, due to Russia's aggression against Ukraine and the occupation of parts of it, without the statement of condemnation including Russia's name.

For all these reasons, it is impossible, in the short and medium term, for the BRICS group to become a competitor or equal in strength to the Western countries, led by America, due to the lack of political and economic harmony between them, let alone the other differences, and it cannot one day constitute a military force, and this makes it more fragile. While Western countries have NATO power, which constitutes a significant military force in addition to its financial, economic and political power.

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A DIGEST OF PUBLIC OPINION

'Alliances vital for urgent development, economic diversification'

"I AM delighted, as many Kuwaitis are, to hear about efforts to strengthen economic and political ties with the Republic of China -- a powerhouse that has not yet fully unveiled its development potential, and undoubtedly holds opportunities we can harness through a thoughtful and balanced approach in our relationship," columnist **Asrar Jowhar Hayat** wrote for **Al-Qabas** daily.

"Recent reports informed us that Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense, Sheikh Ahmed Al-Fahd, held discussions with the Chinese ambassador to Kuwait to prepare for the upcoming visit of His Highness the Deputy Amir, Crown Prince Sheikh Mishaal Al-Ahmad, may God protect him, to China. Additionally, there is news of a delegation led by Al-Fahd planning a visit to China to facilitate His Highness's trip.

Asrar Hayat

"This is a promising move that has the potential to advance our economic and developmental goals, provided we strike a balance between our aspirations and what we can offer to China.

"While I believe this step should have been taken earlier, the adage "better late than never" holds true. China is currently embracing the world, which means that agreements with them are more likely to be equitable and mutually beneficial.

"During my stay in Beijing for nearly a month and a half as part of the Chinese International Media Center's program under the auspices of the Chinese Public Diplomatic Association, I have observed numerous strengths that China can share with its partners through various agreements.

"China's remarkable transformation from poverty to one of the world's largest economies is testament to the vast human, intellectual, technological, and other resources it possesses.

"Having spent this time in Beijing, I've witnessed the Chinese people's eagerness, despite their challenges, to engage with the world, foster openness, and build partnerships for the benefit of all parties involved.

"Furthermore, China stands leagues ahead of us in various fields, with technology and artificial intelligence being particularly noteworthy.

"Today, as I witness my country turning its gaze eastward, I am pleased that we are expanding our options for economic alliances. It's heartening to see the government recognizing the importance of forging such alliances, especially with China. I remain optimistic that this step will pave the way for additional initiatives.

"Despite the prosperity we enjoy, we lag behind in terms of development, technology, and economic diversification. While our neighbors have begun reaping the benefits of economic diversification, we still rely on oil sales to cover our expenses.

"Even with our financial resources, which position us strongly at negotiation tables, we must acknowledge our pressing need for alliances that can drive urgent and practical development, promote economic diversification, and usher in a realistic era of digital transformation."

Also:

"The recurring seasonal campaigns from Iraq against Kuwait have raised numerous questions. These campaigns tend to escalate during critical periods for reasons unrelated to Iraq's interests, often driven by electoral motives and opportunistic exploitation. Such actions only strain the already delicate relations between the two nations, calling for rationality and a comprehension of the current situation," columnist **Talal Abdul Karim Al Arab** wrote for **Al-Jarida** daily.

"Iraq's involvement in the "Al-Durra" field, a matter where it has no rightful claim, appears as a grave misstep, lacking any logical justification unless it aims to sow confusion and complicate matters, potentially benefiting Iran.

"Iraq's strong opposition to Mubarak's port signifies a limited perspective, as this port could significantly benefit Iraq by opening up lucrative investment and trade opportunities, ultimately reducing commercial dependency, which would not align with Iran's interests.

"Regarding the most recent seasonal turmoil concerning the demarcation of maritime borders in Khor Abdullah, it appears to be an ongoing issue in Iraqi politics, driven by electoral or regional considerations. This raises a perplexing question: Why do Iraqis consistently direct their grievances towards Kuwait, their peaceful Arab neighbor that was once unjustly and aggressively attacked? Why don't they similarly challenge their Iranian neighbor, who has committed numerous aggression against them?

"It seems that some parties are intent on destabilizing the region by sowing seeds of discord and disrupting Iraq's relations with Arab nations, particularly Kuwait. The demarcation issue has benefited Iraq at sea and led to the return of land wells dug by Iraqis, not Kuwaitis, on Kuwaiti territory.

"Kuwait possesses sufficient oil reserves, and accusations of oil theft from Iraq can only be attributed to those disconnected from reality. Oil theft typically involves occupying territory, as Iraq did in the past, or engaging in covert drilling at close proximity to the reservoir's location.

"In either case, Kuwait lacks the capability to execute such actions in practice, and if it could, it would not go unnoticed by international observers.

"Iraqi citizens must be vigilant about the deceit of politicians who prioritize interests other than their own nation's. They should recognize that their interests lie with Kuwait and other Arab nations, and they must understand that Iraq's resources and people are abundant.

"Corruption, sectarian quotas, and certain allegiances to Iran have been the root causes of Iraq's destruction. Iraq has become a breeding ground for criminal militias, and it is essential for Iraqi Arabs to realize that Iran, not Kuwait, is responsible for cutting off water and electricity supplies to Iraq. Iran, not Kuwait, diverted the rivers that have historically nourished Iraq's land, taking advantage of the silence of some Iraqi collaborators.

"It is not Kuwait that has depleted the livelihoods of Iraqis or militarily violated their northern and southern territories, nor has it forcefully occupied an Iraqi oil field near the border. We urge Iraqis to focus their efforts on liberating their country from its true enemy rather than directing their grievances at Kuwait, which remains steadfast against any covetous aggressor."

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"The visit of His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishaal Al-Ahmad to Britain, in response to the invitation of British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, adds appreciation, love and partnership to the pages of the long history of bilateral relations between the two countries -- over a period of 124 years," columnist **Tariq Boursli** wrote for **Al-Anba** daily.

"Whoever browses the books of Kuwaiti historians knows the role that Britain has been playing in Kuwait since the 18th century. The relationship between the two countries is distinguished through the first military protection agreement that put Kuwait under the umbrella of the United Kingdom in 1899. This resulted in the protection of Kuwait after its independence and the export of the first Kuwaiti oil shipment until the adoption of the Constitution and so on. Respect and appreciation prevailed between Kuwait and England, and the relationship between the British and Kuwaitis is deep.

"I feel elated whenever I witness the fervent desire to strengthen bilateral relations and security, economic and humanitarian strategies between the two countries. The festive atmosphere and hospitality are manifestations of the depth of high-level relations and friendship between Kuwait and the United Kingdom.

"In fact, the British ambassador issued a statement on this visit, affirming that Kuwait has been the largest investor in Britain since 1953 when the Kuwait Investment Office was established in London. The office is considered the investment womb from which the sovereign and investment funds of Kuwait emerged since the nationalization in 1975. It is worth pointing out that Kuwait and Britain have been cooperating in the fields of cyber and military security since 1991.

"Agreements were signed during this visit, which heralds a wave of Kuwaiti investments in the United Kingdom. In the same manner, we want Britain to be the largest investor in Kuwait. We also want to strengthen cooperation in other fields like culture, arts, literature and civilization.

"As a Kuwaiti citizen, I am happy over the signing of the investment partnership agreement. This is in addition to the memorandum of understanding signed by the Kuwaiti and British foreign ministries on commemorating the 125th anniversary of the Kuwaiti-British partnership in 2024. It makes us optimistic that there will be more progress and prosperity in the coming decades, such that Britain becomes an incubator for huge Kuwaiti investments."

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"It has been revealed that an average of three million sick leaves are granted every year in a sparsely populated country like Kuwait, far from epidemics and communicable diseases that are common in countries with forests and swamps," columnist **Sami Al-Nisf** wrote for **Annahar** daily.

"This is a dangerous fact, especially since it is known that many of the sick leaves are for students and employees. Early diagnosis and knowledge of real causes of illnesses are required to find treatment and reduce such an unrealistic number of sick leaves.

"I personally believe that the educational curricula, memorization methodology and backward teaching methods in government schools are among the reasons. The student goes to school reluctantly and it is natural for him to resort to sick leave. The solution is to use advanced curricula that are close to the curricula of foreign schools, where students are rarely absent due to illness.

"This is also the case with the stifling, boring and repellent administrative atmosphere in government work, the absence of a punishment and reward system, the spread of parachute promotions, and the misunderstanding of some managers that their role is not to create a comfortable atmosphere for employees to work and create.

"Rather, their role is to dominate and take revenge until they are expelled from the workplaces. Thus, employees resort to sick leaves and early retirement, while the best job for the promising youth is one in which there is no work."

— Compiled by Mai Elsoukary

PAM's tripartite panel raids medical center, detains 60

MoI seizes 'largest' liquor factory in Al-Abdali farms

Al-Anba photo

Drugs, knife seized from the two men.

By Fares Al-Abdan

Al-Seyassah Staff and **Agencies**

KUWAIT CITY, Sept 13: The tripartite committee, led by the Public Authority for Manpower, in cooperation with the Ministry of Interior, represented by the Residence Affairs Investigation Department, and the Ministry of Health, represented by the Medical Licensing Department, launched a campaign against one of the famous medical centers in the capital region.

An official source in the authority said that the complaint submitted against the center was dealt with, and during the inspection it was found that 60 employees did not have license from the Ministry of Health to practice the profession and were also violators of the labor and residence laws.

During the inspection of the center, unlicensed medical staff were found inside a secret operating room designated for hair transplantation. A violation report was issued, the tools were confiscated, and the workers were transferred to the competent authorities.

A majority of the violating workers were domestic workers and some of them on dependent visa.

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'Liquor factory raided': Kuwait's Ministry of Interior seized on Wednesday "the largest liquor factory" in Al-Abdali farms ran by six Asians.

This came in a statement released by the Ministry's Public Relations and Media Security saying that this operation comes from joint efforts with the Criminal Investigation Department in capturing the criminals and outlaws.

It added that the Criminal Investigation Department has monitored and traced the suspects daily and were able to apprehend them in a farm in Al-Abdali area used to manufacture local liquor.

It noted that six Asians were apprehended, 236 barrels and manufacturing equipment were seized and confiscated in the raid.

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Duo held for drugs use: Personnel from the Ahmadi Security Directorate have arrested two people – a Kuwaiti citizen and an Asian – for possessing and consuming drugs, reports Al-Anba daily.

The daily said the men who were seized in the Mahboula area and have been handed over to the General Administration for Narcotics Control.

The securitymen have seized from the 'addicts' 3 bags of shabu, a piece of hashish, and 5 'Lyrica' narcotic pills, in addition to drug paraphernalia and a sharp weapon.

The Kuwaiti is believed to be in his 30s and the Asian in his forties.

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23 people arrested: Personnel from the General Department of Criminal Investigation, represented by the Farwaniya Governorate Investigation Department, have arrested 14 people on charges of acts contrary to public morals in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh, reports Al-Rai daily.

Inspectors from the Public Morality Protection Department have also arrested 9 people practicing vice in the Salmiya area and massage institutes in exchange for money.

All those arrested have been referred to the competent authorities to take the necessary legal measures against them.

'Motorists beware, abide by law'

KUWAIT CITY, Sept 13: In a move aimed at enhancing road discipline, security sources have informed Al-Seyassah daily that stringent directives have been issued to confiscate any vehicle that lacks proper metal plates or operates on the roads with just one plate. These vehicles are subject to seizure, and appropriate actions are taken against their owners, reports Al-Seyassah daily

These sources have clarified that all patrols under the jurisdiction of public security, traffic enforcement, and rescue units will halt any vehicle found without metal plates or with only a single plate.

They further emphasized that Article 207 of Executive Regulation No. 81 of 1976, under Traffic Law No. 67 of 1876, gives the authority to the security forces to impound any motor vehicle or car if driven on the road without plates, with only one plate, or if the plate is not legible, if there are obstructions to the driver's vision, or if the vehicle is carrying plates not issued by the General Traffic Department.

Moreover, the General Traffic Department has called on motorists to verify the factory-installed tint percentage on their windows before adding additional tinting.

It should be noted that the maximum permissible tint level is 70%, and it is strictly prohibited to tint the windshield, regardless of whether it is transparent or previously tinted.

Agencies add:

Acting Prime Minister, Minister of Interior Sheikh Talal Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah affirmed on Wednesday the importance of dealing with reckless drivers firmly and traffic congestion promptly to ensure everyone's safety as the school's new academic year starts next week.

In a statement released by the Ministry's Public Relations and Media Security, Sheikh Talal headed a security meeting with Undersecretary of the Ministry, Lieutenant General Anwar Al-Barjas, to follow up on the ministry's readiness to handle traffic congestion during school hours.

Sheikh Talal stressed the importance of police presence on all roads and intersections that lead up to schools in residential areas to help reduce traffic congestion and eliminate illegal parking in front of schools.

He also ordered to boost security and traffic awareness campaigns to provide parents and drivers with all the necessary information needed to avoid motorists' bad behaviors that can affect the safety of other drivers.

HH Amir receives cable from Crown Prince

KUWAIT CITY, Sept 13, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received Wednesday a cable from His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to express joy on his safe return following a private visit to Italy.

His Highness the Crown Prince expressed joy upon His Highness the Amir's return, and said citizens and expatriates were wishing well-being for His Highness the Amir, and praying for Allah the Almighty to bestow on him with blessing to continue his leadership of the nation towards further progress and prosperity.

His Highness the Amir thanked His Highness the Crown Prince for his kind words and best wishes.

His Highness the Amir prayed to Allah the Almighty to preserve the nation and bless it with sustainable security, stability and prosperity towards further development.

KUNA photo

UAE Vice President, Prime Minister and Dubai Ruler receives Kuwaiti Defense Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Fahad Al-Sabah.

UAE, Kuwait bound by 'historic' relations: MoD

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Kuwait are joined by "historic and brotherly" ties, a Kuwaiti Ministry of Defense statement said on Wednesday, citing a common desire to ensure these relations remain on an upward trajectory.

Conveying the Kuwaiti political leadership's "warmest greetings" to the UAE, visiting Kuwaiti Defense Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Fahad Al-Sabah thanked UAE Vice President, Prime Minister and Dubai Ruler Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum for the hospitality shown to him, wishing the Gulf Arab Emirate further development and prosperity.

The talks between the Dubai ruler and the Kuwaiti defense minister also brought together a number of senior UAE state officials, added the statement. (KUNA)

Mol's panel to probe quarrel

KUWAIT CITY, Sept 13: The Ministry of Interior has announced that First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled recently issued a directive on the immediate formation of an investigation committee to look into the alleged quarrel between soldiers at the Special Security Forces camp, reports Al-Qabas daily.

This came after reports on the supposed squabble went viral on social media. It has been reported that the perpetrator fled from the country immediately after the incident.

Nevertheless, officers from the Ports and Borders Security Sector arrested the accused upon his return to the country recently. He was referred to the concerned authority for interrogation and other legal measures.

Chief of Army Staff, Bangladesh Army General SM Shafiuddin Ahmed is seen with Defence Minister H.E. Sheikh Ahmed Fahad, during his visit to Kuwait.

Court adjourns wife's murder case filed against 50-year-old to Sept 27

State Security case set for next week

By Jaber Al-Hamoud
Al-Seyassah Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Sept 13: The Criminal Court adjourned to September 27 the murder case filed against a 50-year-old citizen who is accused of killing his wife after she refused to abort the fetus she had conceived from him under a customary marriage, which is illegal.

During the court session yesterday, the citizen denied all the allegations leveled against him. His defense team also requested for a deadline for review, photocopying documents and preparing defense.

According to the case file, the citizen carried out his crime in October 2022 in Rumaithiya area, where he brutally strangled her, cut her into 20 pieces, and threw them in garbage containers in several areas.

The citizen confessed to the crime after the victim's sister reported her sister missing since October 2022, at the Jahra police station, revealing that her sister also did not attend the wedding of two of her children, and indicated to detectives that her sister was involved in a relationship with the citizen.

She said she called her sister's phone several times but did not receive a response as the device was turned off. She then called the defendant but he turned off his phone.

Meanwhile, the Criminal Court yesterday adjourned to Wednesday next week the State Security case filed against a former parliamentary candidate who was accused of spreading false news.

The Public Prosecution had charged the accused with broadcasting false news and misusing a smart phone for posting messages on his Twitter account regarding the secret expenses of Kuwait's Council of Ministers.

During the court session, the accused denied all allegations leveled against him. Also, his defense team demanded that the judiciary acquit their client of the charges leveled against him.

The Public Prosecution had previously released the accused on bail of KD 1,000.

MoSA gives green light to charities over donations for Morocco

KUWAIT CITY, Sept 13: Acting Undersecretary of the Ministry of Social Affairs Abdulaziz Al-Mutairi confirmed that the ministry has given the green light for charitable societies and Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) to collect donations for the benefit of those affected by the recent earthquakes in the Kingdom of Morocco, reports Al-Anba daily.

Al-Mutairi clarified that donations should be collected at the headquarters of the charitable societies and KRCS in accordance with the regulations. He said the approved methods of collecting donations include K-Net, automated donation collection devices and bank deductions.

He added the ministry is currently coordinating with its Foreign Affairs counterpart and the charitable societies to ensure the success of this donation campaign.

Bangladesh-Kuwait Defense Cooperation

People and Government of Bangladesh will remain ever grateful to Kuwait for being the first Gulf country to recognize Bangladesh in 1973 after the independence of Bangladesh in 1971. Both the countries established diplomatic relation in 1974. Since the establishment of diplomatic relations, with the passage of time relations between the two friendly countries has reached to a new height with the visionary leadership of both the countries. Bangladesh sincerely acknowledges the immense contribution of the state of Kuwait in nation building efforts through different bilateral relation and in particular by hosting large number of Bangladeshi expats and financial support through Kuwait Fund. Bangladesh as a trusted friend, stood firm in the need of time. Bangladesh joined in Coalition Force against the invasion by Iraq in 1990. Since 1991 till to date, Bangladesh Armed forces in collaboration of Kuwait Armed Forces have been actively engaged in "Operation Kuwait Punorgothon". To save lives and properties of brotherly Kuwaiti people, members of Bangladesh Army made sincere and extensive search-clearance-demolition operations against the menace of vastly and densely scattered mines and explosives from Kuwaiti soil. Presently, being divided in 11 contingents, skilled personnel of Bangladesh Armed Forces had been providing technical and vocational expertise in the fields of engineering, medical, communication, security, administration etc. to rebuild Kuwait for the past 32 years. So far 96 Bangladesh Armed Forces personnel sacrificed their lives while serving in Kuwait. Bangladesh Army supported friendly country Kuwait to fight against deadly pandemic COVID-19 by sending a medical team comprising 30 doctors and 70 ICU assistants who played admirable role in controlling the COVID -19 situation in Kuwait for 10 months. Bangladesh gracefully appreciates friendly country Kuwait specially His Highness Amir, His Highness Crown Prince and His Excellency Defense Minister for hosting Bangladeshi contingent for the last 32 years.

The time-tested relations between the Armed Forces is very special and unique in nature. To strengthen existing military relation, on the invitation of Acting Chief of General Staff of Kuwait Armed Forces, Chief of Army Staff (CAS) of Bangladesh Army, General S M Shafiuddin Ahmed, SBP (BAR), OSP, ndu, psc, PhD visited Kuwait from 31 July to 03 August 2023. Recent visit of CAS, Bangladesh Army has opened new areas of defense cooperation to boost up existing defense engagements. General Shafi met with Defense Minister, Acting Chief of General Staff and high officials of Ministry of Defense (MoD), Ministry of Interior (MoI) and Kuwait National Guard (KNG). During the meetings, all of them have shown keen interest to employ more skilled manpower in near future. Consequently, a Kuwait Armed Forces delegation visited Bangladesh in August and another high-level delegation is scheduled to visit in last week of this month. Delegation will visit few factories under Bangladesh Armed Forces to explore future cooperation. Along with minister, senior officers of MoD, MoI and KNG have been invited to visit Bangladesh. These visits are likely to be held in near future. On the other hand, a team from Defense Services Command and Staff College (DSCSC) from Bangladesh will visit Kuwait later this month. KNG and Bangladesh Army is likely to engage in cooperation in the fields of training, exercise and exchange of experts. Both the Armed Forces are also actively considering to open new arenas of cooperation in logistic field.

The recent visit of CAS, Bangladesh Army to Kuwait was very successful and mutually beneficial for both sides. Kuwait recognizes professional attitudes of Bangladesh Armed Forces personnel for their dedication, hard work, courage, brilliance and skill. The defense cooperation between Bangladesh and Kuwait has got a further momentum with this visit and more avenues has opened up. Contribution and excellent efforts of BMC will continue to make rewarding relation between the two countries. Government of Bangladesh is committed to further strengthening bilateral relations in defense sector in future with brotherly and friendly country, the state of Kuwait.

The Indian Ambassador to Kuwait HE Dr Adarsh Swaika today called on the Minister of State for Municipal and Communication Affairs HE Fahad Ali Zayed Al-Shuala. Discussions pertained to potential opportunities for cooperation in the IT and maritime sectors.

Minister of

Continued from Page 1

Fairness begins with removing the burdens of the borrowing citizens who are suffering, either through physical coercion that restricts them and almost deprives them of air because there are those who refuse to open the state as a window of hope to relieve them of their suffering. There are about 120,000 people who are either imprisoned due to their inability to repay or are facing civil lawsuits under the flimsy pretext of "preserving rights."

We said in the past and we repeat it today - Loans are a concern that worries about two-thirds of the people in this country. The abuse practiced by creditors towards debtors has reached the heights, and has even become a factor of social demolition.

As for the government, it is well aware that any obstacle that affects the financial cycle and an increase in the number of poor or needy people exacerbate the crises of citizens and negatively affects society.

Your Excellency the Minister, you stated a few days ago that the citizens' pocket will not be touched. This is true in one case, as there is an administration that can make decisions, and those in charge of it know the correct direction of public finances.

Therefore, the solution begins with increasing the salaries of low-income earners, then working on directing subsidies to those in need, and removing them from the wealthy.

In many countries, there are taxes on wealth and companies, after which it is possible to discuss value-added tax and other taxes that serve society and do not flow into the stomachs of whales of money. Otherwise, we are just plowing in the sea.

King of

Continued from Page 1

slicing off a chunk of mountain, killing residents and razing the hamlet to the ground.

Bulldozers, rescue crews and Moroccan first responders work around the clock trying to dig through the wreckage to unearth the eight to ten corpses still underneath.

"The mountain was split in half and started falling. Houses were fully destroyed," Ait Ougadir Al Houcine said as rescuers worked on recovering bodies, including his sister's. "Some people lost all their cattle. We have nothing but the clothes we're wearing. Everything is gone."

The scene in Imi N'Tala, which mainly houses herders and famers and where 96 residents perished in Friday's earthquake, mirrors that of dozens of places situated along the treacherous mountain roads south of Marrakech: Men in donated djellabas neatly arrange rugs atop dust and rocks to pray after looking for open space and solid ground. Donkeys bray as they pass by people covering their noses to block the smell of decomposing bodies.

The death and injury counts continue to rise as more remote villages are reached, bodies get dug up and people sent to hospitals. Moroccan authorities reported 2,901 deaths as of Tuesday. The United Nations has estimated that 300,000 people were affected by Friday night's magnitude 6.8 quake.

But things look different than in the hours and days immediately after the temblor.

About 38 miles (62 kilometers) north in Marrakech, King Mohammed VI is visiting a hospital and donating blood. And in Imi N'Tala - as well as in nearby Anougal, Imi N'Isli and Igourdane - aid has finally arrived. White and yellow tents line partially paved roads. Pyramids of water bottles and milk cartons are stacked nearby. Moroccans who've come to the region from the country's larger cities hand clay tagine pots and neatly packed bags full of food aid off of the backs of trucks.

Camera crews from France, Spain and Qatar's Al Jazeera set up as Moroccan emergency responders - along with crews from Qatar, Spain and international NGOs - jackhammer through rocks to recover a woman's body from under a crumbling house that looks like it could fall at any moment.

She's likely dead because - unlike the buildings that fell in Turkey and Syria's earthquake earlier this year - the mud bricks used to build homes in Imi N'Tala left little space for air needed to keep people alive, said Patrick Villadry of the French rescue crew, ULIS.

"When we dig, we look for someone alive. From there, we don't ask ourselves questions. If they're alive, great. If they're dead, it's a shame," he said, noting that recovering the dead was important for Moroccan families.

World Media Seminar kicks off in Sharjah with Kuwait participation

Media plays significant role in promoting importance of food security: KUNA chief

SHARJAH, Sep 13, (KUNA): Director General of Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) Dr. Fatima Al-Salem stressed Wednesday the importance of the role played by news agencies and media in promoting the concept of food security, and to discuss and address all challenges facing it.

This came during her participation in a discussion session within the World Media Forum held on the sidelines of (Expo Sharjah 2023) within the theme (Media, Food Security, Opportunities and Challenges).

Dr. Fatima Al-Salem said that food security is a very importance case to the world and to the GCC countries especially in the wake of CORONA pandemic, noting that these challenges and food security have become a very urgent necessity.

The global reports related to food security and its challenges have imposed more tasks on Media such as preparing distinguished cadres and specialized journalists to deliver the media message in a comprehensive manner to the reader to raise awareness and rationalization.

She pointed to the importance of media theories that simplify media messages but in a scientific and thoughtful manner, and shedding light on the humanitarian aspect in media materials dealing with topics and concepts related to food security, development, and other issues in the same context.

She noted that the State of Kuwait is on top of the global rankings in achieving food security, by establishing special reserves and campaigns concerned with rationalizing surplus food, and multiple official and civil national strategies concerned with that.

In this regard, she explained the importance of the role of the media message in shedding light on the concept of food security, as she believed that the most effective way to reach the recipient and public opinion lies in simplifying the media message and using advanced technological means.

On another hand, Dr. Fatima Al-Salem confirmed the importance of focusing on journalism specialized in climate change issues, and launching initiatives and steps that create a new generation of journalists, as what the Media Training and Development Center at KUNA is doing by holding courses in these fields.

On his part, Acting Deputy Director General of the Emirates News Agency (WAM) Ali Al Saad said that the media and news agencies have a very significant role to play in food security issues and concepts.

" Our priority is to focus on preparing specialized materials and broadcasting awareness messages in a smooth manner that relies on simple language and methods, through different materials and stories that carry a human dimension", he explained

Strategic partnerships

Al-Saad pointed out the importance of establishing effective strategic partnerships, especially in the Arab region, moving towards specialized media, and benefiting from the tremendous development in the media, digital communication and others, to shed light on this issue through awareness and rationalization.

The World Media Forum highlights the most important media topics, practices, opportunities and challenges related to issues of sustainability and the environment, issues of climate change, food security, concepts of the green economy and other issues related to the various media fields of journalism, radio, television, digital and artificial intelligence.

The World Media Seminar of Expo center Sharjah, launched Wednesday, prior to the International Government Communication Forum (IGCF) 2023, with the participation of Kuwait, represented by the Director General of Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) Dr. Fatima Al-Salem, officials and experts from Emirates and the region.

KUNA photo

Part of the participation of the Director General of Kuwait News Agency (KUNA), Dr. Fatima Al-Salem, in a panel discussion.

The Director General of the Emirates News Agency (WAM) Mohammad Al-Rayssi, said in an opening speech that the challenges facing news agencies and media institutions are increasing in light of what communication technologies, social media applications and Artificial Intelligence (AI) software have provided.

Facing these challenges requires continuous work with all strategic partners locally, regionally and internationally to find appropriate solutions and alternatives within the framework of societal responsibilities towards various segments and individuals of society, especially youth, as they are more likely to use these technologies, he said.

Al-Rayssi added, WAM will be showcasing in its stand at the International Government Communication Forum two interactive platforms that demonstrate the potential of AI to generate both real and fake news.

He reaffirmed WAM's commitment to credibility and professionalism in its news production. Since its establishment, the agency has signed over 120 international cooperation agreements with news agencies, newspapers, radio stations, television networks, and digital media organizations worldwide.

For his part, Director General of the Sharjah Government Media Bureau Tariq Allay, said "since the launch of the first edition of the International Government Communication Forum, we have been keen to strengthen the partnership between media and government communication and to achieve our goals aimed at developing the government communication system."

The organization of the World Media Seminar by WAM as part of the agenda of the International Government Communication Forum translates the integration of the two sectors and the unity of goals, he added.

Sustainable development

He explained that at a time when sustainable development issues have become the main concern of governments, "we have all agreed on the important role of media in supporting development efforts, presenting the correct image, and following up on shortcomings with the aim of reform and development, leading to finding effective solutions to development challenges."

Allay stressed that achieving sustainable development is a shared responsibility between all parties and requires continuous cooperation to build cultures and enhance positive behavior among individuals and institutions within complementary and effective partnerships.

It is worth noting that the seminar falls within IGCF's activities, which will be launched at the Expo Centre Sharjah entitled "Today's Resources... Tomorrow's Wealth," and brings together a group of experts and participants to elucidate the reality of media in the current era, the requirements of future media, and the importance of investing in media.

KUNA photo

The Kuwaiti and Hungarian sides after the conclusion of the joint meeting.

Memorandum of Understanding signed

Kuwait eyes stronger economic relations with Hungary – Finance Ministry official

KUWAIT CITY, Sept 13, (KUNA): The State of Kuwait is keen on developing economic relations with Hungary, especially in fields of Information Technology, agriculture, water treatment, renewable energy and tourism, affirmed Finance Ministry official on Tuesday.

Ministry Undersecretary, Aseel Al-Munaifi, mentioned this in press statement following the fourth Kuwait-Hungary committee meeting with visiting Hungarian delegation headed by Deputy Secretary of State for Defense, Tamas Vargha.

The meeting, attended by number of high-ranking officials, handled various economic aspects clarified Al-Munaifi, saying that the two sides presented viable investment opportunities.

A roadmap to achieve successful partnership and exchange of expertise was put forth during the meeting.

On his part, the Hungarian official spoke of the diplomatic relations between two countries, as the two are set to celebrate 60 years of relations next year. Vargha dubbed this a cornerstone to strengthen bilateral relations.

Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Sabah had inked a Memorandum of Understanding with Hungary on touristic cooperation during his last visit to Budapest, the Hungarian capital.

The MoU enables both countries to stimulate investments, tourism, and related economic prospects.

Minister Al-Barrak tapped to follow up Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port project

Kuwait heading towards actual operation

By Mohammed Ghanem
Al-Seyassah Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Sept 12: The Council of Ministers decided during its meeting to assign the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Economic Affairs Dr. Saad Al-Barrak to complete work on the Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port project.

According to informed sources, Kuwait is heading towards actual operation of the port in the 2025/2026 fiscal year, that is, after approximately two years.

The project, which is included in the government's work program, will complete the operation of its first phase through global partnerships. An amount of KD 9 million was included in the budget of the Ministry of Public Works in the current fiscal year to ensure the operation of this phase, especially since the cost of the first phase of the project was KD 544.6 million. From the total amount, KD 487.7 million were spent cumulatively, at a rate of 88 percent, until the end of the 2021/2022 fiscal year, and the remaining amount was KD 66.9 million.

The priority in this project was that the Ministry of Public Works was requested to merge the remaining stages, namely construction of container yards, establishment of the customs and services area, and establishment of administrative buildings and workers' housing, into one package to shorten time.

Regarding operating the port, the sources revealed that the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Investment has begun coordination with Public Authority for Investment to take appropriate measures towards determining the best ways to operate the port.

General budget

They said the state's general budget will finance the Public Authority for Investment through the relevant expenses section, with a financial appropriation of KD 500 thousand in the current fiscal year, which is dedicated for consultations regarding Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port.

The sources explained that the port has been included in the budget of the Ministry of Public Works since the 2005/2006 fiscal year. It is considered one of the giant projects, which if completed will be a major regional center for trade and shipping. Its implementation plan was divided into three phases with each phase having several packages to be implemented with 24 docks with required capacities.

Indicators suggests transition could be imminent

Kuwait could face economic challenges if it doesn't accelerate renewable energy efforts

KUWAIT CITY, Sept 13: As per a report released by the Global Energy Monitor, the Middle East and North Africa region has witnessed a 50 percent surge in its renewable energy capacity since 2022, and another 50 percent increase is anticipated by 2024, reports Al-Rai daily.

The report highlights that the region requires a capacity twenty times greater than this to replace the current gas-based power generation. These countries in the region are poised to reap substantial benefits from their endeavors to transition to renewable energy.

There are indicators suggesting that this transition could be imminent. Since May 2022, these nations have augmented their operational capabilities in solar and wind energy by 6.9 gigawatts, marking a 57 percent increase. Additionally, with 9 gigawatts of renewable energy currently under construction and slated for completion by the end of 2024, the growth rate continues to rise.

Economic dependence

In terms of economic dependence, the report reveals that Iraq, Kuwait, Libya, Oman, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia derive over a quarter of their GDP from oil and gas extraction. Should the world shift away from fossil fuels, these countries could face significant economic challenges. It's no surprise that many of these nations have not embraced renewable energy to the same extent as their less oil-rich counterparts in the region, such as Morocco and Egypt.

However, Oman is taking steps to transform its economy and serve as an example for other nations in the region. Libya, too, appears to be exploring diversification by considering renewable energy exports to Europe, although their 25GW project is still in its early stages.

The report assesses the UAE, Oman, and Morocco as potential leaders in renewable energy within the Middle East and North Africa region based on various metrics.

These metrics include the number of commissioned large-scale solar and wind projects, potential project capacities (whether they have been announced, under construction, or in some stage of development), and the establishment of ambitious renewable energy targets.

Egypt and Jordan, alongside these countries, have demonstrated their commitment to developing renewable energy infrastructure, given the anticipated abundance of solar and wind energy in the region's future (361 GW).

'Enhancement of democracies'

Arab parliaments' secretary generals eyeing more cooperation amid talks

DOHA, Sept 13, (KUNA): The secretary generals of parliaments across the wider Arab region assembled for talks on Tuesday in the Qatari capital as part of efforts to bolster cooperation, agreeing that the post forms of the core of parliament.

The meeting involving the executive committee of the Kuwait-based Association of Secretaries-General of Arab Parliaments is imperative given its significance towards parliamentary agendas, said Dr. Hamda Al-Sulaiti, the deputy chief of host nation Qatar's Shura Council.

KUNA photo

Dr. Ahmed Al-Fadala, Chairman of the Association of Secretaries-General of Arab Parliaments and Secretary-General of the Qatari Shura Council.

As the region is plagued by "instability", mainly fueled by the Middle East conflict, it would behoove Arab parliaments to work closer together in a bid to urge "international action" over the "atrocities" committed by the Israelis against the Palestinians, she underlined.

The Arab parliamentary body always prioritizes the "best interests and ambitions" of parliaments in the Arab region, the association's President Ahmed Al-Fadala told the gathering, citing the "growing significance" of the body.

The body also plays a significant role towards the "enhancement of democracies", according to the Secretary General of the Union of Member Councils of in the Organization of Islamic Cooperation Mohammad Nayas, citing the rise of the artificial intelligence market as a concern.

The association, since its inception, aims to to get Arab parliaments on the same page by ensuring a united stand on a number of the region's most pressing matters.

Kuwait Airways Job Vacancies Announcement

Kuwait Airways announces the vacancies for the jobs listed below in accordance with the following specific requirements and specifications:

Required Job	Required Experience	Qualifications
Cabin Crew	No experience required	High School (12) years education.

General Terms:

1. The priority is for Kuwaiti eligible applicants.
2. Must have a great command of English and Arabic (Spoken & Written) and good knowledge with computer use.
3. Passing the English language test is required.
4. For Kuwaitis, the applicant must have performed the mandatory military service or be exempted from it in accordance with Law No. 20/2015 and submit a Completion Certificate of the mandatory military service or present an exemption from it.
5. Applicants shall be subject to the necessary conditions for appointment in accordance with the rules and regulations at Kuwait Airways.
6. Passing the training course is required for some of the listed jobs.
7. Applicants shall be subject to the necessary interviews and tests and are required to pass the tests to proceed to the interview.
8. In case of equal results (after meeting the required conditions and passing the personal interviews) the differentiation shall be decided by the following criteria:

1. Holder of the higher older qualification. 2. Whomever graduated first.
3. Age seniority. 4. Married applicants are preferred over single status applicants.

Cabin Crew Job Requirements:

1- Female applicants: age between (20-34) years and the minimum length is 160 cm to be consistent with the weight.
2- Male applicants: age between (20-35) years and the minimum length is 167 cm to be consistent with the weight.
3- Completion of Highschool (12) years education.
4- Proficiency in written and spoken for English language.
5- The applicant must be good-looking and physically fit to work as an Airhostess/ Steward

How to apply:

- Applications shall be submitted on the: https://careers.kuwaitairways.com within 30 days from the publication date of this announcement.
- Documents to be attached to the website:

1. Valid Copy of civil ID.
2. Valid Copy of passport.
3. Highschool (12) years qualification certified.
4. Updated CV.

- Non-compliant and incomplete applications will be excluded, and such exclusion shall itself be a formal apology without the need to notify the applicant.
- Receipt of the application does not mean acceptance and the company reserves the right not to accept any applicant for the vacancies mentioned above.

Kuwait Airways Company
14 September 2023

IRU makes profits of KD 16 mln

The Insurance Regulatory Unit (IRU) achieved profits worth KD 16 million (approx. USD 51 million) in the last three years, including KD 11 (USD 35 million) for the state treasury, with zero establishment cost for the state.

In a speech at the insurance forum on Wednesday, head of the forum Mohammad Al-Otaibi said that the reason the unit's establishment did not cost the government anything is due to its ability to adapt to the situation without the existence of an operational capital or reserves, like other entities do.

The unit is proud to have no financial fines or notices from the State Audit Bureau of Kuwait in the past few years, with an employment rate of 100 percent, he noted. (KUNA)

UK economy shrinks in July

The British economy shrank by 0.5% in July amid a series of strikes, particularly by doctors at the start of their careers, and unseasonably wet weather, official figures showed Wednesday.

The Office for National Statistics said the strikes by so-called junior doctors weighed on health sector activity, while the sixth wettest July on record hit retailers after a buoyant June, when business was brisk as a result of warm weather.

Most economists downplayed the prospect that the British economy would fall into recession as monthly growth figures have been yo-yoing up and down as of late. Still, growth is expected to stay tepid.

James Smith, developed markets economist at ING, said a recession "can't be ruled out" but that the economy "seems to be still growing, albeit fractionally." (AP)

Europe's economic outlook worsens

The European Union has lowered its forecast for economic growth this year and next, saying inflation is taking a heavy toll on people's willingness to spend in shops - while higher interest rates are sharply restricting the credit needed for investment and purchases.

The revised forecast Monday from the European Commission, the EU's executive arm, comes as fears of recession grow and as the European Central Bank faces a key decision this week on whether to keep raising rates, which are aimed at getting inflation under control.

The 20 countries that use the euro currency are expected to see growth of 0.8% this year instead of 1.1% projected in the spring forecast, the commission said. For next year, growth expectations were lowered to 1.3% from 1.6%. (AP)

Market Movements 13-09-2023

			Change	Closing pts
▲ PAKISTAN	-	KSE 100	+0.24	45,595.41
▲ EGYPT	-	EGX 30	+1.14	19,361.70
▼ UAE	-	DFM	-0.25	4,050.64
▼ JAPAN	-	Nikkei	-0.21	32,706.52
▼ PHILIPPINES	-	PSEi	-1.30	6,149.18
▼ SAUDI	-	Tadawul	-0.31	11,122.23

Business

Ministry organizes panel discussion

Offshore exploration drilling enters new era of exploration ops in Kuwait

KUWAIT CITY, Sept 13, (KUNA): The Kuwaiti Ministry of Oil (MoO) confirmed that the offshore exploration drilling project enters a new and promising era of oil and gas exploration operations in the country, contributing to achieving the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation's 2040 strategy and increasing its production capacity.

The Director of Public Relations and Media at the Ministry Sheikha Tamader Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah said during a discussion panel organized by the ministry on Wednesday entitled "Offshore Drilling Project," that the project currently being implemented by Kuwait Oil Company (KOC) will broaden horizons for a future that the country looks forward to for further development.

She pointed out KOC's keenness to ensure that the offshore drilling experience is complete, integrated and safe in all its aspects, underscoring the aim of achieving the maximum benefit.

On his side, Senior Geophysicist at KOC Maitham Ebrahim underlined the importance of the marine exploration project as a national project whose purpose is to contribute to increasing Kuwait's reserves of hydrocarbon resources.

The project ensures the continuity of new hydrocarbon resources to meet the needs of the global market and enhances Kuwait's role as one of the reliable producers in the world, Ebrahim said.

The project includes Kuwait among the leading regional players as a prominent marine operator in accordance with international standards and ensures the addition of new technical specializations connected to offshore drilling operations and the creation of new and diverse job opportunities, he added.

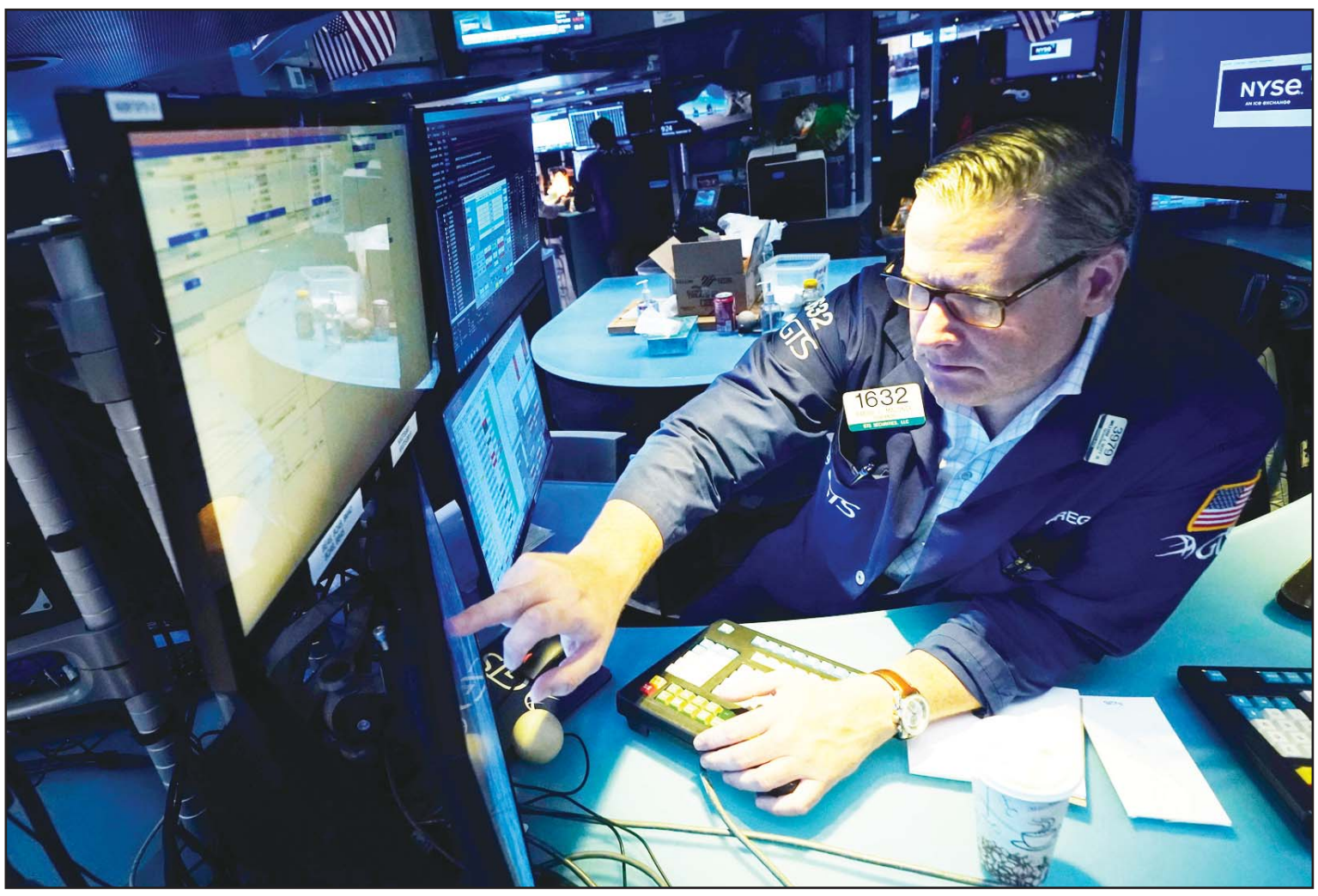
Meanwhile, Senior Geologist at KOC Ahmad Al-Otaibi said that the stages of the current marine exploration project focused on implementing a two-dimensional seismic survey, studying the areas surrounding the marine area, conducting geophysical and geological studies to know the details of the earth's layers and their compositions, identifying the best marine drilling sites, and preparing for logistical operations.

The marine area represents approximately one-third of Kuwait's total land area, and the program includes drilling six exploratory wells to explore for oil and gas in the marine areas of Kuwait as a first stage, and based on the drilling results, the subsequent stages will be determined successively, Al-Otaibi stated.

During the marine exploratory project, two jackup rigs were used, and a marine risk assessment was carried out and all obstacles were removed to ensure that the drilling platforms reached the drilling sites and settled safely. Drilling of the first exploratory well began using the Oriental Phoenix rig. The Oriental Dragon drilling rig is expected to begin drilling the second exploratory well soon, he mentioned.

He pointed out the use of the latest methods and means during drilling operations, which protect the surrounding marine area from pollution. The workers also undergo special training for this purpose, he added, indicating that if any accident occurs, it will be dealt with within the emergency response plan prepared in advance for all possible scenarios.

Wall St churns after highly anticipated 'inflation data'



Specialist Gregg Maloney works at his post on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange, Wednesday, Sept. 13, 2023. Stocks were churning in place on Wall Street after a highly anticipated report showed inflation accelerated across the country last month, but not by much more than expected. (AP)

Asian shares slide after tech, rising oil prices drag WS lower

NEW YORK, Sept 13, (AP): Stocks were churning in place on Wall Street Wednesday after a highly anticipated report showed inflation accelerated across the country last month, but not by much more than expected.

The S&P 500 was up 0.3% in afternoon trading after drifting between small gains and losses earlier. The Dow Jones Industrial Average was 58 points higher, or 0.2%, at 34,703, as of 12:36 p.m. Eastern time, and the Nasdaq composite was up 0.5%.

The moves follow a shaky immediate reaction across financial markets to the inflation report, where bond yields and stock prices swung back and forth several times. The report said U.S. consumers paid prices last month that were 3.7% higher than a year earlier, up from July's inflation rate of 3.2%.

That's discouraging for shoppers paying higher prices, but much of the acceleration was because of higher fuel costs, which can swing very sharply and quickly. Ignoring those, underlying inflation trends still look to be pointing toward continued moderation, economists said. Inflation peaked last year above 9%.

The inflation report was so highly anticipated because it will help steer what the Federal Reserve does next on interest rates. The Fed has already hiked its main rate to the highest level in more than two decades, which hurts prices for stocks and other investments, and the hope on Wall Street is that inflation has cooled enough for it to be done.

Wednesday's data likely keeps the Fed on track to keep rates steady at its meeting next week, said Gargi Chaudhuri, head of iShares Investment Strategy, Americas. It could also mean trends continue in such a way that the Fed does not hike rates any more during this cycle.

But she also said expectations among traders on Wall Street for cuts to interest rates next year may be too aggressive. Such cuts can act like steroids for stocks and other investments, but inflation is still above the Fed's target of 2%.

"If anything, higher headline inflation is proof that the Fed will need to keep rates higher for longer and that heavy rate cuts next year are mispriced," Chaudhuri said.

Even though economists are willing to ignore fuel costs when looking at inflation to find the underlying trends, households and companies don't get the same luxury.

Stocks of airlines were struggling after a couple warned of the hit to profits they're taking because of higher costs.

American Airlines cut its forecast for profits during the summer because fuel costs are running higher than it expected. It also had to pay about $230 million in retroactive pay to pilots after they ratified a new labor contract. Its stock fell 4.2%.

Spirit Airlines said it's also paying higher fuel costs this summer than expected, roughly $3.06 per gallon instead of the $2.80 it had earlier forecast. It's also been seeing steep discounting to fares during the last few weeks. That pushed it to cut its forecast for revenue during the third quarter, and its stock fell 2.6%.

Other airlines also sank, including declines of 2.5% for United Airlines, 2.1% for Delta Air Lines and 1.9% for Southwest Airlines.

On the winning end of Wall Street were high-growth stocks that could be big beneficiaries if the Fed is indeed done hiking interest rates. High rates hurt all kinds of investments, but they often most hurt technology companies and others promising big growth far out in the future.

Amazon climbed 2% and was one of the strongest forces pushing upward on the S&P 500. Microsoft gained 1.1%, and Tesla climbed 1.3%.

Moderna jumped 2.8% after it reported encouraging results from a trial of a flu vaccine.

In the bond market, the yield on the 10-year Treasury fell to 4.25% from 4.27% late Tuesday. It had swung as high as 4.34% immediately after the inflation report.

The two-year Treasury yield, which moves more on expectations for Fed action, slipped to 4.97% from 5.02% late Tuesday. It also briefly leaped and was as high as 5.07% a minute after the inflation report's release.

Europe

Stocks retreated Wednesday in Europe and Asia and oil prices rose ahead of a key report on U.S. inflation that could sway the Federal Reserve's future decisions on interest rates.

Germany's DAX shed 0.5% to 15,636.61 and the CAC 40 in Paris declined 0.5% to 7,213.81. In London, the FTSE 100 edged 0.1% lower, to 7,518.23.

Asia

Stocks fell Wednesday in Asia after a slide in technology stocks dragged Wall Street lower ahead of a key report on U.S. inflation.

Hong Kong's Hang Seng lost 0.2% to 17,986,56 and the Shanghai Composite index sank 0.8% to 3,113.18.

Japan's Nikkei 225 index shed 0.2% to 32,706.52, while the Kospi in Seoul edged 0.1% lower, to 2,533.61. Australia's S&P/ASX 200 gave up 0.7% to 7,154.60.

Shares rose in India and Taiwan but fell in Southeast Asia.

Regional markets have been relatively quiet ahead of this week's release of Chinese and U.S. economic data.

Oil

In other trading Wednesday, U.S. benchmark crude was up 21 cents at $89.05 a barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. It jumped $1.55 on Tuesday.

Brent crude oil, the international pricing standard, picked up 15 cents to $92.21 a barrel.

Currencies

The U.S. dollar rose to 147.28 Japanese yen from 147.08 yen late Tuesday. The euro slipped to $1.0739 from $1.0755.

Global Sustainability Initiatives

Zayed Sustainability Prize announces '33 finalists'

ABU DHABI, United Arab Emirates, Sept 13, (Business Wire): The Zayed Sustainability Prize, the UAE's pioneering global sustainability and humanitarian award, has announced this year's finalists following a deliberation by its esteemed Jury.

The Zayed Sustainability Prize Jury met in Abu Dhabi to elect the winners of this edition.

The winners will be announced at the Zayed Sustainability Prize Awards Ceremony on 1 December during COP28 UAE, the 28 th Conference of the Parties of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, to be held from 30 November to 12 December.

The Zayed Sustainability Prize's Jury elected the 33 finalists from 5,213 entries received across six categories: Health, Food, Energy, Water, Climate Action and Global High Schools - a 15% increase in submissions compared to last year. The new Climate Action category, introduced to mark the UAE's Year of Sustainability and hosting of COP28 UAE, received 3,178 nominations.

From Brazil, Indonesia, Rwanda and 27 other countries, the finalists represent small and medium sized businesses, nonprofit organisations and high schools, and reflect the Prize's growing mandate to reward innovations that transcend borders and tackle pressing global challenges.

H.E. Dr. Sultan Ahmed Al Jaber, UAE Minister of Industry and Advanced Technology, Director General of the Zayed Sustainability Prize, and COP28 President-Designate, said the finalists exemplify the remarkable ingenuity and unwavering commitment to shaping a more sustainable and resilient future for our planet.

"The Zayed Sustainability Prize carries forward the enduring legacy of UAE's visionary leader, Sheikh Zayed, whose commitment to sustainability and humanitarianism continues to inspire us. This legacy remains the guiding light of our nation's aspirations, propelling us forward in our mission to uplift communities around the globe. Over the past 15 years, the Prize has been a powerful force for positive change, transforming the lives of over 378 million people across 151 countries. We have incentivised solutions that are driving climate and economic progress in some of the world's most vulnerable regions.

"This cycle, we received a record-breaking number of submissions from every continent. The innovations put forth by the finalists reflect a profound dedication to inclusivity and an unyielding resolve to bridge critical gaps. These solutions directly align with the four pillars of the COP28 UAE agenda: fast-tracking a just and equitable energy transition, fixing climate finance, focusing on people, lives and livelihoods and underpinning everything with full inclusivity. The work of these sustainability pioneers will contribute practical solutions for climate progress that protect the planet, improve livelihoods, and save lives."

Through the Prize's 106 winners to date, 11 million people have gained access to safe drinking water, 54 million homes have gained access to reliable energy, 3.5 million people have gained access to more nutritious food, and over 728,000 people have gained access to affordable healthcare.

H.E. Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson, Chair of the Prize Jury, said: "As global challenges continue to mount, our newest group of Prize finalists reveal the extraordinary efforts being made worldwide to meet the needs of the moment with purpose and innovation - inspiring hope for a brighter future. Whether it's restoring the ocean wilderness, using technology to ensure better, more sustainable farm yields, or driving change for individuals without access to affordable healthcare, these innovators are transforming our world."

The Global High Schools' finalists presented project-based, student-led sustainability solutions, with finalists divided into 6 regions. The regional finalists include:

Colegio De Alto Rendimiento La Libertad (Peru); Liceo Baldomero Lillo Figueroa (Chile); and New Horizons School (Argentina).

Northfleet Technology College (United Kingdom); Presidential School in Tashkent (Uzbekistan); and Split International School (Croatia).

International School (Morocco); JSS International School (United Arab Emirates); and Obour STEM School (Egypt).

Gwani Ibrahim Dan Hajja Academy (Nigeria); Lighthouse Primary and Secondary School (Mauritius); and USAP Community School (Zimbabwe).

India International Public School (India); KORT Education Complex (Pakistan); and Obhizatrik School (Bangladesh).

Beijing No. 35 High School (China); Swami Vivekananda College (Fiji); and South Hill School, Inc. (The Philippines).

In the Health, Food, Energy, Water and Climate Action categories, each winner receives US$600,000. Each of the six winning Global High Schools receives up to US$100,000.

The Zayed Sustainability Prize is a tribute to the legacy of the late founding father of the UAE, Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan. The Prize aims to drive sustainable development and humanitarian action by recognising and rewarding organisations and high schools that are delivering innovative sustainable solutions across the categories of Health, Food, Energy, Water, Climate Action and Global High Schools. For over 15 years, through its 106 winners, the Prize has positively impacted the lives of over 378 million people in 151 countries.

ABK successfully completes capital increase

'Great demand witnessed is a reflection of shareholders' confidence in the bank'

KUWAIT CITY, Sept 13: Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) announced the successful completion of its capital increase by offering 500million-shares valued at KD100 million. The demand exceeded the targeted value by 331%to reach KD 331.37 million.

Following the completion of the capital increase, the Bank's paid-up capital increased by 26.7% to reach KD237.4 million. ABK will utilize the proceeds to strengthen its capital base, aligning with its strategy to further develop and grow its operations.

The subscription period spanned from Sunday, 27 August 2023 to Sunday, 10 September 2023, managed by Kamco Invest as the Lead Manager and Subscription Agent along with ABK Capital as the Joint Lead Manager and Subscription Agent. The subscription was conducted entirely through Kuwait Clearing Company's online platform.

On this occasion, Mr. Talal Behbehani, Chairman of ABK Group, said, "We are pleased with the level of demand witnessed throughout the subscription process. Exceeding the targeted value is a reflection of shareholders' confidence in the Bank." Mr. Behbehani highlightedthat the subscription coverage exceeded the offering value by 331%. He emphasized that the capital increase would strengthen the Bank's capital base and contribute towards enhancing its core business activities, reinforcing its leading position in the Kuwaiti banking sector.

Mr. Talal Mohamed Reza Behbehani - ABK Chairman.

Mr. Abdulla Al Sumait - Acting Group Chief Executive Officer.

The Chairman affirmed that proceeds will also be allocated towards achieving the targets set under ABK's strategy, which include enriching customer experience, investing in the Bank's digital transformation strategy, and keeping pace with the rapid changes in the local, regional, and global banking industry. This will contribute to enhancing ABK's operations in the Kuwaiti market through the provision of new banking products and services as well as allow the Bank to finance infrastructure projects in the country.

In terms of the Bank's geographical presence, Mr. Behbehani emphasized that the capital increase will contribute to the Bank's expansion plans in the regional markets in which it operates, namely Egypt and the United Arab Emirates. He said, "The Bank continuously strives to add value to all its stakeholders, including shareholders, customers and others." Mr. Behbehaniextended his appreciation to Kamco Invest, ABK Capital, and Kuwait Clearing Company for their significant efforts in managing the subscription process. He also praised the ongoing support ABK receives from the Central Bank of Kuwait, the Capital Markets Authority, and the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

For his part, Mr. Abdulla Al Sumait, Acting Group CEO at ABK, said, "We are proud of our investors' great confidence in ABK. This is reflected in the great turnout where proceeds from the capital increase will contribute to strengthening our competitive position in the banking sector." He added that ABK is keen on implementing its strategic transformation plans, pointing out that the capital increase will contribute to strengthening operations in Kuwait and across the region in the UAE, and Egypt.

ABK-building

ABK achieved a Net Profit of KD 23.9 million at the end of the first half of 2023, representing a growth of 30% compared to KD 18.4 million during the first half of 2022. Meanwhile, Earnings per Share reached 11 fils compared to 8 fils during the same period in the previous year.

ABK's financial performance reflects its continuous improvement in key operational aspects, the strong growth of its loan portfolio, the decrease in its provisions and risks, its healthy balance sheet, and its stable liquidity levels.

Since its establishment in 1967, ABK has progressed to become one of the leading Kuwaiti banks in the region that offers a wide array of personal, corporate, and private banking products and services. ABK also provides a broad range of local, regional, and global investment solutions and services through its subsidiary, ABK Capital.

Across the region, the Bank offers individuals and corporates the convenience of comprehensive banking and financial services in the Egyptian market through ABK-Egypt's network of 44 branches. This is in addition to ABK's three branches located in Dubai, Abu Dhabi, and Dubai International Financial Centre (DIFC) in the United Arab Emirates, servicing both Kuwaiti and Emirati individual and corporate clients.

ABK is a strong supporter of the Central Bank of Kuwait and Kuwait Banking Association's 'Let's Be Aware' awareness campaign. Through its various initiatives, the Bank aims to promote financial inclusion by educating Kuwaiti society about customer rights, responsibilities, and the different types of banking and special needs services. Additionally, ABK consistently provides strategic information on how to avoid banking and financial fraud, loan application requirements, digital services, and more.

For more information about ABK, please follow the Bank's social media accounts @abk_kuwait, visit eahli.com, contact Ahlan Ahli 1 899 899 or visit one of the Bank's branches across Kuwait.

Center is a nucleus for the support of Arab youth and governments: Al Habtoor

An exceptional opening ceremony for AHRC

CAIRO, Sept 13: Al Habtoor Research Centre (AHRC) in Cairo was launched in an exceptional opening ceremony on Saturday 9 September. The event was attended by an elite of intellectual and cultural figures, officials, senior media professionals and experts specialized in various fields in Egypt and the Arab world. It is a leading and influential research center specialized in various political, economic and security fields.

The most prominent attendees were Mr. Amr Moussa, Former Secretary-General of the Arab League, Dr. Mustafa al-Faqi, a political intellectual, Ambassador Ahmad Abou Zeid, the official spokesperson of the Egyptian Foreign Ministry and Ambassador Mohamed al-Orabi, former Egyptian Minister of Foreign Affairs.

At the beginning of the ceremony, a video was screened featuring Mr. Khalaf Al Habtoor, Founding Chairman of Al Habtoor Group, who stated that he established the Center to be a beacon for Arab thought comparable to major international research centers, through the drafting and publishing of research and studies in various fields for the benefit of the Arab countries in the political, economic, social and security fields. The center would also examine the global transformations and their impact on the region, probing future outlooks and sending early warning signals about major issues, which would be of interest to decision-makers.

The AHRC team gave a distinguished presentation on the role of artificial intelligence in shaping the world future, through video clips that warned of the fact that machines outdo the human role in some cases.

Khalaf Al Habtoor answering a question.

Mr Al Habtoor welcomed all attendees, expressing his pleasure to launch AHRC in Cairo in the presence of prominent researchers and public figures. He stressed that his aim was to provide serious research services that help to promote the efforts of sustainable socio-economic development in UAE, his home country, and all friendly Arab states.

On choosing Cairo to host the Center, Al Habtoor said: "Cairo is a land of knowledge; it has knowledge and youth. Therefore, we open the Center here in Cairo to be a nucleus for all Arab youth, governments and decision-makers who can benefit from the Center's research and studies. It also provides an opportunity to train and educate a new generation of researchers." He noted that he decided to rely on youth as there are young people who have extensive expertise and experience, which would enhance the benefits as well as generation complementarity.

An official addressing the audience.

He added: "We are highly indebted to Egypt. It sent us teachers, schoolbooks, and experts in various fields. Our love for Egypt is deeply rooted in our hearts, souls, and minds. We hope that the Center would make great contributions to the Arab world at the time being and to the whole world in the future."

Mr Al Habtoor expressed his hope that the Center "would achieve prompt results for everyone through the official website, as well as the research and studies. I am pleased to receive feedbacks and proposals for improvement. We should listen to everyone to reach the highest level in research and benefit from all experiences."

Islam Kamal Ghoneim, CEO of the Center, said in the video clip: "We are working to provide all means of support and research tools in various global fields and issues, draft in-depth and scientific studies and research that contribute to supporting both Arab youth and governments and help in anticipating the future and taking the right decision."

On the objectives and plans, Dr. Azza Hachem, AHRC research director, said: "We aim at creating solutions and contributing to crisis management. Our role is focused on preventing crises or managing them in an effective and successful manner when they occur." According to her, centers of research and studies are key drivers in all major transformations in the world, as they play a crucial role in shaping the events.

She added: "Our goal is to create new elites capable of shaping thought among the Arab audience by raising awareness, supporting decision-makers and helping them to share various perspectives, in addition to foresight, early warning, anticipation in dealing with crises and disasters and predicting them as well as devising efficient solutions."

Dr. Mustafa al-Faqi said: "The event today is something to be proud of. It totally changed my views about Arab research centers, especially through the reliance on a distinguished young generation." He said that this initiative was totally compatible with Al Habtoor's vision and contributed to addressing the major challenges in the Arab countries and the world.

About Al Habtoor Research Center

Al Habtoor Research Center (AHRC) is an independent think tank established in 2022 in Cairo, Egypt. Its primary aim is to support decision-makers, raise awareness, and promote open public dialogue about Middle Eastern and global issues. The center's main efforts focus on predicting crises and building a practical understanding of the world. These objectives are achieved through research papers, analyses, and reports prepared diligently by a dedicated team of experts and researchers.

Mr. Khalaf Al Habtoor, Founding Chairman of Al Habtoor Group (left) with other officials.

A flyer of the campaign.

Through its "Nojoom" partnership with Jarir

Ooredoo Kuwait 'continues' upgrading learning experience

KUWAIT CITY, Sept 13: As the Back-to-School season approaches, Ooredoo Kuwait, the leading telecom company, is thrilled to shine a spotlight on its esteemed 'Nojoom' loyalty program and its ongoing partnership with Jarir Bookstore Kuwait.

Jarir Bookstore is renowned for its expansive product selection and enticing offers, making it the perfect destination for a rewarding Back-to-School shopping spree. Their product categories span across Electronics, Arabic and English Books, Office and School Supplies, as well as Art and Crafts.

Flourishing since its inception in 2018, the partnership between Ooredoo Kuwait and Jarir Bookstore has been enabling Ooredoo users to seamlessly convert their Nojoom points into Kuwaiti Dinar vouchers, available in denominations of KD5, KD10, KD15, KD20, and KD50.

Claiming these vouchers is a hassle-free process, as they can be conveniently redeemed at any of Jarir's Kuwait branches, including Shuwaikh, Hawalli, Salmiya, Egaila, and the recently opened Avenues branch in April this year.

The 'Nojoom' loyalty program has long been a customer favorite for its innovative approach to rewards. Customers earn points every time they use Ooredoo services, which can then be exchanged for a wide array of products and services tailored to cater to various customer preferences.

Commenting on this long-standing partnership and its benefits for members, Leena Al-Essa, Advertising Manager at Ooredoo Kuwait, expressed, "We eagerly anticipate the Back-to-School season in collaboration with Jarir Bookstore. This partnership not only builds upon the incredible success we've achieved with the Nojoom program but, more importantly, provides our customers with the opportunity to redeem their points beyond the realm of telecommunications."

Leena Al-Essa, Advertising Manager at Ooredoo Kuwait.

This collaboration underscores Ooredoo Kuwait's unwavering commitment to enhancing customer experiences and offering innovative rewards, further solidifying its position as a telecommunications industry leader.

For more information and updates, please visit Ooredoo Kuwait and Jarir Bookstore Kuwait.

Ooredoo Kuwait was established in December 1999 as the second operator in the country. Today, the company offers mobile, broadband internet and corporate managed services tailored to the needs of customers and businesses. The company operates a number of telecom providers in the region: Ooredoo Algeria, Ooredoo Tunisia, Ooredoo Maldives, and Ooredoo Palestine. Ooredoo Kuwait is a member of the international Ooredoo Group based in Doha, Qatar.

Kuwait Airways Board of Directors holds its first meeting geared towards greater progress and more achievements

Members of the board pose together.

KUWAIT CITY, Sept 13: Kuwait Airways' new Board of Directors held its first meeting at the company's headquarters, headed by the Chairman of the Board of Directors of Kuwait Airways, Captain Abdulmohsen Salem Alfagaan, and in the presence of the Members of the Board comprising of Dr. Amani Khaled Boresli, Mr. Abdulaziz Abdullah Alhumaidhi, Mr. Omar Mohammad Alomar, Mr. Salem Bader Alshatti, Mr. Mohammad Mannaa Alenezi, and Mr. Ali Haidar Khajah. The meeting ended with the decision to appoint Dr. Amani Khaled Boresli as Vice Chairman of the Board of Directors, in addition to the establishment of the members of the working committees.

This meeting follows the decision of the Minister of Finance, H.E. Fahad Abdulaziz Al-Jarallah, (No:55 of 2023, dated 6 September 2023) to appoint the new Board of Directors for a period of three years.

On this occasion, the Chairman of the Board of Directors, Captain Abdulmohsen Salem Alfagaan stated, "On behalf of myself and the Board of Directors, I would like to extend my sincere thanks and gratitude to the political leadership in the country and to His Excellency the Minister of Finance, Mr. Fahad Abdulaziz Al-Jarallah for the trust placed in us to take over the management and assume these duties. We invoke the blessings of God Almighty to enable us to fulfil these expectations and achieve the aspirations of the honourable people of Kuwait, by developing Kuwait Airways, the National Carrier of the State of Kuwait."

Alfagaan added, "The Board of Directors met with His Excellency the Minister of Finance, heeding his judicious directives and proposals regarding the development of Kuwait Airways in the subsequent stages and towards contributing to achieving the anticipated objectives. We assured His Excellency of our endeavours towards achieving these directives and plans with precision, diligence, and dedication, which is to be implemented, to reach broader horizons of progress in the best interests of Kuwait Airways as entrusted by its valued customers, whether in the State of Kuwait or abroad."

Alfagaan mentioned, "The new Board of Directors will strive with all diligence to complete the phase of developing and improving Kuwait Airways, which has been full of achievements since 1954, and based on the aspiration of its esteemed customers. We will work with the honourable members of the Board to develop appropriate and practical strategies to confront challenges and circumstances, reviewing them suitably and to develop solutions that will assist to achieve these goals, leading to the development and progress of all sectors of the company and the improvement of the entire operational system, to meet the preferences and requirements of our valued customers, as well as achieve their complete satisfaction with our services and facilities provided on board the Blue Bird."

Alfagaan explained, "The members of the new Board bring together a unique amalgamation of diverse experience in various sectors and fields, fully fledged to develop suitable strategies that contribute significantly to the prosperity and advancement of Kuwait Airways, in line with its extensive history as the country's national carrier and among the position of airlines in the region. In addition, the members with their consistency of ideas and their persistence embark on this journey with a unified team spirit, in the public interest of the Blue Bird."

Alfagaan concluded his statement by extending his thanks and appreciation to the former Board of Directors of Kuwait Airways for their tangible efforts in developing the Blue Bird. He emphasized that the current Board of Directors would continue to endeavour to develop and improve the performance and position of the company in providing its services and assisting passengers in every field and would fulfil the expectations entrusted by everyone for the benefit of the beloved country of Kuwait.

Gulf Bank enters strategic partnership with Transcrate International Logistics

Bid to support existing and potential GBK SMEs customers

KUWAIT CITY, Sept 13: As part of its ongoing efforts to support Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), Gulf Bank has entered into a strategic partnership with Transcrate, a leading international logistics company, to provide its premium services to the Bank's SMEs customers at discounted rates.

Transcrate International Logistics will provide Gulf Bank's SMEs customers with a range of services that would help them expand their businesses, meet the requirements of their customers, and carry out shipping, customs clearance, and logistics services.

On this occasion, Gulf Bank's General Manager of Corporate Banking, Mr. Faisal Al-Adsani, said: "This agreement is part of Gulf Bank's 2025 strategy, which considers the SMEs sector as one of its main pillars. The Bank aims to increase the growth rates of corporate services and help them expand their portfolio of products and banking services."

Enhance

He added: "Gulf Bank is always striving to enhance non-banking services for SMEs, to help them operate their business successfully, without having to invest in the purchasing, renting, managing stand-alone warehouses, or hire a specialized team to manage clearance, delivery and inventory transportation.

Today, SMEs play an important role in diversifying the Kuwaiti economy, creating job opportunities and raising the value of entrepreneurship. Hence, Gulf Bank is keen to provide the necessary support in accordance with the Bank's policies, to promote sustainable growth in SMEs, and the national economy as a whole."

Al-Adsani continued: "In addition to its distinguished role in providing credit financing to this sector, in accordance with the Bank's policies, Gulf Bank also provides its SMEs customers with electronic banking services, electronic salary transfers, issuance of debit cards, point-of-sale registration services, payment gateways, logistics, advisory and other services for companies. Customers can visit the website to register and for further inquiries."

Commenting on the strategic partnership, Mr. Ahmad Al-Qenaei from Transcrate International Logistics, said: "We are delighted to enter this important partnership with Gulf Bank, one of the leading banks in Kuwait, and to provide our services to its SMEs customers. This would help them expand their business and activities both internally and externally, in addition to facilitating all their logistics requirements. It is part of our company's goals to educate customers and complete their requests in a timely manner, to help them reach their goals."

Gulf Bank's vision is to be the leading Kuwaiti Bank of the Future. The Bank is constantly engaging and empowering its employees as part of an inclusive and diversified workplace in recognition of every employee's role in delivering customer excellence and serving the community at large. With its extensive network of branches and innovative digital services, Gulf Bank is able to give its customers the choice of how and where to conduct their banking transactions, all while ensuring a simple and seamless banking experience. Gulf Bank is committed to maintaining robust developments in sustainability at environmental, social and governance levels through diverse sustainability initiatives, strategically selected to benefit the Bank both internally and externally. Gulf Bank supports Kuwait Vision 2035 "New Kuwait" and works with various parties to achieve it.

Zain NLI press conference 2023

Company sponsors Breaking Barriers conference

Zain supports academic forums and highlights role of digital transformation and emerging technologies

KUWAIT CITY, Sept 13: Zain announces that it will sponsor the National Leadership Institute (NLI)'s Breaking Barriers conference next October. The anticipated event is set to feature a group of inspiring speakers and notable experts from local, regional, and international levels, covering key topics like digital transformation, emerging technologies, and diversity & inclusion. The conference comes under the patronage of H.E. Minister of Finance Fahad Aljarallah.

The announcement was made at the press conference attended by Zain Kuwait's Corporate Relations Department Manager Hamad Al Musaibeeh, General Manager of National Leaders Company Mohammad Al Khulaifi, and the event's sponsors and supporters.

Announcing Zain's support, Hamad Al Musaibeeh said: "We're thrilled to collaborate once again with NLI to support the Breaking Barriers conference. We're especially excited after the amazing success we witnessed back in 2021 when we supported NLI's first conference. Zain's participation comes to affirm our strong belief in the key role played by such innovative platforms in promoting innovation and the growth of people in our community."

Al Musaibeeh added: "The event's core themes are well-aligned with our corporate goals at Zain, such as the impact of digital transformation and emerging technologies on the economy, women in leadership, diversity & inclusion in the workplace, and much more. We look forward to attending the keynotes, panels, and workshops that will surely inspire everyone."

The Breaking Barriers conference is the third annual event from the National Leadership Institute and is set to offer guests invaluable opportunities to attend keynotes, panel discussions, and workshops facilitated by a unique set of notable speakers, experts, and specialists in entrepreneurship, business, innovation, and technology.

This year's conference will have a diverse set of international and local speakers. Among them are Tom Bilyeu, co-founder of Quest Nutrition; Jo Malone, a successful entrepreneur who turned a small venture into a globally recognized brand; Calum Chace, a specialist in artificial intelligence; Daniel Hulme, a leading expert in AI, emerging technologies, and the Metaverse; Sara Sabry, the first female Arab astronaut; and Graeme Codrington, who specializes in the Future of Work, and much more.

The National Leadership Institute (NLI) is an institute fully owned by the National Company for Educational Services and Training (NEST), a subsidiary of the National Technology Enterprises Company (NTEC). The NLI Conference Series was launched in 2021 to offer organizations in Kuwait an innovative training solution. In 2022 the conference was attended by over 1,100 participants from various international and local industries and corporations.

By supporting this conference, Zain aspires to reflect its growing commitment to pursue its corporate sustainability strategy and serve the community's most vibrant sectors, including entrepreneurship, innovation, and youth. The company is keen on empowering intellectual growth by actively participating in academic forums and gatherings that bring about rich experiences and allow a constructive exchange of information for entrepreneurs, leaders, and community members.

Faisal Al Adsani

Euromoney: Boubyan Named 'The World's Best Islamic Structured Products House'

Mohammed Al Jaser

Al-Jaser: The Award Highlights Boubyan Bank's Ability to Acquire a Share of the Corporate Finance Market in Kuwait and the Region

Boubyan Bank received another award as a part of Euromoney's international awards to banks in Kuwait and the region, where the bank was named "The World's Best Islamic Structured Products House 2023". This emphasizes the bank's leadership in acquiring a share of corporate finance in the Kuwaiti market, and reinforcing its competitive abilities to offer outstanding financing solutions and products to corporate customers.

The international institution recognized Boubyan with this award on the back of Boubyan's financing deals to major projects and companies, which reinforced its strategy in the financing market and its role in the growth of the banking industry through its financing solutions which contribute to the growth of Islamic finance.

Boubyan received "The World's Best Islamic Structured Products House 2023" award for being the mandated lead arranger, global agent, in financing the J3 project for developing Jaber Al-Ahmad Residential City at a total cost of KD 150+ million.

Mr. Mohammed Al-Jaser Al-Ghanim, Deputy General Manager - Corporate Banking Group, stated: "Thanks to Almighty Allah, we made a new achievement by outperforming Islamic financial institutions worldwide. The outstanding award by a prestigious institution such as Euromoney reinforces our achievements and emphasizes our leadership in terms of excellence and uniqueness of products, thus leading to our sustainable growth across various financing sectors and on the long term."

He added: "The most prominent aspect about this award is that it comes from an international institution which is renowned for its fairness, and that this recognition is based on a thorough assessment, which reflects the role of the leadership of the bank and its prominent role in reinforcing the Islamic finance sector by financing mega corporate projects, and the accelerating growth of the finance industry by providing all means of support, innovating financing solutions, and the necessary support to many vital projects for its business banking customers.

Al-Jaser concluded: "Boubyan Bank's solid performance and growth across all financial indicators, especially market shares in various sectors, are the fruit of its unwavering commitment to offering sustainable solutions and products that achieve sustainable growth over the long term. All this was achieved by the special efforts of our human resources, and we remain committed to maintaining our successes across all business sectors."

The iPhone 15 Pro is displayed during an announcement of new products on the Apple campus, Tuesday, Sept. 12, in Cupertino, Calif. (AP)

Apple Watches are displayed during an announcement of new products on the Apple campus, in Cupertino, Calif. (AP)

Apple AirPods Pro 2nd generation with USB-C connector on display on the Apple campus, in Cupertino, Calif. (AP)

iPhone 15 models not making any major leaps in tech

New iPhones get faster chips, better cameras and new charging ports

CUPERTINO, Calif., Sept 13, (AP): Apple on Tuesday unveiled its next generation of iPhones - a lineup that will boast better cameras, faster processors, a new charging system and a price hike for the fanciest model.

The showcase at Apple's headquarters in Cupertino, California, comes as the company tries to reverse a mild slump that has seen its sales drop from last year in three consecutive quarters. The malaise is a key reason Apple's stock price has dipped by about 10% since mid-July, dropping the company's market value below the $3 trillion threshold it reached for the first time earlier this summer.

Investors apparently weren't impressed with what Apple rolled out Tuesday. The company's shares fell nearly 2% Tuesday, a steeper decline than the major market indexes.

As has been case with Apple and other smartphone makers, the four types of iPhone 15 models aren't making any major leaps in technology. But Apple added enough new bells and whistles to the top-of-the line model - the iPhone 15 Pro Max - to boost its starting price by $100, or 9%, from last year's version to $1,200. As part of the higher base price, the cheapest iPhone 15 Pro Max will provide 256 megabytes of storage, up from 128 megabytes for the least expensive version of the iPhone 14 Pro Max.

Apple is holding the line on prices for rest of the lineup, with the basic iPhone 15 selling for $800, the iPhone 15 Plus for $900 and the iPhone 15 Pro for $1,000.

Although maintaining those prices are bound to squeeze Apple's profit margins and put further pressure on the company's stock price, Investing.com analyst Thomas Monteiro believes it's a prudent move with still-high inflation and spiking interest rates pinching household budgets. "The reality was that Apple found itself in a challenging position leading up to this event," Monteiro said.

And the price hike for the iPhone 15 Pro Max could help Apple boost sales if consumers continue to gravitate toward the company's premium models. Wedbush Securities analyst Dan Ives expects the iPhone 15 Pro and Pro Max to account for about 75% of the device's total sales in the upcoming year.

Preorders

All the new models will be available in stores Sept. 22, with preorders beginning this Friday.

One of the biggest changes that Apple announced is a new way to charge the iPhone 15 models and future generations. The company is switching to the USB-C standard that is already widely used on many devices, including its Mac computers and many of its iPads.

Apple is being forced to phase out the Lightning port cables it rolled out in 2012 because of a mandate that European regulators plan to impose in 2024.

Although consumers often don't like change, the transition to USB-C ports may not be that inconvenient. That's because the standard is already widely used on a range of computers, smartphones and other devices people already own. The shift to USB-C may even be a popular move since that standard typically charges devices more quickly and also offers faster data transfer speeds.

The basic iPhone 15 models have been redesigned to include a shape-shifting cutout on the display screen that Apple calls its "Dynamic Island" for app notifications - a look that was introduced with last year's Pro and Pro Max devices. The basic models are also getting a faster chip used in last year's Pro and Pro Max models, while the next generation of the premium iPhone 15s will run on an even more advanced processor that will enable the devices to accommodate the same kind of video games that typically require a console.

The iPhone 15 Pro and Pro Max also will be equipped with what Apple maintains is the equivalent of seven camera lenses. They will include periscope-style telephoto lens that will improve the quality of photos taken from far distances. The telephoto lens boasts a 5x optical zoom, which lags the 10x optical zoom on Samsung's premium Galaxy S22 Ultra, but represents an upgrade from the 3x optical zoom on the iPhone 14 Pro and Pro Max.

In anticipation of next year's release of Apple's mixed reality headset, the iPhone 15 Pro and Pro Max will also have a spatial video option designed for viewing on that headset.

Apple is encasing the premium models in titanium that the company says is the same alloy used on some space ships.

Besides its new iPhones, Apple also announced its next generation of smartwatches - a product that made its debut nearly a decade ago. The Series 9 Apple Watch, available in stores Sept. 22, will include a new gesture control that will enable users to control alarms and answer phone calls by double snapping their thumbs with a finger.

Apple unveiled its first-ever carbon neutral products in the all-new Apple Watch lineup. Innovations in design and clean energy have driven dramatic reductions in product emissions of over 75 percent for each carbon neutral Apple Watch. This milestone marks a major step in the company's journey toward its ambitious Apple 2030 goal to make every product carbon neutral by the end of the decade, including the entire global supply chain and the lifetime use of every device Apple makes.

Sources

As part of Apple 2030 and the company's broader environmental efforts, Apple has also ended the use of leather across all of its product lines, announced its first entirely fiber-based packaging for the new Apple Watch lineup, and continued to expand the use of recycled materials in iPhone®. The company also introduced a new tool in the Home app called Grid Forecast, which helps inform users when their power grid has cleaner energy available, so they can decide when to use electricity.

Apple has adopted a clear and rigorous approach to product decarbonization that prioritizes reducing greenhouse gas emissions from the three biggest sources across the product life cycle: electricity, materials, and transportation. Only after Apple steeply cuts product emissions, will the company apply high-quality carbon credits from nature-based projects for emissions that cannot yet be avoided or reduced with existing solutions.

Apple must take its phone off French market

iPhone 12 emits too much radiation: French agency

PARIS, Sept 13, (AP): A government watchdog agency in France has ordered Apple to withdraw the iPhone 12 from the French market, saying it emits levels of electromagnetic radiation that are too high.

The National Frequency Agency, which oversees radio-electric frequencies as well as public exposure to electromagnetic radiation, called on Apple in a statement Tuesday to "implement all available means to rapidly fix this malfunction" for phones already being used.

Corrective updates to the iPhone 12 will be monitored by the agency, and if they don't work, "Apple will have to recall" phones that have already been sold, according to the French regulator's statement.

Apple disputed the findings and said the device complies with all regulations governing radiation.

The agency, which is known by the French acronym ANFR, said it recently checked 141 cellphones, including the iPhone 12, for electromagnetic waves capable of being absorbed by the body.

It said it found a level of electromagnetic energy absorption of 5.74 watts per kilogram during tests of a phone in a hand or a pocket, higher than the European Union standard of 4 watts per kilogram.

The agency said the iPhone 12 met the threshold when radiation levels were assessed for a phone kept in a jacket or in a bag.

Apple said the iPhone 12, which was released in late 2020, has been certified by multiple international bodies and complies with all applicable regulations and standards for radiation around the world.

The US tech company said it has provided the French agency with multiple lab results carried out both by the company and third-party labs proving the phone's compliance.

Cellphones have been labeled as "possible" carcinogens by the World Health Organization's cancer research arm, putting them in the same category as coffee, diesel fumes and the pesticide DDT. The radiation produced by cellphones cannot directly damage DNA and is different from stronger types of radiation like X-rays or ultraviolet light.

In 2018, two US government studies that bombarded mice and rats with cellphone radiation found a weak link to some heart tumors, but federal regulators and scientists said it was still safe to use the devices. Scientists said those findings didn't reflect how most people use their cellphones and that the animal findings didn't translate into a similar concern for humans.

Twitter privacy probe

'Musk shouldn't be immune to testify'

WASHINGTON, Sept 13, (AP): The US government says the former Twitter's request to end oversight of its data privacy and security practices is "meritless" and owner Elon Musk should not be immune to testifying about the company since he has "first-hand knowledge" of the conduct being investigated.

This includes decisions he made since acquiring the company - including mass layoffs, hasty product launches and an overall "chaotic environment" - that could be in violation of a government order limiting its privacy and security practices.

The company now called X Corp. had filed a motion in July for a protective order that would prevent Musk from having to testify about the company - and for relief from its 2022 consent order with the Federal Trade Commission. In a Monday filing on behalf of the FTC, the US Department of Justice said that in seeking to end the FTC's order, X merely "complains the FTC asked too many questions after Elon Musk acquired the company."

But the FTC was asking questions, according to the filing, because of "sudden, radical changes at the company" after Musk took over. Within weeks, half of Twitter's employees were terminated or resigned, "including key executives in privacy, data security, and compliance roles."

Outages

There were also "alarming site outages, product malfunctions, and issues with data access controls," the filing says - so the FTC had "every reason to seek information" about whether the company was still complying with the order.

The FTC has been watching the company for years since Twitter agreed to a 2011 consent order alleging serious data security lapses. But the agency's concerns spiked with the tumult that followed Elon Musk's Oct. 27 takeover of the company.

In March it was disclosed that the FTC was investigating Musk's mass layoffs at Twitter and trying to obtain his internal communications as part of ongoing oversight of the social media company's privacy and cybersecurity practices, according to documents described in a congressional report.

Twitter paid a $150 million penalty in May 2022, about five months before Musk's takeover, for violating the 2011 consent order. An updated version established new procedures requiring the company to implement an enhanced privacy-protection program as well as beef up information security. The company's July filing seeks relief from the consent order, saying that the FTC's investigation has "spiraled out of control."

Information

But the government's filing Monday said the FTC was requesting information because it wanted to see if the company was properly protecting user data during its transformation from Twitter into X under Musk's rule. The FTC heard from five former X employees during its investigation, who "revealed a chaotic environment at the company that raised serious questions about whether and how Musk and other leaders were ensuring X Corp.'s compliance" with the consent order.

For instance, Twitter's former director of security engineering, Andrew Sayler, testified that he had "ongoing questions about Elon's commitment to the overall security and privacy of the organization" because "the manner in which Elon was requesting us to grant access to third parties that had not undergone our regular vetting process struck" Sayler as "having some degree of disregard for the overall sensitivity and security at that level of access," according to the filing.

Pass meaningful regulation of tech industry

In closed forum, technology titans to give senators advice on 'artificial intelligence'

WASHINGTON, Sept 13, (AP): Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer has been talking for months about accomplishing a potentially impossible task: Passing bipartisan legislation within the next year that both encourages the rapid development of artificial intelligence and also mitigates its biggest risks. On Wednesday, he is convening a meeting of some of the country's most prominent technology executives, among others, to ask them how Congress should do it.

The closed-door forum on Capitol Hill will include almost two dozen tech leaders and advocates, and some of the industry's biggest names: Meta's Mark Zuckerberg and Elon Musk, the CEO of X and Tesla, as well as former Microsoft CEO Bill Gates. All 100 senators are invited, but the public is not.

Schumer, D-N.Y., who is leading the forum with Republican Sen. Mike Rounds of South Dakota, won't necessarily take the tech executives' advice as he works with Republicans and fellow Democrats to try and ensure some oversight of the burgeoning sector. But he's hoping that they will give senators some realistic direction as he tries to do what Congress hasn't done for many years - pass meaningful regulation of the tech industry.

"It's going to be a fascinating group because they have different points of view," Schumer said in an interview with The Associated Press ahead of the forum. "Hopefully we can weave it into a little bit of some broad consensus."

Rounds, who spoke to AP with Schumer on Tuesday, said Congress needs to get ahead of fast-moving AI by making sure it continues to develop "on the positive side" while also taking care of potential issues surrounding data transparency and privacy.

Challenge

"AI is not going away, and it can do some really good things or it can be a real challenge," Rounds said.

Schumer says regulation of artificial intelligence will be "one of the most difficult issues we can ever take on," and ticks off the reasons why: It's technically complicated, it keeps changing and it "has such a wide, broad effect across the whole world," he said.

Congress has a lackluster track record when it comes to regulating technology. Lawmakers have lots of proposals - many of them bipartisan - but have mostly failed to agree on major legislation to regulate the industry as powerful tech companies have resisted.

Many lawmakers point to the failure to pass any legislation surrounding social media - bills have stalled in both chambers that would better protect children, regulate activity around elections and mandate stricter privacy standards, among other measures.

"We don't want to do what we did with social media, which is let the techies figure it out, and we'll fix it later," says Senate Intelligence Committee Chairman Mark Warner, D-Va., on the AI push.

Schumer's bipartisan working group - comprised of Rounds, Democratic Sen. Martin Heinrich of New Mexico and Republican Sen. Todd Young of Indiana - is hoping that the rapid growth of artificial intelligence will create more urgency. Sparked by the release of ChatGPT less than a year ago, businesses across many sectors have been clamoring to apply new generative AI tools that can compose human-like passages of text, program computer code and create novel images, audio and video. The hype over such tools has accelerated worries over its potential societal harms and prompted calls for more transparency in how the data behind the new products is collected and used.

"You have to have some government involvement for guardrails," Schumer said. "If there are no guardrails, who knows what could happen."

Schumer says Wednesday's forum will focus on big ideas like whether the government should be involved at all, and what questions Congress should be asking. Each participant will have three minutes to speak on a topic of their choosing, and Schumer and Rounds will moderate open discussions among the group in the morning and afternoon.

Some of Schumer's most influential guests, including Musk and Sam Altman, CEO of ChatGPT-maker OpenAI, have signaled more dire concerns evoking popular science fiction about the possibility of humanity losing control to advanced AI systems if the right safeguards are not in place.

But for many lawmakers and the people they represent, AI's effects on employment and navigating a flood of AI-generated misinformation are more immediate effects.

A recent report from the market research group Forrester projected that generative AI technology could replace 2.4 million jobs in the US by 2030, many of them white-collar roles not affected by previous waves of automation. This year alone the number of lost jobs could total 90,000, the report said, though far more jobs will be reshaped than eliminated.

AI experts have also warned of the growing potential of AI-generated online disinformation to influence elections, including the upcoming 2024 presidential race.

On the more positive side, Rounds says he would like to see the empowerment of new medical technologies that could save lives and allow medical professionals to access more data. That topic is "very personal to me," Rounds says, after his wife died of cancer two years ago.

Many members of Congress agree that legislation will probably be needed in response to the quick escalation of artificial intelligence tools in government, business and daily life. But there is little consensus on what that should be, or what might be needed. There is also some division - some members worry more about overregulation, and others worry more about the potential risks of an unchecked industry.

"I am involved in this process in large measure to ensure that we act, but we don't act more boldly or over-broadly than the circumstances require," says Sen. Young, one of the members of Schumer's working group.

'This case is about the future of internet'

Google pays more than $10bn a year to maintain its dominance, says US

WASHINGTON, Sept 13, (AP): Google has exploited its dominance of the internet search market to lock out competitors and smother innovation, the Department of Justice said Tuesday at the opening of the biggest US antitrust trial in a quarter century.

"This case is about the future of the internet and whether Google's search engine will ever face meaningful competition," said Kenneth Dintzer, the Justice Department's lead litigator.

Over the next 10 weeks, federal lawyers and state attorneys general will try to prove Google rigged the market in its favor by locking in its search engine as the default choice in a plethora of places and devices. US District Judge Amit Mehta likely won't issue a ruling until early next year. If he decides Google broke the law, another trial will decide what steps should be taken to rein in the Mountain View, California-based company.

Top executives at Google and its corporate parent Alphabet Inc., as well as those from other powerful technology companies are expected to testify. Among them is likely to be Alphabet CEO Sundar Pichai, who succeeded Google co-founder Larry Page four years ago. Court documents also suggest that Eddy Cue, a high ranking Apple executive, might be called to the stand.

The Justice Department filed its antitrust lawsuit against Google nearly three years ago during the Trump administration, alleging that the company has used its internet search dominance to gain an unfair advantage against competitors. Government lawyers say Google protects its franchise through a form of payola, shelling out billions of dollars annually to be the default search engine on the iPhone and on web browsers such as Apple's Safari and Mozilla's Firefox.

"Google pays more than $10 billion per year for these privileged positions,'' Dintzer said.

Contracts

"Google's contracts ensure that rivals cannot match the search quality ad monetization, especially on phones," he said. "Through this feedback loop, this wheel has been turning for more than 12 years. It always turns to Google's advantage."

Google counters that it faces a wide range of competition despite commanding about 90% of the internet search market. Its rivals, the company argues, range from search engines such as Microsoft's Bing to websites like Amazon and Yelp, where consumers can post questions about what to buy or where to go. "There are lots of way users access the web other than default search engines, and people use them all the time,'' said attorney John Schmidtlein, a partner at the law firm Williams & Connolly which is representing Google.

But the more searches Google processes, the more data it collects, data that can be used to improve future searches and give it an even bigger advantage over its rivals, Dintzer said. "User data is the oxygen for a search engine," he said. Because of its market dominance, "Google search and ad products are better than its rivals can hope to be."

That is why, he said, Google pays so much for its search engine to be the default option on products from Apple and other companies.

Google "began weaponizing defaults" more than 15 years ago, Dintzer said, citing an internal Google document calling its arrangements an "Achilles Heel" for rival search engines offered by Yahoo and MSN.

He also alleged that Google strong-armed Apple into giving its search engine a default position on its devices as a condition for revenue sharing. "This is not a negotiation," Dintzer said. "This is Google saying: Take it or leave it."

Litigators argue the company's anticompetitive tactics prevented Apple from developing a search engine of its own.

And Dintzer said Google deleted documents to keep them out of court proceedings and sought to hide others under attorney-client privilege.

"They destroyed documents for years,'' Dintzer said. "They turned history off, your honor, so they could rewrite it in this court.''

The Conversation

CDC expects vaccines to be effective at preventing severe virus

How will 2 updated COVID-19 shots fare against latest variants?

By Prakash Nagarkatti and **Mitzi Nagarkatti**
University of South Carolina

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

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On Sept 12, 2023, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommended the newly formulated COVID-19 vaccines for all Americans ages 6 months and up, hours after its expert advisory committee voted 13 to 1 in favor of recommending the vaccines.

The CDC's broad recommendation comes one day after the Food and Drug Administration approved Moderna's and Pfizer's updated mRNA vaccines that target a previously dominant variant of the omicron family called XBB.1.5. The updated shots will be available to the public within days.

The Conversation asked Prakash Nagarkatti and Mitzi Nagarkatti, a husband and wife team of immunologists from the University of South Carolina, to weigh in on how the new vaccines might stand up against the latest COVID-19 variants that are swirling across the globe.

Formulated

When the first vaccine against COVID-19 was rolled out in December 2020, it was designed as a monovalent vaccine, meaning that it was formulated against only the original SARS-CoV-2 virus. That vaccine, as well as the updated ones, target the spike protein, which the virus uses to infect our cells and cause the disease.

That design made sense before the virus began mutating into a complex family tree of variants and sublineages. But as the virus structure shifted over time, the antibodies produced in response to the original vaccine became less effective against the new variants.

This necessitated the development in 2022 of new "bivalent" vaccines that targeted both the original strain of SARS-CoV-2 and new viral variants such as the omicron BA.4 and BA.5 lineages that were dominant in mid-2022.

But, not surprisingly, new variants of the virus continued to emerge.

In June 2023, the FDA asked vaccine developers to formulate new fall shots to target the then-dominant XBB.1.5 subvariant.

The FDA approved that monovalent mRNA-based vaccine based on the overall efficacy data presented by the vaccine manufacturers.

Unfortunately, XBB.1.5 is no longer the dominant strain in the U.S.; it has been displaced by other variants from the XBB lineage, thereby raising concerns about the potential efficacy of the new shot. As of mid-September, the dominant variants nationwide are EG.5, also known as Eris, followed by FL.1.5.1 - called Fornax - and XBB.1.16.6.

Meanwhile, a new highly mutated omicron offshoot, BA.2.86, nicknamed Pirola, is making its way across the globe - albeit so far in small numbers.

The CDC recommended that everyone ages 6 months old and up should get an updated COVID-19 vaccine so that they can be better protected against developing serious outcomes from COVID-19, including hospitalization. The agency noted that people who received the 2022-2023 bivalent COVID-19 shot "saw greater protection against illness and hospitalization than those who did not."

Most Americans will be able to get the newly formulated vaccine at no cost, according to the CDC.

The FDA approved a single shot of the updated vaccine for anyone ages 5 and older - regardless of whether they were previously vaccinated or not. The agency also approved unvaccinated individuals 6 months to 4 years of age to receive three doses of the updated Pfizer vaccine or two doses of the updated Moderna vaccine.

Based on its current assessment, the CDC indicates that the BA.2.86 variant may be able to cause infection even in people who have been previously vaccinated or those who have had COVID-19 infection in the past. But the CDC says it still expects the updated fall 2023 booster shot to be effective at reducing severe disease and hospitalization.

Moderna reported in August 2023 that the new monovalent mRNA COVID-19 vaccine gave a "significant boost" in antibodies that are protective against two of the currently circulating variants: EG.5 - which is responsible for most cases in the U.S. as of mid-September - and FL.1.5.1. Then, in early September, Moderna announced that its most recent data from human trials showed an 8.7-fold increase in neutralizing antibodies against the newest variant, BA.2.86, following vaccination with the updated shot.

Similarly, new pre-clinical data from Pfizer shows that its version of the new mRNA vaccine produced antibodies that were effective at neutralizing the XBB.1.5, BA.2.86 and EG.5.1 variants.

This early research suggests that the new mRNA vaccines - although developed specifically against XBB.1.5 - are still effective against some of the most prevalent variants.

Response

Novavax, which specializes in traditional protein-based vaccines, also announced in August that its updated COVID-19 vaccine directed against the XBB variant produced a broad neutralizing antibody response against key variants in animal studies. However, the company does not yet have data on its vaccine's performance against two other key variants, FL.1.5.1 and BA.2.86. The Novavax vaccine has not yet gone up for FDA review, but its approval is also expected within months.

It is important to keep in mind that while all three vaccines have been shown to trigger antibodies that can neutralize most of the currently circulating variants, it is unclear whether the vaccines will be able to effectively prevent COVID-19 infection in humans. Such clinical studies are time-consuming, so given the urgency and speed needed to develop vaccines against the ever-changing COVID-19 variants, vaccine manufacturers rely on antibody levels as an indicator of protection.

Antibodies produced after a COVID-19 infection or vaccination last for about six months, and then their levels start declining. This is called "waning immunity."

About a year after getting a COVID-19 infection or vaccination, only a small fraction of antibodies can be detected. This is why health care providers recommend getting another shot if a year has passed since you were vaccinated or had an active infection.

It has become very clear that vaccines against COVID-19 do not provide 100% protection against catching a new COVID-19 infection, but they can make illness from the infection milder, shorter or both.

In addition, vaccines provide significant protection from hospitalization and death and may help protect against developing long COVID. (AP)

'Enable more equitable care'

CorVista System gets FDA 'okay' to detect cardiovascular disease

WASHINGTON, Sept 13: CorVista Health, Inc, a leading digital health company dedicated to improving cardiovascular disease diagnosis, announced the FDA clearance of the CorVista System® with CAD Add-On to evaluate the presence of significant coronary artery disease as an aid in diagnosis.

The CorVista® System is a non-invasive medical device system comprised of hardware and software components that are designed to work together to allow a physician to evaluate the patient at point-of-care for cardiac disease using a static machine-learned detection algorithm. The CAD Add-On is the first of the company's anticipated suite of cardiac detection algorithms to receive market clearance.

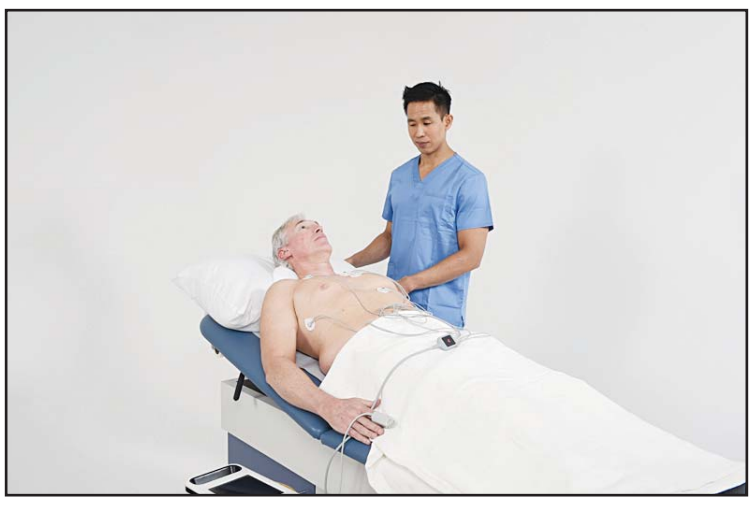
Solution

"From all of us at CorVista Health, we are thrilled to announce we have obtained FDA clearance of the CorVista System," said Don Crawford, President and CEO of CorVista Health. "Our point-of-care, non-invasive solution rules out significant CAD with a negative predictive value (NPV) of 99%. Furthermore, it requires no fasting, radiation, or significant capital investment. The ability to obtain a result within minutes will be a game changer in aiding physicians to detect the potential presence of cardiac disease."

The CorVista System is indicated to analyze sensor-acquired physiological signals of patients presenting with cardiovascular symptoms (such as chest pain, dyspnea, fatigue) to indicate the likelihood of significant coronary artery disease. The analysis is presented for interpretation by healthcare providers in conjunction with their clinical judgment, the patient's signs, symptoms, and clinical history as an aid in diagnosis.

The clearance was based on an extensive blinded clinical validation dataset (N=1,816), collected through the IDENTIFY study, showing performance in identifying significant CAD with sensitivity of 88% and specificity of 51%. These results are comparable to the rule out performance of coronary computed tomography angiography (CCTA). Additionally, this performance is maintained in the currently underserved female population. This milestone follows the announcement of receiving FDA Breakthrough Designation for the company's second disease specific Add-On module in development focused on pulmonary hypertension.

"We believe CorVista Health has the ability to transform the way cardiovascular disease is diagnosed, particularly in underserved low-resource settings where there is the greatest need," said Charles Bridges, M.D., ScD., Executive Vice President, Chief Scientific Officer of CorVista Health. "CorVista Health's innovative solution has the potential to make a tremendous impact to our healthcare system and enable more equitable care."



CorVista System

CorVista Health, Inc is applying machine learning to develop novel cardiac detection algorithms to enhance the CorVista System platform over time, with the aim of transforming cardiovascular care and the patient experience. CorVista Health is dedicated to addressing the FDA's call to action for leveraging health technologies to advance health equity, as presented by FDA Commissioner, Dr. Robert Califf. Particularly, the decline in life expectancy in rural areas has been cited as key evidence of disparate health outcomes. CorVista System has the potential to enable more equitable care by providing access to immediately actionable, high-quality cardiovascular status results in low-resource settings, where access to capital-intensive equipment and the qualified specialists needed to operate them may not be available. In this way, the CorVista System is uniquely positioned to advance the quality of care in rural and low-resource settings.

CorVista System is a non-invasive point-of-care solution that is intended to synchronously collect and apply machine learning to a patient's cardiac and hemodynamic signals to predict the likelihood of cardiovascular diseases without the use of radiation, contrast agents, injections, fasting or exercise. Within minutes of the test, the CorVista® Analysis is available in a secure web portal to aid physicians in rapidly diagnosing and treating patients with suspected cardiovascular disease, answering important clinical questions to guide better treatment decisions. The CorVista® System with CAD add-on has been cleared to market as a 510(k) device. Additional CorVista System Add-ons for Pulmonary Hypertension and LV Filling Pressure are currently investigational devices limited by federal law (or United States) law to investigational use and are not available for commercial distribution.

SELUTION SLR safe, effective

MedAlliance announces enrollment of first patient in 'LOVE-DEB' Study

GENEVA, Sept 13: The first patient has been enrolled in a UK study of large vessel de novo coronary artery disease treated with SELUTION SLR™. This is a trial initiated by physicians at the Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, which is where the first patient was enrolled. SELUTION SLR is a novel sirolimus-eluting balloon that provides a controlled sustained release of drug, similar to a drug-eluting stent (DES).

The aim of the LOVE-DEB Study (Large de-NOVo coronary artEry disease treated with sirolimus Drug Eluting Balloon: prospective evaluation of safety & efficacy of SELUTION SLR drug eluting balloon) is to evaluate the safety and efficacy of SELUTION SLR in treating native de novo coronary artery disease in larger vessels (≥2.75mm). Its primary objective is to evaluate the proportion of patients who underwent Target Lesion Revascularization (TLR) within one year of their procedure.

"The LOVE-DEB Study is a unique trial in which we are assessing the safety and efficacy of sirolimus DEB in de novo disease only in the large coronary arteries in routine clinical practice. We aim to recruit 300 patients over a period of 12 months across 10 centers in the UK. I am extremely delighted that we have kick-started the study by recruiting our first patient in the study at Wigan. I am very grateful for the invaluable support from all those who are involved in this study," commented Principal Investigator Dr Abhishek Kumar, Consultant Cardiologist, Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust.

Adopted

"Although these centers have already adopted our novel technology in their daily practice, we are excited to see the results in this understudied important patient population, where drug-eluting stents have demonstrated a greater than 2% complication rate per year," added Jeffrey B. Jump, Chairman and CEO of MedAlliance.

MedAlliance was the first drug-eluting balloon company to receive FDA Breakthrough Designation status. Currently three IDE clinical studies are evaluating SELUTION SLR in the US: in CLTI patients with BTK disease; SFA/PPA; and coronary ISR. In addition, MedAlliance received IDE approval for de novo coronary artery lesions in January 2023. SELUTION SLR was awarded CE Mark Approval for the treatment of coronary artery disease in May 2020. This complements the substantial experience that the company has gained with the SELUTION DeNovo and SUCCESS trials in Europe & SELUTION SFA in Japan.

MedAlliance's unique DEB technology involves MicroReservoirs which contain a combination of biodegradable polymer intermixed with the anti-restenotic drug sirolimus, applied as a coating on the surface of an angioplasty balloon. These MicroReservoirs provide controlled and sustained release of the drug for up to 90 days. MedAlliance's proprietary CAT™ (Cell Adherent Technology) enables the MicroReservoirs to be coated onto balloons and efficiently transferred to adhere to the vessel lumen when delivered via expansion of the balloon.

SELUTION SLR is commercially available in Europe, Asia, the Middle East, and the Americas (outside USA) and most other countries where the CE Mark is recognized. Over 50,000 units have been used for patient treatments in routine clinical practice or as part of coronary clinical trials.

MedAlliance is medical technology company which announced a staged acquisition by Cordis in October 2022. It is headquartered in Nyon, Switzerland. MedAlliance specializes in the development of ground-breaking technology and commercialization of advanced drug device combination products for the treatment of coronary and peripheral artery disease.

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ARAB TIMES
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 2023

Books

National Book Awards drops Drew Barrymore as host

‘Elon Musk’ offers revealing but not surprising portrait of tech mogul

NEW YORK, Sept 13, (AP): For those who have been paying attention to Elon Musk for at least the past couple years, Walter Isaacson’s biography of the tech billionaire doesn’t feel that surprising.

Isaacson’s biography “Elon Musk” does a good job hammering home the portrayal of the SpaceX founder and now owner of X — formerly Twitter — as a visionary but mercurial figure who’s given to mood swings and self-destructive behavior.

It’s a familiar descriptor for Musk’s fans and detractors, but Isaacson’s biography still offers plenty of revealing details about the tech mogul.

In the opening pages of the book on Musk’s childhood, he’s described as someone “not hardwired to have empathy,” a characteristic that comes into play throughout his work endeavors and personal life.

What Isaacson doesn’t conclude is whether those characteristics are propelling Musk’s success or undoing it.

The Musk biography is a fitting addition to Isaacson’s works chronicling the lives of major figures in science and technology, including Albert Einstein, Leonardo da Vinci, Jennifer Doudna and Steve Jobs.

As with those books, Isaacson deftly handles complicated matters like the development of electric vehicles, rockets and artificial intelligence while also deeply exploring Musk’s background and family.

By shadowing the billionaire over two years and through interviews with Musk’s family and colleagues, Isaacson is also able to show how Musk’s risk-taking may work well in designing electric cars and rockets but hasn’t fit well with running a social media platform.

Isaacson provides insight into how badly Musk misjudged his ability to run Twitter and the consequences of his missteps. He also offers his own theories on why the billionaire wanted to take over the social media platform. In part, Isaacson writes, it was a chance for someone who was beaten up on the playground as a kid to now own “the ultimate playground.”

The book has already made headlines, including Isaacson walking back his initial reporting in the book on Musk not allowing Ukraine to use Starlink internet services to launch a surprise attack on Russian forces in Crimea. Isaacson’s book initially reported that Musk secretly told his engineers to turn off coverage within 100 kilometers of the Crimean coast as Ukraine was launching the attack. Isaacson has since posted on X the coverage hadn’t been activated over Crimea.

The book has also gained attention for previously undisclosed details about Musk’s family life. The news generated by Isaacson’s book underscores just how much Musk’s legacy remains in flux and the difficulty any biographer faces in assessing it.

But the most fascinating parts are early on, as Isaacson delves into Musk’s upbringing, particularly his father. Musk’s father is portrayed in the book as a conspiracy-minded, verbally abusive Jekyll-and-Hyde figure. Musk’s fear that, as his mother puts it, “he might become his father,” is identified early on as a specter and possibly a driver of his success.

Also:

NEW YORK: **Drew Barrymore** has been dropped as host of the upcoming National Book Awards ceremony, a day after her talk show taped its first episode since the Hollywood writers strike began.

“The National Book Awards is an evening dedicated to celebrating the power of literature, and the incomparable contributions of writers to our culture,” the National Book Foundation, which presents the award, said in a statement Tuesday. “In light of the announcement that ‘The Drew Barrymore Show’ will resume production, the National Book Foundation has rescinded Ms. Barrymore’s invitation to host the 74th National Book Awards Ceremony.”

The awards event, sometimes referred to as the Academy Awards of the publishing world, is scheduled for Nov. 15.

Barrymore’s resumption of her CBS talk show doesn’t inherently cause issues with the actors guild, which is also on strike, as daytime talk shows are governed by a different Screen Actors Guild-American Federation of Radio and Television Artists contract that was renewed and ratified last year. But Barrymore’s show employs at least three writers who are members of the writers guild, which has been on strike since early May. Those writers were picketing outside the CBS Broadcast Building on Monday.

“The only people I know for sure that are not going back are us three WGA writers. And the rest, I can’t really speak for,” **Chelsea White**, one of the show’s writers, said on the picket line. “I think first and foremost, this is obviously way bigger than just ‘The Drew Barrymore Show’ and writers. We are out here standing with our union and feeling great and excited always to stand with our union.”

Barrymore drew criticism from members of both guilds for crossing the picket line, and from **Colson Whitehead, Alexander Chee** and other authors who questioned whether she should remain as host of the National Book Awards.

The fourth season of the talk show is slated to start airing Sept. 18. A representative for Barrymore did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Variety

This image released by Prime shows Michael Pena in a scene from ‘A Million Miles Away.’ (AP)

Film

Hernández biopic charms and inspires

Unlikely astronaut soars in ‘Million Miles’

LOS ANGELES, Sept 13, (AP): If ever there was an inspirational story about reaching for the stars, it’s “A Million Miles,” the real-life journey of a how a boy who grew up as a migrant farmworker became a NASA astronaut.

It starts in the corn fields of Michoacan, Mexico, as José Hernández looks up into the sky in wonder, and it ends two hours later with him 200 miles above the Earth in the International Space Station.

“Tell me something,” his cousin tells him. “Who better than a migrant? Somebody who knows what it’s like to dive into the unknown. Who better than that?”

Biopics with outsized heroes can lay it on thick, but “A Million Miles” manages to keep its hero’s feet firmly on earth before his space shot, largely thanks to star Michael Peña as Hernández and Rosa Salazar as his wife. They keep their characters’ humanity even as the soundtrack and visuals blast off. He may be an astronaut, but someone still needs to take out the trash.

Screenwriters Bettina Gilois, Hernán Jiménez and Alejandra Márquez Abella - who base their story on Hernández’s memoir - tell a linear story of a gifted young man who is helped along the way by a teacher, his parents and his extended family. He is rejected so many times from NASA that he keeps all their letters in a folder.

Everyone sacrifices for Hernández to eventually become a mission specialist: His parents stop moving from field to field and lose their home, his wife delays her dreams of opening a restaurant and Hernández himself misses the birth of a child and spends endless hours away preparing. As an engineer, he is mistaken for a janitor at his first day at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory.

“A Million Miles” is wisely more about one man’s obsession and nicely touches on topics like racism, assimilation, deferred dreams, family guilt and dedication. “Tenacity is a superpower,” he is told and that’s a pretty great lesson amid all these superhero flicks.

In many ways, the movie is an outsized twin to another biopic this year - “Flamin’ Hot,” the story of how a struggling but tenacious Mexican American janitor came up with the hit snack Flamin’ Hot Cheetos. “A Million Miles” even has a scene with a bowl of Doritos.

Alejandra Márquez Abella directs with assurance and there are some truly elegant touches, like when a box of paperwork dissolves to become a box of field crops or when the camera captures Hernández as a boy in the family car and then seamlessly shows him all grown up in a car following.

But the director also threatens to lay it on thick, like adding the image of a Monarch butterfly floating in the space shuttle - a symbol from the film’s first frames but one that feels labored by the time zero-gravity has been reached. We’ve already had a shot of farmworkers gazing up in their field as his shuttle streaks heaven-ward.

Sacrifices

Better are the scenes in which Hernández tries to make himself typical NASA material, like trading in his Impala for something more suburban, eating sandwiches at work - not enchiladas - and giving up blasting Mexican music for Rick Astley. “I think you’re trying to forget who you are,” he is told.

There is a scene later with no dialogue that soars because we’ve watched Hernández persist for so long: Seeing him drive through the NASA headquarters front gate with a Los Tigres del Norte song blaring from his truck and a smile on his lips.

Peña almost underplays his hero - a smart move and nicely done - but Salazar threatens to steal the film completely as a strong, loving, stressed-out mother and wife. “We grew up watching our people make sacrifices. It’s on us now,” she says.

Toward the end, he shows up at her restaurant in one of those coveted blue astronaut coveralls for the first time after being chosen to fly to space and is promptly sent to the kitchen. They are a dishwasher down, after all, and he needs to put in a shift, NASA or not. That perfectly captures this sweet, loving and worthwhile portrait of a family’s grit.

“A Million Miles Away,” an Amazon Prime Video release, is rated PG for “thematic elements and language.” Running time: 120 minutes. Three stars out of four.

Also:

MUMBAI, India: **Akshay Kumar**, one of the most prominent superstars in India, has embarked on an awe-inspiring journey within the Indian film industry by captivating audiences with his recent movie - OMG 2, produced by Wakaao Films and a successful sequel to the 2013 hit, which has already amassed over 20 million dollars globally.

Akshay Kumar who is known for his impressive track record of delivering a series of hits over the years, has used his fame and success to make social cause driven films relevant. His previous films like ‘Toilet: Ek Prem Katha’ dealt with open defecation, followed by ‘Padman’ that spoke about menstrual hygiene. The actor - often referred by Indians as a ‘Superstar with a Heart’ is also known for his action movies where he often pulls off daredevil stunts like **Tom Cruise**. His blockbuster successes have surpassed the billion-dollar milestone, over the years, a remarkable achievement within the Indian film industry. The superstar, through his film projects and social causes, employs over 10,000 people annually.

Akshay Kumar’s powerful performance has once again taken centre stage in the recently released OMG 2. The film has garnered commercial and critical acclaim across viewers and critics. With this movie, Akshay Kumar has reaffirmed his exceptional talent by boldly challenging the unconventional norms on sex education, a pressing need in today’s India. Considered by many as one of his finest performances to date, Akshay Kumar’s depiction as the messenger of Lord Shiva has left an enduring impression. However, the Censor Board of Film Certification (CBFC) and certain segments of the country deemed the film suitable exclusively for viewers aged 18+ and thus, the film has received an A+ certificate. People in India, including students, are sharing their thoughts against CBFC’s decision, on social media. They’re even engaging with the Information and Broadcasting Ministry on Twitter, which is unusual in a country like India. A large section in the audience believes that this rating limits the movie’s accessibility despite its positive impact.

NEW YORK: On a waterfront promenade lined with pink flowers and facing **Manhattan**’s majestic skyline, designer **Michael Kors** paid tribute to his late mother with a show honoring the travels the two enjoyed together.

As always, Kors was joined by a slew of celebrities at the picturesque venue along the East River in **Brooklyn**’s Domino Park, under the Williamsburg Bridge. Actors **Halle Berry, Blake Lively, Tiffany Haddish, Ellen Pompeo, Olivia Wilde, Jenna Dewan** and many more were in attendance.

“All of us dream of holidays,” the designer said before the show, explaining the inspiration for a collection projecting a beach-going vibe, with **Burt Bacharach** favorites like “What the World Needs Now” and “Promises, Promises” on the soundtrack. “I wanted to have this sort of barefoot glamour.”

But the designer was thinking most of all about his mother, the late **Joan Kors**, who died in August at 84. A former Revlon model, she was a strong influence on her son throughout his life, he has said.

“My mother truly was my ultimate muse, my ultimate supporter,” Kors said. “She and I traveled the world together and I have so many incredible memories of holidays with her. And she was a woman who broke the rules. She wore hot pants to the office. I think she always had fun with fashion and she really knew herself.”

The runway was heavy on looks one imagined Kors’ mother might have worn in the ’60s and ’70s, including some very short mini-dresses and chiffon sundresses. Many items were in cotton and cashmere crochet or in lace.

Asked about his hefty celebrity contingent, Kors noted he was a big fan of movies, theater and music. (AP)

❑ ❑ ❑

CHICAGO: **Jussie Smollett**’s lawyers told an **Illinois** appellate court Tuesday it should toss the former “Empire” actor’s convictions for staging a racist, homophobic attack against himself in 2019 and then lying about it to Chicago police, arguing that anger over the case led to properly dismissed charges being improperly restored.

Smollett, foregoing his usual three-piece suits in favor of a casual beige jacket and blue jeans, slipped into court for the hour-long oral arguments Tuesday and sat on spectator benches. He seemed to listen intently, leaning forward to follow the debate before the three-judge panel.

Smollett, 41, didn’t speak to reporters after the hearing, and Chicago TV station WGN showed footage of him from behind leaving the court building via an alley, wearing a hat and different coat.

Kors

Smollett

“Public outrage against the defendant cannot overrule the rule of law,” one of his lawyers, **Nenye Uche**, told the panel - referring to how public perception of Smollett turned after police said he created a crime and wasn’t a victim of one.

Uche added that many of the issues surrounding the appeal and Smollett’s prosecution boil down to the question: “Is it fair?”

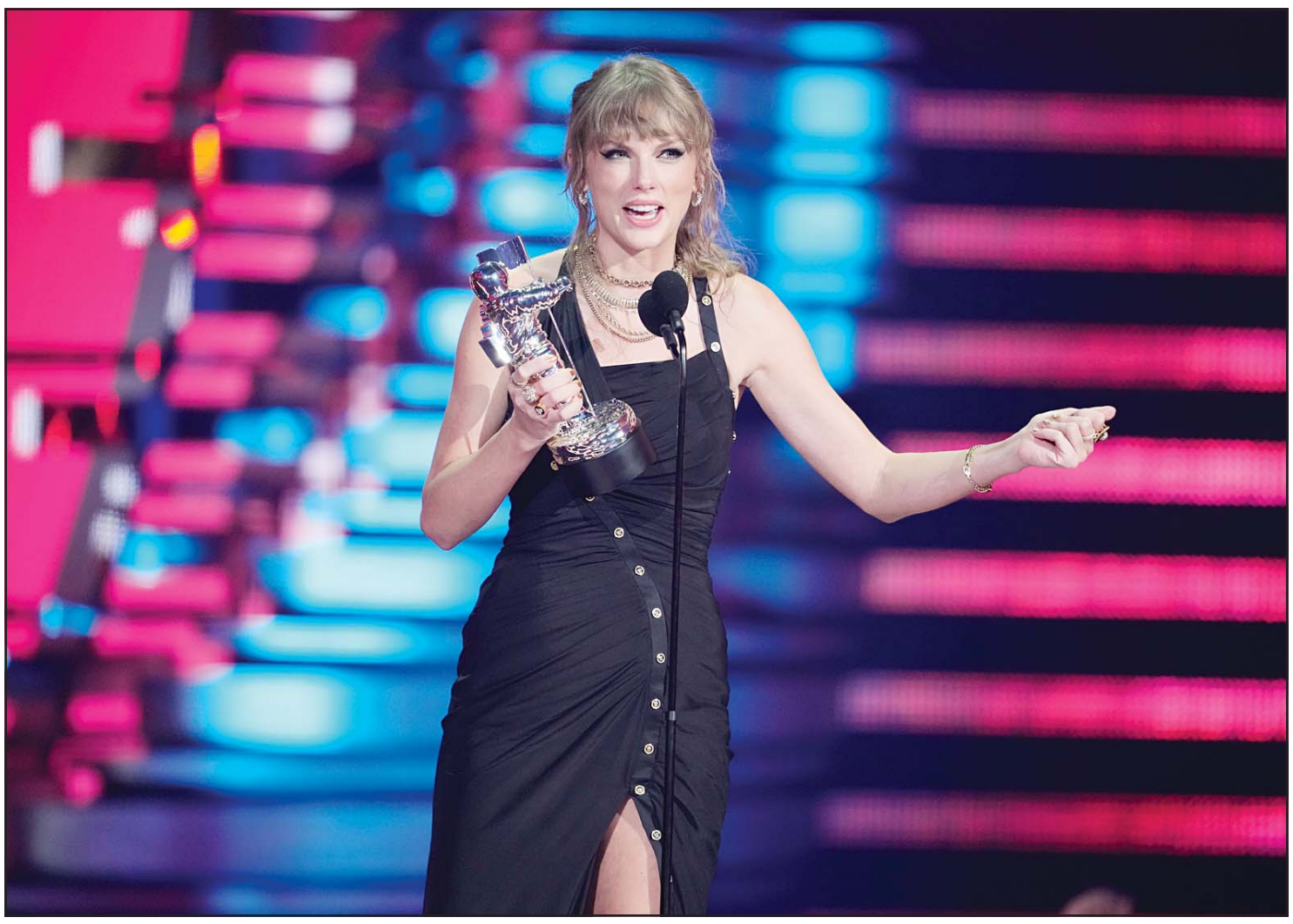
If the appeal before the Chicago-based First District Appellate Court fails, Smollett will have to finish a 150-day stint in jail that his trial judge ordered during his 2022 sentencing. Smollett spent just six days in jail before his release pending the outcome of the appeal. A ruling is expected to take several weeks.

Among a long list of arguments in Smollett’s 76-page written appeal is that his 2021 trial violated his Fifth Amendment protections against double jeopardy - being punished for the same crime twice. (AP)

People & Places

Shakira performs during the MTV Video Music Awards. (AP)

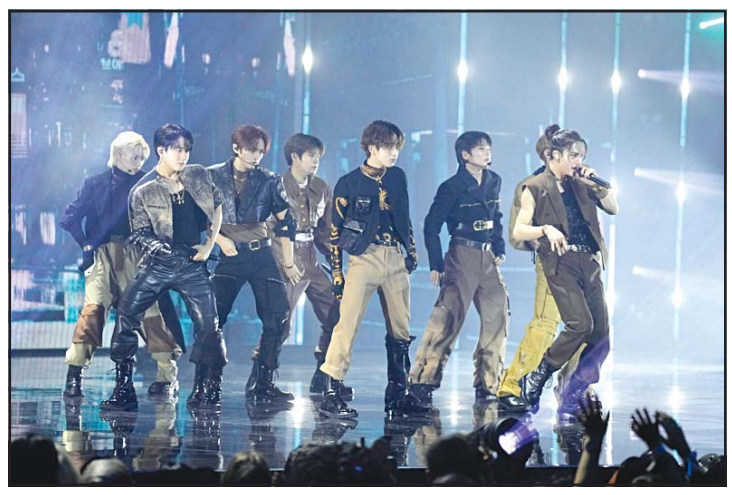
Joey Fatone, (from left), Lance Bass, Justin Timberlake, JC Chasez and Chris Kirkpatrick of NYSNC present the award for best pop. (AP)



Taylor Swift accepts the award for song of the year for 'Anti-Hero' during the MTV Video Music Awards on Tuesday, Sept. 12, at the Prudential Center in Newark, N.J. (AP)

Olivia Rodrigo performs during the MTV Video Music Awards.

Rema, (left), and Selena Gomez accept the award for best afrobeats for 'Calm Down.' (AP)



Stray Kids perform during the MTV Video Music Awards.

LL Cool J performs during the MTV Video Music Awards.

Renee Rapp performs during the MTV Video Music Awards. (AP)

Doja Cat performs during the MTV Video Music Awards.

Lil Nas X at the MTV Video Music Awards. (AP)

Lil Wayne performs during the MTV Video Music Awards.

Nicki Minaj performs during the MTV Video Music Awards. (AP)

Ice Spice, winner of the award for best new artist. (AP)

Anitta, winner of the award for best Latin for 'Funk Rave. (AP)

Show dominated by hip-hop, K-pop and Latin jams

Taylor Swift and her 'Anti-Hero' top MTV VMAs

NEW YORK, Sept 13, (AP): Taylor Swift took home the top prize at the 2023 MTV Video Music Awards for her "Anti-Hero" music video on a night full of surprises.

"This is unbelievable. The fact that this is a fan-voted award means so much to me," Swift said in her acceptance speech. "I can't believe it was a year ago that I announced the 'Midnights' album."

The show, held at the Prudential Center in Newark, New Jersey, was Swift's from nearly the beginning. The night's first presenters were none other than NSYNC, who reunited to hand the best pop video award to Swift.

In coordinating suits, Justin Timberlake, Joey Fatone, Lance Bass, Chris Kirkpatrick and JC Chasez shared the stage with Swift. Bass handed her a friendship bracelet, just as fans do at the superstar's shows. "You're pop personified," she told the group.

The night's top nominee later returned to the stage to pick up the song of the year trophy for "Anti-Hero" and also the best direction award.

Swift took home nine of the 11 awards she was up for, including artist of the year in a category made up entirely of women nominees for the first time in VMA history.

Her "Karma (Remix)" collaborator, Ice Spice, won best new artist. "Oh my God, this is so cool," she said. "I just want to thank my munchkins."

New music was abundant throughout the show. Host Nicki Minaj performed her latest single, the dreamy "Last Time I Saw You" before jumping into a brand-new tease of a fiery new trap cut from her highly-anticipated "Pink Friday 2" album.

"I ain't nothing like you," she raps, "I'm on a whole other level."

As much as Swift dominated, the VMAs centered on music's global power. K-pop boy band Tomorrow X Together and Brazilian superstar Anitta premiered their new collaboration, the glossy retro-pop of "Back for More."

Regional

Another K-pop group, Stray Kids, brought "S-Class" to the stage, regional Mexicana star Peso Pluma performed "Lady Gaga" and reggaetonera Karol G delivered "Oki Doki" and "Tá OK (remix),"

Comedian Tiffany Haddish presented the award for "Best Afrobeats" in the category's inaugural year, given to Rema and Selena Gomez for their massive hit "Calm Down."

"Africa in the house!" Rema started his acceptance speech. "Shout out to Fela (Kuti) who started Afrobeats in the first place…and I want to give a big shout out to the next generation of Afrobeats."

Gomez stood a few feet from the microphone but jumped in when Rema asked her to, telling the crowd: "I want to send all of my love to Nigeria, thank you."

Colombian icon Shakira received the Video Vanguard Award and performed an incredible bilingual medley of her decades of hits - "She Wolf," her collaboration with Rauw Alejandro "Te Felicito," the viral, record-breaking "Shakira: Bzrp Music Sessions, Vol. 53" with Bizarrap among them - in a set introduced by her "Hips Don't Lie" collaborator Wyclef Jean.

"MTV, thank you for being such a big part of my career since I was only 18 years old," Shakira said, also thanking her parents and her children, who she brought to the show.

"This is for you my people, my Latin American people, inside and outside this country," she said, switching to Spanish. "Thank you for inspiring me and for injecting me with so much strength and so much desire to move forward, I love you so much."

She also took home the award for best collaboration for "TQG," her song with Karol G. The duo gave their acceptance speech entirely in Spanish. "If collaborating with the legendary Shakira had been impressive, having an award with her is something from another planet," Karol G exclaimed.

Diddy received the Global Icon Award from Mary J. Blige and his daughter Chance Combs. He is third recipient of the award, following the Red Hot Chili Peppers in 2022 and the Foo Fighters in 2021.

Collection

The legendary rapper also performed at the VMAs for the first time since 2005. It was an incredible collection of some of his biggest hits like "Bad Boy for Life" and "Mo Money Mo Problems," joined by some of his greatest collaborators: Yung Miami, Keyshia Cole, and sweetest of all, his son, King Combs.

"Love wins, y'all, love wins," he started his speech. "I started out as a paper boy, I didn't know I was going to be here." He then led the audience with a chant of "bad boy."

"This is for 30 years," he continued. "I pray to God that you get to do what you love for 30 years."

Lil Wayne opened the show with a performance of his new single "Kat Food." Immediately afterward, Olivia Rodrigo brought her "Vampire" music video set to the stage, before launching into her cheeky pop-punk single "Get Him Back!"

Between the two tracks, snippets of her sold singles played aloud - at the same moment, she was rushed from the staged in a pre-planned "malfunction," further mirroring the "Vampire" video and symbolizing a move from her first record to her second.

The live sets were many: Cardi B and Megan Thee Stallion brought "Bongos" to life with big choreography; Demi Lovato played a rock 'n' roll medley of her biggest hits: "Heart Attack," into "Sorry Not Sorry," "Cool for the Summer" before the best K-pop award was given to Stray Kids.

Later, Anitta would win the "best Latin" award for the second year in a row, delivering one of the more endearing acceptance speeches of the night - "I wanna thank myself," she laughed. "Because I work so hard!"

French Montana used his position as best R&B presenter alongside Ashanti to draw attention to Morocco earthquake relief, spotlighting a relief fund that he said he would personally donate to. Montana grew up in Morocco.

Near the end of the show, the MTV Video Music Awards celebrated 50 years of hip-hop with a star-studded finale performance. Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five started with "The Message," which led to Doug E. Fresh and Slick Rick's "The Show." Nicki Minaj, Lil Wayne, LL Cool J and DMC of Run-DMC closed it out - an energetic celebration of a multigenerational culture.

Health

‘There’s a safety issue’

Popular decongestant ineffective: FDA panel

WASHINGTON, Sept 13, (AP): The leading decongestant used by millions of Americans looking for relief from a stuffy nose is no better than a dummy pill, according to government experts who reviewed the latest research on the long-questioned drug ingredient.

Advisers to the Food and Drug Administration voted unanimously on Tuesday against the effectiveness of the key drug found in popular versions of Sudafed, Dayquil and other medications stocked on store shelves.

“Modern studies, when well conducted, are not showing any improvement in congestion with phenylephrine,” said Dr. Mark Dykewicz, an allergy specialist at the Saint Louis University School of Medicine.

The FDA assembled its outside advisers to take another look at phenylephrine, which became the main drug in over-the-counter decongestants when medicines with an older ingredient - pseudoephedrine - were moved behind pharmacy counters. A 2006 law had forced the move because pseudoephedrine can be illegally processed into methamphetamine.

Michele

Those original versions of Sudafed and other medicines remain available without a prescription, but they’re less popular and account for about one-fifth of the $2.2 billion market for oral decongestants. Phenylephrine versions - sometimes labeled “PE” on packaging - make up the rest.

If the FDA follows through on the panel’s recommendations, Johnson & Johnson, Bayer and other drugmakers could be required to pull their oral medications containing phenylephrine from store shelves. That would likely force consumers to switch to the behind-the-counter pseudoephedrine products or to phenylephrine-based nasal sprays and drops.

In that scenario, the FDA would have to work with drugstores, pharmacists and other health providers to educate consumers about the remaining options for treating congestion, panelists said Tuesday.

The group also told the FDA that studying phenylephrine at higher doses was not an option because it can push blood pressure to potentially dangerous levels.

“I think there’s a safety issue there,” said Dr. Paul Pisaric of Archwell Health in Oklahoma. “I think this is a done deal as far as I’m concerned. It doesn’t work.”

Allergy

This week’s two-day meeting was prompted by University of Florida researchers who petitioned the FDA to remove most phenylephrine products based on recent studies showing they failed to outperform placebo pills in patients with cold and allergy congestion. The same researchers also challenged the drug’s effectiveness in 2007, but the FDA allowed the products to remain on the market pending additional research.

That was also the recommendation of FDA’s outside experts at the time, who met for a similar meeting on the drug in 2007.

This time, the 16 members of the FDA panel unanimously agreed that current evidence doesn’t show a benefit for the drug.

“I feel this drug in this oral dose should have been removed from the market a long time ago,” said Jennifer Schwartzott, the patient representative on the panel. “Patients require and deserve medications that treat their symptoms safely and effectively and I don’t believe that this medication does that.”

The advisers essentially backed the conclusions of an FDA scientific review published ahead of this week’s meeting, which found numerous flaws in the 1960s and 1970s studies that supported phenylephrine’s original approval. The studies were “extremely small” and used statistical and research techniques no longer accepted by the agency, regulators said.

“The bottom line is that none of the original studies stand up to modern standards of study design or conduct,” said Dr. Peter Starke, the agency’s lead medical reviewer.

Additionally, three larger, rigorously conducted studies published since 2016 showed no difference between phenylephrine medications and placebos for relieving congestion. Those studies were conducted by Merck and Johnson & Johnson and enrolled hundreds of patients.

A trade group representing nonprescription drugmakers, the Consumer Healthcare Products Association, argued that the new studies had limitations and that consumers should continue to have “easy access” to phenylephrine.

Like many other over-the-counter ingredients, phenylephrine was essentially grandfathered into approval during a sweeping FDA review begun in 1972. It has been sold in various forms for more than 75 years, predating the agency’s own regulations on drug effectiveness.

“Any time a product has been on the market that long, it’s human nature to make assumptions about what we think we know about the product,” said **Dr. Theresa Michele**, who leads the FDA’s office of nonprescription drugs.

But FDA reviewers said their latest assessment reflects new testing insights into how quickly phenylephrine is metabolized when taken by mouth, leaving only trace levels that reach nasal passages to relieve congestion. The drug appears more effective when applied directly to the nose, in sprays or drops, and those products are not under review.

There’s unlikely to be any immediate impact from Tuesday’s panel vote, which is not binding.

The group’s negative opinion opens the door for the FDA to pull phenylephrine from a federal list of decongestants deemed effective for over-the-counter pills and liquids. The FDA said removing the products would eliminate “unnecessary costs and delay in care of taking a drug that has no benefit.”

Also:

SACRAMENTO, Calif.: California lawmakers are working through hundreds of bills before the legislative session ends on Thursday.

If approved, the bills go to Democratic Gov. **Gavin Newsom**, who will have until Oct. 14 to decide whether to sign them into law, veto them or let them become law without his signature.

The state Legislature almost never overrides a veto from the governor, no matter what political party is in charge.

Lawmakers on Tuesday voted to become the first state to ban four chemicals from processed food and drinks sold in California by 2027.

The chemicals - red dye no. 3, potassium bromate, brominated vegetable oil and propyl paraben - are still used in popular products like Peeps, the popular marshmallow chicks most associated with Easter.

Democratic Assemblymember **Jesse Gabriel**, the author of the bill, said those chemicals have already been banned by the European Union and other countries because of scientific research linking them to health problems, including cancer.

An earlier version of the bill would also have banned titanium dioxide, which is used in Skittles. But amendments in the state Senate removed that chemical from the ban.

The state Assembly approved a bill requiring companies making more than $500 million annually to disclose what financial risks climate change poses to their businesses and how they plan to address those risks.

State Sen. **Henry Stern**, a Democrat from **Los Angeles** who introduced the legislation, said the information would be useful for individuals and lawmakers when making public and private investment decisions. The bill was changed recently to require companies to begin reporting the information in 2026, instead of 2024, and mandate that they report every other year, instead of annually.

The changes would help make it more feasible for businesses to follow through with reporting requirements, said **Anne DiGrazia**, a spokesperson for Stern.

The bill was among the biggest climate proposals in the state Legislature this year, collecting support from major companies including IKEA and Microsoft, as well as former California Air Resources Board Chair **Mary D. Nichols**.

Sudafed and other common nasal decongestants containing pseudoephedrine are on display behind the counter at Hospital Discount Pharmacy in Edmond, Okla., Jan. 11, 2005. On Tuesday, Sept. 12, 2023 advisers to the Food and Drug Administration said that a different ingredient, phenylephrine, is ineffective at relieving nasal congestion. Drugmakers reformulated their products with phenylephrine after a 2006 law required pseudoephedrine-containing medications be sold from the behind pharmacy counter. (AP)

Edgard Boquín, a project leader working with Doctors Without Borders, holds a glass jar filled with mosquitoes before their release in neighborhoods rife with dengue, in a facility in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, Tuesday, Aug. 22, 2023. The mosquitoes come from eggs, produced in a World Mosquito Program bio factory to carry the bacteria Wolbachia, which interrupts the transmission of dengue. (AP)

Discovery

Astronaut Rubio breaks US record: NASA astronaut **Frank Rubio** now holds the record for the longest US spaceflight.

Rubio surpassed the US space endurance record of 355 days on Monday at the International Space Station. He arrived at the outpost last September with two Russians for a routine six months. But their stay was doubled after their Soyuz capsule developed a coolant leak while parked at the space station.

The trio will return to Earth on Sept 27 in a replacement capsule that was sent up empty for the ride home. By then, Rubio will have spent 371 days in space, more than two weeks longer than Mark Vande Hei, the previous US record holder for a single spaceflight, Russia holds the world record of 437 days, set in the mid-1990s.

“Your dedication is truly out of this world, Frank!” NASA chief Bill Nelson said via X, formerly known as Twitter.

A replacement crew of two Russians and an American is set to launch to the station from Kazakhstan on Friday. (AP)

❑ ❑ ❑

Couple rescues baby shark: A Connecticut couple’s scuba diving trip in Rhode Island on Monday turned into a mission to rescue a baby shark.

Deb and Steve Dauphinais, of Glastonbury, Connecticut, were diving on the sand flats off Jamestown, Rhode Island, when Deb Dauphinais spotted the 16-inch (41-centimeter) juvenile shark with its head stuck inside a work glove at the bottom of about 35 feet (10 meters) of water.

Deb Dauphinais, a dive instructor, said she thought the shark was dead, but when it twitched she motioned for her husband to come over and help.

“He came over and did his own little double-take,” she said.

She said her husband tugged on the glove, which seemed to be suctioned to the shark’s head, but it eventually popped free.

Deb Dauphinais said they were not afraid of being attacked by what appeared to be a juvenile Dogfish shark, but were cautious, in case it snapped at them.

“It kind of looked at both of us, didn’t look at all injured, got its equilibrium back and then swam off back to where it is supposed to be,” she said.

Deb Dauphinais, who has been an instructor for about 30 years, said this is not the first time she has rescued a marine animal in distress. A few years ago, she freed a black sea bass that had been hooked on a discarded fishing line, she said.

“There are countless stories of underwater sea creatures being killed by underwater sea trash,” she said. “It’s an ongoing issue that’s near and dear to my heart. But these are the only times I’ve been able to save something, at least a shark, like that.” (AP)

❑ ❑ ❑

Rhino kills zookeeper: A rhinoceros attacked a married couple working as zookeepers in Austria on Tuesday, killing the woman and seriously injuring the man as he attempted to save her, authorities said.

The attack happened at the Hellbrunn Zoo in the western Austrian city of Salzburg.

Zoo director **Sabine Grebner** told reporters that the 33-year-old woman, a German citizen from Bavaria, was assigned that day to put insect repellent on the rhino’s body because they are very sensitive to insect bites.

The 30-year-old female rhino, Jeti, attacked the keeper though it was not clear why, Austria’s APA news agency cited Grebner as saying.

Salzburg police said the woman “succumbed to her injuries at the scene of the accident.” Attempts to resuscitate her were not successful.

The other zookeeper, a 34-year-old Austrian citizen who was feeding other animals at the time, was also attacked and injured when he tried to chase the rhino away from his wife. The woman suffered severe chest trauma while her husband had a fractured leg and was taken to a hospital, APA reported.

The names of the two zookeepers were not released in line with Austrian privacy rules.

The man, a trained animal keeper, has worked at the zoo since 2008, and his wife, a certified animal keeper, since 2014. Previously, she was employed in Munich, the zoo director said. (AP)

Grebner

Rubio

Health

Old enemies are now becoming allies

Special mosquitoes to fight dengue

TEGUCIGALPA, Honduras, Sept 13, (AP): For decades, preventing dengue fever in Honduras has meant teaching people to fear mosquitoes and avoid their bites. Now, Hondurans are being educated about a potentially more effective way to control the disease - and it goes against everything they’ve learned.

Which explains why a dozen people cheered last month as Tegucigalpa resident Hector Enriquez held a glass jar filled with mosquitoes above his head, and then freed the buzzing insects into the air. Enriquez, a 52-year-old mason, had volunteered to help publicize a plan to suppress dengue by releasing millions of special mosquitoes in the Honduran capital.

The mosquitoes Enriquez unleashed in his El Manchen neighborhood - an area rife with dengue - were bred by scientists to carry bacteria called Wolbachia that interrupt transmission of the disease. When these mosquitoes reproduce, they pass the bacteria to their offspring, reducing future outbreaks.

This emerging strategy for battling dengue was pioneered over the last decade by the nonprofit World Mosquito Program, and it is being tested in more than a dozen countries. With more than half the world’s population at risk of contracting dengue, the World Health Organization is paying close attention to the mosquito releases in Honduras, and elsewhere, and it is poised to promote the strategy globally.

Infectious

In Honduras, where 10,000 people are known to be sickened by dengue each year, Doctors Without Borders is partnering with the mosquito program over the next six months to release close to 9 million mosquitoes carrying the Wolbachia bacteria.

“There is a desperate need for new approaches,” said Scott O’Neill, founder of the mosquito program.

Scientists have made great strides in recent decades in reducing the threat of infectious diseases, including mosquito-borne viruses like malaria. But dengue is the exception: Its rate of infection keeps going up.

Models estimate that around 400 million people across some 130 countries are infected each year with dengue. Mortality rates from dengue are low - an estimated 40,000 people die each year from it - but outbreaks can overwhelm health systems and force many people to miss work or school.

“When you come down with a case of dengue fever, it’s often akin to getting the worst case of influenza you can imagine,” said Conor McMeniman, a mosquito researcher at Johns Hopkins University. It’s commonly known as “breakbone fever” for a reason, McMeniman said.

Traditional methods of preventing mosquito-borne illnesses haven’t been nearly as effective against dengue.

The Aedes aegypti mosquitoes that most commonly spread dengue have been resistant to insecticides, which have fleeting results even in the best-case scenario. And because dengue virus comes in four different forms, it is harder to control through vaccines.

Aedes aegypti mosquitoes are also a challenging foe because they are most active during the day - meaning that’s when they bite - so bed nets aren’t much help against them. Because these mosquitoes thrive in warm and wet environments, and in dense cities, climate change and urbanization are expected to make the fight against dengue even harder.

“We need better tools,” said Raman Velayudhan, a researcher from the WHO’s Global Neglected Tropical Diseases Program. “Wolbachia is definitely a long-term, sustainable solution.”

Velayudhan and other experts from the WHO plan to publish a recommendation as early as this month to promote further testing of the Wolbachia strategy in other parts of the world.

The Wolbachia strategy has been decades in the making.

The bacteria exist naturally in about 60% of insect species, just not in the Aedes aegypti mosquito.

“We worked for years on this,” said O’Neill, 61, who with help from his students in Australia eventually figured out how to transfer the bacteria from fruit flies into Aedes aegypti mosquito embryos by using microscopic glass needles.

Infected

Around 40 years ago, scientists aimed to use Wolbachia in a different way: to drive down mosquito populations. Because male mosquitoes carrying the bacteria only produce offspring with females that also have it, scientists would release infected male mosquitoes into the wild to breed with uninfected females, whose eggs would not hatch.

But along the way, O’Neill’s team made a surprising discovery: Mosquitoes carrying Wolbachia didn’t spread dengue - or other related diseases, including yellow fever, Zika and chikungunya.

And since infected females pass Wolbachia to their offspring, they will eventually “replace” a local mosquito population with one that carries the virus-blocking bacteria.

The replacement strategy has required a major shift in thinking about mosquito control, said Oliver Brady, an epidemiologist at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.

“Everything in the past has been about killing mosquitoes, or at the very least, preventing mosquitoes from biting humans,” Brady said.

Since O’Neill’s lab first tested the replacement strategy in Australia in 2011, the World Mosquito Program has run trials affecting 11 million people across 14 countries, including Brazil, Mexico, Colombia, Fiji and Vietnam.

Strategy

The results are promising. In 2019, a large-scale field trial in Indonesia showed a 76% drop in reported dengue cases after Wolbachia-infected mosquitoes were released.

Still, questions remain about whether the replacement strategy will be effective - and cost effective - on a global scale, O’Neill said. The three-year Tegucigalpa trial will cost $900,000, or roughly $10 per person that Doctors Without Borders expects it to protect.

Scientists aren’t yet sure how Wolbachia actually blocks viral transmission. And it isn’t clear whether the bacteria will work equally well against all strains of the virus, or if some strains might become resistant over time, said Bobby Reiner, a mosquito researcher at the University of Washington.

“It’s certainly not a one-and-done fix, forever guaranteed,” Reiner said.

Many of the world’s mosquitoes infected with Wolbachia were hatched in a warehouse in Medellín, Colombia, where the World Mosquito Program runs a factory that breeds 30 million of them per week.

The factory imports dried mosquito eggs from different parts of the world to ensure the specially bred mosquitoes it eventually releases will have similar qualities to local populations, including resistance to insecticides, said Edgard Boquín, one of the Honduras project leaders working for Doctors Without Borders.

India braces to contain Nipah virus as 2 deaths, 4 infections confirmed in Kerala

NEW DELHI, Sept 13, (KUNA): Indian health authorities on Wednesday braced to contain the spread of Nipah virus as two deaths and four infections were confirmed from Southern Indian state of Kerala.

Kerala Health Minister Veena George said that the test of samples confirmed that two people form Calicut district died after been infected by the deadly virus while Four others were infected.

A high level team of officials were send to Kerala to help the health workers carry out the necessary precautionary measures.

According to local media reports around 350 people have come into contact with the affected and 50 of them are said to be in high risk category.

The first death was reported on August followed by another case in September prompting Health authorities to imposed restrictions on movement of people and shut down schools in the affected areas.

Those who were in contact with the affected people have been put under quarantine.

The central team also advised to carry out health procedures, including searching for features in the family for those who have been in contact, and provided mobile testing centers.

Fruit bats are considered the natural host of the deadly virus which affects both animals and humans.

The virus shows symptoms of the disease similar to influenza such as high body temperature and headache.

MLB Results/Standings

WASHINGTON, Sept 13, (AP): Results and standings from MLB games on Tuesday.

NY Yankees	3	Boston 1st game	2	Cleveland	3	San Francisco	1
Chicago W. Sox	6	Kansas City 1st game	2	Seattle	8	LA Angels	0
St Louis	5	Baltimore	2	Pittsburgh	5	Washington	1
Texas	6	Toronto	3	NY Mets	7	Arizona	4
Minnesota	3	Tampa Bay	2	Atlanta	7	Philadelphia 10 inn	6
Cincinnati	6	Detroit 10 inn	5	Milwaukee	3	Miami	1
Oakland	6	Houston	2	Colorado	6	Chicago Cubs	4
NY Yankees	4	Boston 2nd game	1	LA Dodgers	11	San Diego	2
Kansas City	11	Chicago W. Sox 2nd game					

American League

East Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Baltimore	91	53	.632	—
Tampa Bay	89	57	.610	3
Toronto	80	65	.552	11-1/2
Boston	73	72	.503	18-1/2
New York	73	72	.503	18-1/2

Central Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Minnesota	76	69	.524	—
Cleveland	69	77	.473	7-1/2
Detroit	66	78	.458	9-1/2
Chicago	56	89	.386	20
Kansas City	45	101	.308	31-1/2

West Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Houston	82	64	.562	—
Texas	80	64	.556	1
Seattle	80	65	.552	1-1/2
Los Angeles	68	78	.466	14
Oakland	46	99	.317	35-1/2

National League

East Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
z-Atlanta	95	50	.655	—
Philadelphia	79	66	.545	16
Miami	74	71	.510	21
New York	66	78	.458	28-1/2
Washington	65	80	.448	30

Central Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Milwaukee	81	63	.563	—
Chicago	78	68	.534	4
Cincinnati	75	71	.514	7
Pittsburgh	67	78	.462	14-1/2
St Louis	64	81	.441	17-1/2

West Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Los Angeles	88	56	.611	—
Arizona	76	70	.521	13
San Francisco	74	71	.510	14-1/2
San Diego	68	78	.466	21
Colorado	52	92	.361	36

Least productive opening week in years

NFL passing games struggle

WASHINGTON, Sept 13, (AP): NFL passing games struggled to get off the ground in Week 1.

Whether it was because of quarterbacks being rusty from a lack of preseason action, wet weather that impacted several games or improved defense, this was one of the worst opening weekends for passing in years no matter the measurement.

Nineteen of the 32 teams failed to reach even 200 yards of net passing in their openers, the first time that has happened in any week of the season since Week 3 in 2008.

In all, teams combined for just 194.5 net yards passing per game for the lowest total in Week 1 of a season since 2006. The average of 6.3 yards per attempt was the lowest for the opening week since 1996 and the 9.8 yards per completion were the lowest on records that go back to 1940.

It's a stark reversal from the recent trend that tilted the field to more passing thanks to rules changes and an influx of dynamic quarterbacks. But the drop-off from Week 1 just four years ago was stark with teams throwing for nearly 85 fewer yards per game, and yards per attempt dropping by 1.5 yards per pass.

Four teams failed to reach even 100 yards passing with some notable statistics of futility.

Seattle had minus-8 yards passing and 12 yards of offense in the second half of a loss to the Rams - the fewest in an opener in 24 years. The expansion Browns had minus-7 yards of offense in the 1999 opener against Pittsburgh.

Cincinnati's Joe Burrow celebrated his new contract by going 14 for 31 for 82 yards in a loss to Cleveland, while getting sacked twice for 15 yards. The 67 net yards passing were the fewest in an opener in the past 30 years - a mark that stook only a few hours.

Because in the night game Sunday, the Giants finished with just 63 net yards passing in a 40-0 loss to Dallas.

The other team that failed to reach 100 yards passing was the Atlanta Falcons, who had 91 in a 24-10 win over Carolina.

One of the few passing bright spots in Week 1 came from Miami, where Tua Tagovailoa threw for 466 yards in a win over the Chargers for the fourth best output ever in Week 1. Only Norm Van Brocklin (554 yards in 1951), Tom Brady (517 in 2011) and Dan Marino (473 in 1994) threw for more in an opener.

Tyreek Hill had 215 of those yards for the third best Week 1 receiving output behind only Frank Clarke (241 in 1962) and Anquan Boldin (217 in 2003).

Week 1 didn't go well for the five coaches beginning tenures with new teams.

Denver's Sean Payton, Indianapolis' Shane Steichen, Carolina's Frank Reich, Houston's DeMeco Ryans and Arizona's Jonathan Gannon all lost their season openers.

This marked just the third time in NFL history that there were at least five new coaches to begin a season and they all lost in Week 1, according to Sportradar. It also happened in 2018 when first-year coaches went 0-7 and in 2001 when they went 0-6.

Three of those coaches lost with rookie quarterbacks: Bryce Young of the Panthers, C.J. Stroud of the Texans and Anthony Richardson.

Young was the ninth straight No. 1 pick who started the season opener as a rookie and didn't win. The last victorious one was David Carr on the expansion Texans in 2002, with Kyler Murray getting a tie for the Cardinals in 2019.

Richardson became the fifth rookie QB to record at least one TD passing and rushing, joining Archie Manning (1971), Chris Weinke (2001), Cam Newton (2011) and DeShone Kizer (2017).

The talk before the season was about the discrepancy in quality between the NFC and AFC, with the AFC home to a majority of the top quarterbacks and Super Bowl contenders.

But for one week, the NFC came out on top.

Led by cross-conference wins from last season's NFC title game participants Philadelphia (25-20 vs. New England) and San Francisco (30-7 over Pittsburgh), the NFC went 4-0 against the AFC. Detroit beat Super Bowl champion Kansas City 21-20 and New Orleans beat Tennessee in the other two interconference games.

FOOTBALL

Change Name

I, Taiyaba, holder of Indian Passport No. V7775620 having permanent address Rajasthan, India, 327024 residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as under:
Given name (Taiyaba)
Surname (Abul Fazal)

Change Name

MURTAZA KAPDA S/O JOHAR ALI Resident of Husami Mohalla Partapur Dist. Banswara passport No.M0246063. has changed my name from MURTAZA to MURTAZA KAPDA. I will be known by name of MURTAZA KAPDA.

Change Name

I, Fakhruddin, holder of Indian Passport No. S2390930 having permanent address Mumbai, India, 400003 residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as under: Given name (Fakhruddin)
Surname (Mala)

مطلوب لعائلة كويتية

طبـــــاخ

ذو خبرة في المأكولات العالمية
يعمل في فندق أو مطعم
• حاصل على شهادة
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Olson ties homer mark with 51, Braves close in on NL East title

St. Louis Cardinals relief pitcher Ryan Helsley throws to the Baltimore Orioles in the ninth inning of a baseball game in Baltimore. The Cardinals won 5-2. (AP)

Yankees sweep Red Sox

PHILADELPHIA, Sept 13, (AP): Matt Olson tied the Braves' season home run record with 51 and Atlanta moved to the cusp of the NL East title, beating the Philadelphia Phillies 7-6 in 10 innings Tuesday night.

Marcell Ozuna hit a three-run shot, Ronald Acuña Jr. had a two-run homer for the Braves. After blowing a 6-1 lead, they won on Eddie Rosario's RBI single off Craig Kimbrel (7-6) that scored the automatic runner.

The Braves can wrap up their sixth straight division crown with a win Wednesday over the Phillies.

Olson is trying to pass Andruw Jones, who hit 51 in 2005.

The NL wild-card leading Phillies tied it on home runs in the ninth for the second straight day but failed to complete the comeback.

Trea Turner tied it at 6 with a leadoff homer – his 11th in the last 13 games - in the ninth off Braves closer Raisel Iglesias.

Bryce Harper got his 1,500th career hit on his 17th homer of the season in the eighth and Bryson Stott hit a two run-shot in the inning to cut it to 6-5.

Iglesias (5-4) blew ninth-inning leads in consecutive days and picked up two wins. Brand Hand tossed a scoreless 10th for his first save.

Yankees 3, Red Sox 2, 1st game

Yankees 4, Red Sox 1, 2nd game

In Boston, Gleyber Torres keyed the Yankees to their first doubleheader sweep at Fenway Park since 2006, leading New York over Boston twice to get manager Aaron Boone his 500th career win.

Torres had a go-ahead, two-run single in the sixth inning and started a game-ending double play with the bases loaded in the opener of a day-night doubleheader opener. Then in the night game, Torres scored the go-ahead run on a bases-loaded grounder in the sixth and added an RBI single in the ninth.

New York entered 1-8 against the Red Sox this year and had not swept a doubleheader at Fenway since Aug. 18, 2006. The Yankees, who had been fifth in the AL East every day since Aug. 9, matched Boston at 73-72.

Boone improved his managing record to 500-353 in six seasons.

Carlos Rodón (3-5) struck out nine over five innings in the night game, allowing one run and four hits. Zach McAllister, a 35-year-old right-hander, gave up one hit in a scoreless sixth in his first major league appearance since 2018 with Detroit. Matt Bowman, a 32-year-old righty, pitched a one-hit eighth in his first big league outing since 2019 with Cincinnati.

Nick Ramirez finished with a perfect ninth for his first major league save.

Dodgers 11, Padres 2

In Los Angeles, Freddie Freeman homered, doubled and had four hits on his 34th birthday, Will Smith hit a three-run homer and Los Angeles beat San Diego to trim its NL West magic number to five.

Freeman was outstanding on his jersey giveaway night at Dodger Stadium, scoring a season-high four runs in front of thousands wearing his white No. 5 shirt. He singled and scored in the first, hit a two-run homer in the third, singled and scored again in the fourth and got his franchise-record 55th double in the eighth, completing his sixth four-hit game of the season.

Freeman has four homers, 12 RBIs and 12 runs scored in the 14 major league games he has played on his birthday.

Lance Lynn (11-11) pitched seven sturdy innings of five-hit ball.

Fernando Tatís Jr. homered for the Padres, who have lost four of six. Michael Wacha (11-4) took his second consecutive loss.

Cardinals 5, Orioles 2

In Baltimore, Adam Wainwright pitched five solid innings for his 199th win, and St. Louis spoiled John Means' return for Baltimore.

Richie Palacios homered in his first two plate appearances after entering the game as a pinch-runner for an injured Nolan Gorman in the second. It was that kind of night for the Cardinals. Wainwright (4-11) snapped a seven-start losing streak and a run of 11 in a row without a victory. The 42-year-old right-hander, who is retiring after this season, allowed two runs and seven hits.

It was a frustrating loss for the Orioles, who entered with a three-game lead over Tampa Bay atop the AL East, but on this night, the big question for Baltimore was how Means (0-1) would pitch. He was making his first appearance since having Tommy John surgery in April of last year.

Means allowed homers to Paul Goldschmidt in the first and Palacios in the fourth, but he made it through five innings allowing only four hits.

Brewers 3, Marlins 1

In Milwaukee, Josh Donaldson homered for the first time with his new team and Freddy Peralta turned in another stellar outing to help Milwaukee beat Miami.

BASEBALL

Milwaukee (81-63) is a season-high 18 games above .500 and reached the mark for the first time since it finished the 2021 season at 95-67.

Donaldson hit a solo home run deep into the second deck in left with one out in the fourth off Edward Cabrera (6-7) to put the Brewers in front 2-1. It was Donaldson's 11th homer of the season and first as a Brewer.

Peralta (12-8), who entered having gone 5-0 with a 2.09 ERA over his last eight starts, surrendered a leadoff homer to Luis Arraez on the third pitch of the game but then retired 19 of the next 20 batters and recorded nine strikeouts to reach 200 for the season. Devin Williams finished for his 33rd save.

Twins 3, Rays 2

In Minneapolis, Willi Castro hit a two-run home run in the seventh inning and Minnesota rallied to beat Tampa Bay.

Edouard Julien also homered for the Twins, who lost the first two in the three-game series and began the night with a 7 1/2-game lead over Cleveland in the AL Central.

René Pinto homered and Josh Lowe had an RBI single for the Rays, who missed an opportunity to gain ground in the AL East with Baltimore losing to St. Louis. Instead, Tampa Bay remained three games behind the Orioles.

Minnesota was held to two hits through six innings before Max Kepler singled off Rays' starter Zack Littell (3-6) with one out in the seventh. After Carlos Correa struck out, Castro hit a first-pitch slider to the seats in right-centerfield.

Louie Varland (4-3) pitched 2 1/3 innings of scoreless relief, followed by a shutout inning from Caleb Thielbar before Jhoan Duran had a 1-2-3 ninth for his 26th save in 31 chances.

Mets 7, Diamondbacks 4

In New York, Ronny Mauricio hit his first major league homer, Pete Alonso launched his 44th of the season and New York beat Arizona.

Francisco Álvarez also went deep and José Butto (1-2) earned his first career win as New York handed the Diamondbacks a costly defeat. Arizona began the day with a 1 1/2-game lead over Miami and San Francisco in a crowded race for the final National League wild card.

New York won hours after David Stearns agreed to become the team's president of baseball operations, according to several reports - filling a spot that's been vacant since Steve Cohen bought the team following the 2020 season.

Adam Ottavino finished for his 10th save.

Ryne Nelson (7-8) was the loser.

Athletics 6, Astros 2

In Houston, Shea Langeliers and Tony Kemp homered and Oakland jumped on Justin Verlander early in a victory over Houston.

Oakland has won the first two games of this series to avoid its 100th loss this season. Houston's lead in the AL West dwindled to one game with the loss and a win by Texas over Toronto on Tuesday night.

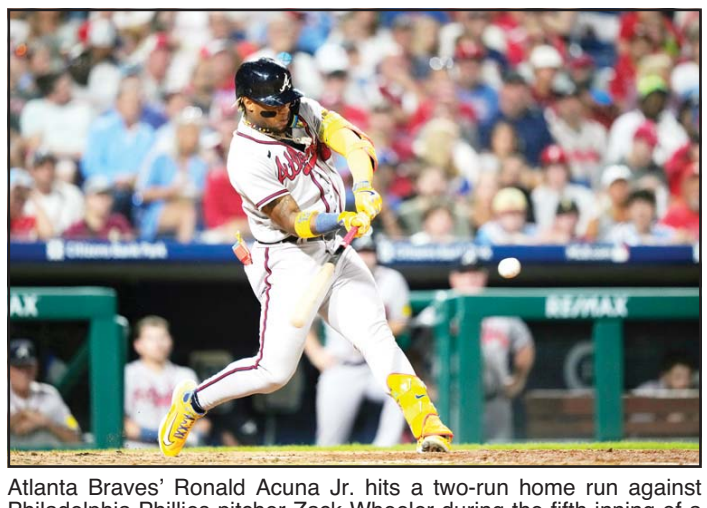
The Astros home woes continued as they fell to 37-37 at Minute Maid Park this season after dropping 12 of their last 16 games there.

Verlander (11-8) allowed eight hits and five runs with seven strikeouts in seven innings in his eighth start since a trade from the New York Mets. Oakland starter J.P. Sears (5-11) yielded five hits and two runs in six innings.

Rangers 6, Blue Jays 3

In Toronto, Robbie Grossman hit a two-run home run, Max Scherzer pitched 5 1/3 shutout innings before leaving because of a right triceps spasm and Texas beat Toronto to leapfrog the Blue Jays in the AL wild-card race.

Corey Seager had three hits, drove in a run and scored twice as the Rangers (80-64) won their fourth straight and wrapped up the season series against Toronto (80-65) with two games remaining. Seager finished 3 for 4 with an intentional walk. Texas came in a half-game behind the Blue Jays.



Atlanta Braves' Ronald Acuna Jr. hits a two-run home run against Philadelphia Phillies pitcher Zack Wheeler during the fifth inning of a baseball game in Philadelphia. (AP)

Guardians 3, Giants 1

In San Francisco, Tyler Freeman hit a go-ahead two-run single in the sixth moments after San Francisco starter Sean Manaea exited with the bases loaded, and Cleveland beat the Giants.

Right-hander Cal Quantrill (3-6), the former Stanford pitcher who sat out a month earlier this season due to inflammation in his pitching shoulder, allowed one run on five hits over six innings to win for the first time in nine starts.

Cleveland closer Emmanuel Clase reached 40 saves for a second straight season, getting a huge catch from center fielder Myles Straw on the wall to steal an extra-base hit from Blake Sabol.

White Sox 6, Royals 2, 1st game

Royals 11, White Sox 10, 2nd game

In Chicago, Maikel García hit a tiebreaking single in the seventh inning after Kansas City wasted a nine-run lead, and the Royals hung on to beat Chicago for a doubleheader split.

In the opener, Dylan Cease won consecutive decisions for just the third time and the White Sox ended a strange run of losses when their pitchers struck out 14 or more - Chicago had been 0-11 this year.

Kansas City, a major league-worst 45-101, has lost at least 100 games for the third time in six seasons and with 16 games left could break the team record of 106, set in 2005.

Reds 6, Tigers 5, 10 innings

In Detroit, Tyler Stephenson had an RBI single in the 10th inning in Cincinnati's victory over Detroit.

Stephenson led off the 10th with a single off Tigers closer Alex Lange (6-4), with Noelvi Marte sliding around Jake Rogers' tag at the plate.

Reds All-Star closer Alexis Díaz (9-4) got the victory with a scoreless ninth, and former Tiger Buck Farmer pitched the 10th for his third save.

Rockies 6, Cubs 4

In Denver, Kris Bryant hit a go-ahead homer in the sixth inning and had three RBIs against his former team, helping Colorado beat Chicago.

Elías Díaz had three hits for Colorado, which denied the Cubs a chance to gain ground on Philadelphia in the NL wild card. The Phillies lead Chicago by 1 1/2 games for the first wild card, and the Cubs trail NL Central-leading Milwaukee by four games.

Brenton Doyle had two hits, Jake Bird (3-3) got the win in relief of Chris Flexen, and Justin Lawrence caught Nico Hoerner looking with two on to end the game and get his 11th save for the Rockies.

Mariners 8, Angels 0

In Seattle, J.P. Crawford hit a three-run double, Eugenio Suárez homered and had an early RBI single and Seattle scored seven runs with two outs against Los Angeles.

The Mariners snapped a four-game losing streak and took advantage of Houston's loss to last-place Oakland to pull within 1 1/2 games of the AL West-leading Astros. Seattle also tied Toronto for the third and final AL wild card.

Pirates 5, Nationals 1

In Pittsburgh, Josh Palacios hit a two-run homer against his former team, Bailey Falter pitched six efficient innings and Pittsburgh beat Washington.

Palacios gave the Pirates a 2-0 lead in the second with his eighth home run, a 410-foot shot to the bullpen in center. Palacios played 29 games for the Nationals last season, but Pittsburgh picked him up in the December minor league Rule 5 draft.

Wales change 13 to face Portugal, but retain Rees Zammit and Faletau

Whitelock to equal McCaw's All Blacks caps record vs Namibia

TOULOUSE, France, Sept 13, (AP): Lock Sam Whitelock will equal Richie McCaw's New Zealand caps record in a much-changed side facing Namibia in the Rugby World Cup on Friday.

The All Blacks have changed 10, one positional, of the starting side that lost to France 27-13 last Friday in Paris.

Whitelock's 148th test will tie McCaw, who retired in 2015 after his second straight World Cup win. Whitelock is going for an unprecedented third win.

Whitelock

Only retired great Alun Wyn Jones has more caps, 171 for Wales and the British and Irish Lions.

Whitelock, prop Nepo Laulala and back-rowers Ardie Savea - the captain again in Sam Cane's injury absence - and Dalton Papali'i have retained their starting spots in the pack.

Beauden Barrett and Anton Lienert-Brown, moved from inside center to outside, are the only backs to repeat.

Damian McKenzie has the No. 10 jersey. In his 43rd test, he will make his World Cup debut with two others, scrumhalf Cam Roigard and wing Caleb Clarke.

New Zealand Squad: Beauden Barrett, Caleb Clarke, Anton Lienert-Brown, David Havili, Leicester Fainaga'auku, Damian McKenzie, Cam Roigard; Ardie Savea (captain), Dalton Papali'i, Luke Jacobson, Sam Whitelock, Brodie Retallick, Nepo Laulala, Samisoni Taukei'aho, Ofa Tu'ungafasi. Reserves: Dane Coles, Ethan de Groot, Fletcher Newell, Scott Barrett, Tupou Vaa'i, Aaron Smith, Richie Mo'unga, Rieko Ioane.

Wales made 13 changes to its starters to face Portugal at the Rugby World Cup, with only wing Louis Rees Zammit and No. 8 Taulupe Faletau retained from the breathless win against Fiji.

Four Welsh will make their World Cup debuts against the Portuguese in Nice on Saturday in centers Mason Grady and Johnny Williams, lock Christ Tshiunza and hooker Dewi Lake, who is captain. Taine Basham may also get a first World Cup appearance off the bench.

Leigh Halfpenny is at fullback and set to play his 101st test and appear in a third Rugby World Cup.

Gareth Anscombe comes in for Dan Biggar at No. 10 and will combine with scrumhalf Tomos Williams, who's set for a 50th test appearance. Tommy Reffell and Dan Lydiate complete the back row alongside Faletau.

Club teammates Tshiunza and Dafydd Jenkins are the locks, with loose forward-lock utility Tshiunza also starting his first game in the second row for Wales.

RUGBY

Wales rested most of its frontliners and is expecting an easier game than the 32-26 win over the Fijians, which went down the wire before the Welsh clung on to win in the dying seconds in the game of the tournament so far.

Nearly all of the frontliners get a rest after that, although Wales does have hooker Ryan Elias, lock Adam Beard, scrumhalf Gareth Davies and wing Josh Adams on the bench.

"We've done a thorough debrief of last week's game and know the areas we need to improve," Wales coach Warren Gatland said. "We have a clear plan of how we want to play on Saturday and it's about going out there and executing that as we have prepared."

Portugal is set for its first appearance at this Rugby World Cup. The Portuguese have played only at one previous World Cup, also in France in 2007.

Wales Squad: Leigh Halfpenny, Louis Rees Zammit, Mason Grady, Johnny Williams, Rio Dyer, Gareth Anscombe, Tomos Williams; Taulupe Faletau, Tommy Reffell, Dan Lydiate, Dafydd Jenkins, Christ Tshiunza, Dillon Lewis, Dewi Lake (captain), Nicky Smith. Reserves: Ryan Elias, Corey Domachowski, Tomas Francis, Adam Beard, Taine Basham, Gareth Davies, Sam Costelow, Josh Adams.

Rugby World Cup organizers apologized again on Wednesday to fans who missed the start of matches in Marseille and Bordeaux last weekend, and didn't believe the refereeing on head injuries has been inconsistent.

India's Jasprit Bumrah celebrates the wicket of Sri Lanka's Pathum Nissanka during the Asia Cup cricket match between Sri Lanka and India in Colombo, Sri Lanka. (AP)

Markram hits century

South Africa finally end Australia winning run to stay alive in series

POTCHEFSTROOM, South Africa, Sept 13, (AP): David Warner's shoe came off then so did the wheels in Australia's innings as South Africa stayed alive in their one-day international series .

Australia was cruising at 157-2 in the 19th over in a chase of 339 until Warner lost his shoe and was run out. The visitors folded to be all out for 227 in the 35th over.

"Series is still alive, we've gone a notch up and want to keep raising the bar," South Africa captain Temba Bavuma said.

CRICKET

South Africa won by 111 runs, finally defeating the Australians, who had won the first five tour matches, including sweeping all three Twenty20s. Australia has another chance to clinch the ODI series on Friday in the fourth match in Johannesburg.

Australia won the toss and gave an ODI debut to legspinner Tanveer Sangha, who made his T20 debut on this tour and took 4-31.

But Sangha wasn't introduced until Bavuma and Quinton de Kock laid another good platform.

England's Reece Topley bowls during the One Day International cricket match between England and New Zealand at The Oval cricket ground in London. (AP)

The batters were 65 without loss after the powerplay and cracked on.

De Kock laid into Sean Abbott and Josh Hazlewood, and it took Travis Head to stop de Kock at 146-1 in the 23rd over. He sliced to backward point after 82 from 77 balls.

Bavuma hit straight to cover in the next over after 57 off 62, and Sangha had his maiden ODI wicket.

Aiden Markram wasn't fazed and pulled Sangha for a six. He maintained the momentum with Reeza Hendricks in a stand of 76 in 12 overs, and with Marco Jansen in a stand of 63 in five overs at the death.

Hazlewood was plundered for 23 runs in the 45th over, and Nathan Ellis went for 21 runs in the 47th.

Markram achieved his second ODI century off the last ball when he smashed Hazlewood back down the ground for his ninth boundary.

South Africa had 338-6 and Markram was 102 not out off 74 balls.

The South Africans were excited by the turn on offer after Australia part-timer Head collected 2-39 from 10 overs. South Africa picked two front-line spinners in left-armers Tabraiz Shamsi and Keshav Maharaj, and they took two wickets each.

But they had no impact at the start of the chase when Australia got off to another flyer.

Head pumped Jansen for three straight boundaries in the second over. Jansen went for 30 in his first three overs and was replaced by Sisanda Magala, who dismissed Head on 38.

Warner, dropped in the first over off Markram, reached a fifty off 27 balls by pulling Gerald Coetzee for a six over midwicket.

Australia was 104-1 after the powerplay. The momentum changed at 157-2 in the 19th over when Warner went for a single but slipped, lost his shoe, and still ran but dived too late - run out by a direct throw from Maharaj. Warner made 78 off 56 balls.

Marnus Labuschagne and Marcus Stoinis were stumped and Australia, at 178-5 in the 24th over, was in deep trouble.

The pressure was too much. Coetzee grabbed four of the last five wickets to have 4-50 but Shamsi and Maharaj were the architects of this win.

India reach Asia Cup final

India's KL Rahul plays a shot as Sri Lanka's Kusal Mendis watches during the Asia Cup cricket match between Sri Lanka and India in Colombo, Sri Lanka. (AP)

Men in Blue thwart young Wellalage to beat Sri Lanka

COLOMBO, Sri Lanka, Sept 13, (AP): India reached the Asia Cup final by thwarting 20-year-old Dunith Wellalage's all-round brilliance to beat Sri Lanka by 41 runs.

After claiming 5-40 with his left-arm spin to help bowl out India for 213, Wellalage kept Sri Lanka in the game with an unbeaten 42 before he ran out of partners and Sri Lanka got dismissed for 172 in 41.3 overs.

"The pitch got slightly better towards the end so we had to hold our nerve and bowl consistently," Indian skipper Rohit Sharma said.

The defeat broke Sri Lanka's 13-match winning streak and it must now beat Pakistan in its last Super 4 game on Thursday to qualify for the Sunday's final. Pakistan also has two points like Sri Lanka after both beat Bangladesh in the Super 4 stage, but lost to India.

Wellalage and Dhananjaya de Silva put the small chase back on the track on a tricky spinning wicket after the top-order got flattened against India pace and spin and slumped to 99-6.

Wellalage used his feet well against India spinners and also smacked spinner Kuldeep Yadav over mid-wicket for the only six in the Sri Lanka innings before Ravindra Jadeja (2-33) provided India a much needed breakthrough.

With only 52 required off 76 balls, de Silva couldn't resist and holed out at mid-on before Yadav ran through the tail to finish with 4-33 that left Wellalage stranded on a 46-ball knock.

CRICKET

India was playing for the third straight day after its Super 4 game against Pakistan was stretched into the reserve day because of rain before it thumped its archrival by 228 runs.

Sharma (53) became the second fastest batter to complete 10,000 ODI runs behind teammate Virat Kohli as he played aggressively against fast bowlers in a dominating 80-run opening partnership with Shubman Gill, who scored 19.

But the introduction of Wellalage in the 11th over saw Indian top order struggling to read the left-arm spinner as the ball started to grip on the wicket. Wellalage clean bowled Gill off his first ball that turned enough as Gill tried to defend.

Kohli, who scored his fourth successive ODI hundred at the R. Premadasa Stadium on Monday, fell cheaply to Wellalage and Sharma got beaten with a straight delivery that skidded through the Indian skipper and hit the stumps.

K.L. Rahul (39) and Ishan Kishan (33) shared a half-century stand before Rahul gave a tame return catch to Wellalage. With the wicket started favoring spinners, Sri Lanka skipper Dasun Shanka brought on his part-time offspinner Charith Assalanka and Wellalage plucked a brilliant two-handed catch over his head at mid-wicket which got Kishan dismissed.

Wellalage rounded his spell when he had Hardik Pandya caught behind off his final delivery as Assalanka got through the tail. Axar Patel (26), who replaced Shardul Thakur in the playing XI, added a valuable 27 for the last wicket with Mohammed Siraj before the left-hander holed out at long off in the final over as Sri Lanka bowled out the opposition for its 14th successive ODI.

'Investigation did not uncover serious corruption'

PARIS, Sept 13, (AP): France's top financial prosecutor said Wednesday that investigations into the organization of the 2024 Paris Olympics have not revealed any serious corruption or influence peddling, and that his goal is not to disrupt the event.

Speaking in an interview with RTL radio, Jean-Francois Bohnert said the potential infractions currently investigated by the the financial prosecutor's office are "mainly formal."

"It's about favoritism, of illegal interest-taking," he said. "It's about the way certain contracts have been distributed, the arrangements ... But I don't see any elements, at least not at this stage, that would lead the investigation towards the most serious cases of corruption or influence peddling."

French police searched the Paris Olympic organizing committee headquarters in June as part of corruption investigations into contracts linked to the event.

The search and other related raids were linked to two preliminary investigations of the Paris Olympics. One probe was opened in 2017 - the year Paris was picked by the International Olympic Committee as the 2024 host - and the other began last year.

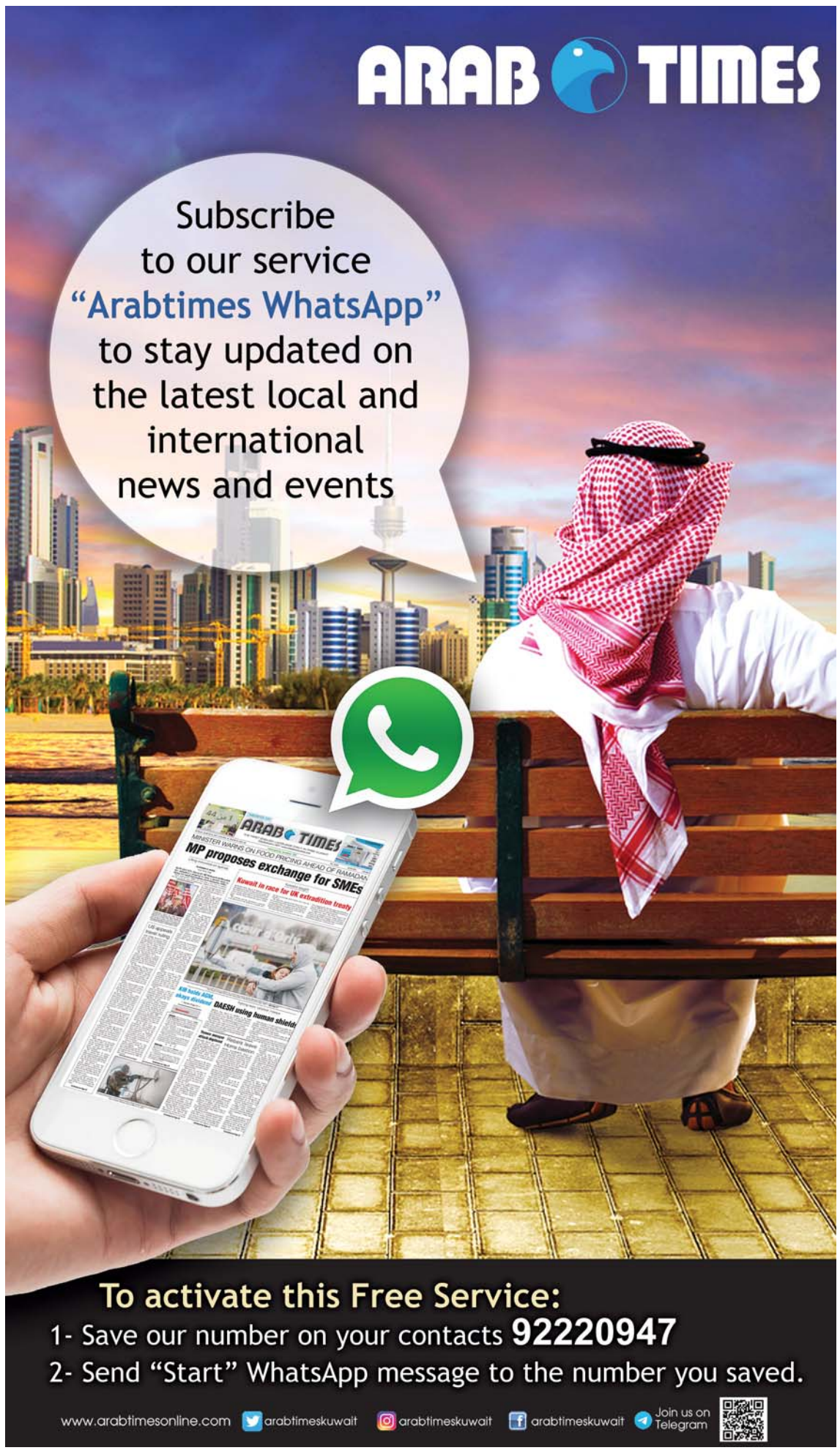
Asked whether arrests could take place during the Olympics, Bonhert said the office wants to "ensure the smooth running of what is going to be a global event" and a "universal party."

"It's not up to us to come and disrupt that order," he added. "And that's why we started early enough. The searches that took place were carried out more than a year before the start of the Games."

OLYMPICS

The probe, opened in 2017, is looking into suspected embezzlement of public funds and favoritism, and concerns about an unspecified contract reached by Paris organizers, the prosecutor's office said in June.

The 2022 investigation followed an audit by the French Anti-Corruption Agency. The prosecutor's office said that case targets suspected conflict of interest and favoritism involving several contracts reached by the organizing committee and Solideo, the public body in charge of Olympic infrastructure.



Italy's players celebrate at the end of the Euro 2024 group C qualifying soccer match between Italy and Ukraine at the San Siro stadium, in Milan, Italy. (AP)

Sports

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Italy get Euro 2024 qualifying back on track

Spain win big

MILAN, Sept 13, (AP): European champion Italy took a big step toward being able to defend its title. Spain and Belgium won easily on their path to Euro 2024. Sweden looks like it's failing to qualify for the first time in 28 years.

Romania and Kosovo managed to finish a game that risked being abandoned. Political pro-Serbia chants by home fans in Bucharest forced a 45-minute delay in the first half and players were taken back to their locker rooms.

After Romania risked forfeiting the game as a 3-0 loss, late goals earned a 2-0 win though the national federation now faces punishment in a UEFA disciplinary case.

Frattesi

The highest-stakes game of the evening saw Italy secure a vital 2-1 win over Ukraine in what shapes as a tight race to finish second in the group led by England.

Two first-half goals by Inter Milan midfielder Davide Frattesi in his home stadium at San Siro gave new coach Luciano Spalletti a first win after a tension-filled draw at North Macedonia on Saturday.

Italy's improved and more energetic performance survived Ukraine forward Andriy Yarmolenko cutting the lead before halftime.

Italy and Ukraine are tied on seven points - with North Macedonia, which beat Malta 2-0 but has the

KUNA photo

Kuwaiti player controls the ball during the U 23 Asian Cup qualifier between Kuwait and Iraq.

SOCCER

toughest schedule - trailing six behind England, who Spalletti's team must face at Wembley Stadium next month.

A possible scenario is a decisive final-round game between Ukraine and Italy on Nov. 20: a place at Euro 2024 for one, and for the other uncertainty next March in the playoffs that stopped Italy going to the past two World Cups.

On the field, the Spanish men's team has found a calm serenity in stark contrast to the scandalous furor surrounding its now-former federation president Luis Rubiales.

A 6-0 rout of Cyprus on Tuesday followed a 7-1 win at Georgia on Friday. In between, Rubiales finally resigned while suspended by FIFA and now under criminal investigation by Spanish prosecutors for alleged sexual assault against player Jenni Hermoso at the Women's World Cup final on Aug. 20.

Coach Luis de la Fuente seems to have survived in his job despite ties to Rubiales and his players did their bit in Granada to show all is well within the men's team.

"I'm happy because there's reason to be," said De la Fuente, who had no concerns after Gavi started the scoring in the 18th. Substitute Ferran Torres scored twice in a late flurry of goals.

Spain now trails six points behind group leader Scotland. Spain lost 2-0 in Glasgow in March and hosts the Scots next on Oct. 12 before playing its game in hand at Norway three days later.

Norway stars Erling Haaland and Martin Odegaard scored first-half goals Tuesday in a 2-1 win over Georgia to stay in outside contention for a top-two finish. The playoffs await Norway as a safety net.

Sweden does not have a playoff option and not much hope of a top-two finish trailing badly behind Belgium and Austria in Group F.

As Belgium cruised past last-place Estonia 5-0, Sweden slumped to a 3-1 home loss against Austria that left coach Janne Andersson insisting he would not walk away from the job he has held for more than seven years.

Sweden has qualified for six straight Euros since missing the 1996 edition but now is seven points behind the two leaders with three rounds left. Next up: away to Belgium on Oct. 16.

Belgian celebrations started early against Estonia with veteran defender Jan Vertonghen scoring a fourth-minute header in his 150th game for the Red Devils.

Romelu Lukaku scored twice in three second-half minutes to run his tallies to 77 goals in 110 national-team games. Belgium next goes to Austria on Oct. 13.

Switzerland, Romania and Israel are locked in a three-way battle for two qualifying places from Group I.

Romania captain Nicolae Stanciu went over to talk with fans who had chanted and displayed a banner with the "Kosovo is Serbia" slogan early in the game. Kosovo's declaration of independence from Serbia in 2008 is formally recognized by about 100 countries and the majority of European Union members though not Romania.

Late goals by Stanciu and Valentin Mihaila, in stoppage time, sealed the win that proved even more important after Israel also found a goal in added time from Gabi Kanichowsky to beat Belarus 1-0.

Switzerland eventually cruised past last-place Andorra 3-0 with second-half goals from Cedric Itten, Granit Xhaka and Xherdan Shaqiri.

The Swiss lead Romania by two points with Israel a point further back and each had four games left. Israel hosts Switzerland on Oct. 12.

Kuwait, Iraq qualify for U-23 Asian Cup

KUWAIT CITY, Sept 13, (KUNA): Kuwait's Olympic drew 2-2 with Iraq, the frontrunners of the Group F of the AFC U23 Asian Cup Qatar 2024 Qualifiers, securing a ticket to the final round of the cup.

The encounter, held at Kuwait Sports Club Stadium, saw a goalless first half before Salman Al-Awadhi scored the opener for the Blue in the 48th minute.

SOCCER

Bander Al-Salameh doubled Kuwait's lead in minute 65.

Iraq, undeterred, were able two come back with goals from Dhul-Faqar Younus at minute 69 and Mustafa Al-Korji at minute 70.

Kuwait ranked second in Group F rankings after Iraq on goal difference, with seven points each.

Qatar's iconic Lusail Stadium, which staged the FIFA World Cup 2022 Final, will host the first match of AFC U23 Asian Cup between Qatar and Lebanon on Friday, January 12, 2024.

Ecuador edge Uruguay

Argentina, Brazil stay unbeaten in World Cup qualifiers

LA PAZ, Bolivia, Sept 13, (AP): Argentina expected a struggle in the altitude of La Paz. The World Cup champion's climb appeared even steeper with Lionel Messi out of the lineup.

Argentina still beat Bolivia 3-0 on Tuesday in its second match of the qualifying campaign for the 2026 World Cup.

It's now two for two in qualifiers for coach Lionel Scaloni's team, which was led by veteran Ángel Di María and a strong midfield.

Brazil joined Argentina on six points atop the South American standings after a last-minute 1-0 win at Peru.

Uruguay had a chance to join the leaders but lost 2-1 at Ecuador.

The Ecuadorians now have moved back to zero; they started the tournament at -3 after having three points deducted by FIFA for the falsification of birth information of defender Byron Castillo, who is of Colombian origin.

The next World Cup in the United States, Mexico and Canada is expanding to a 48-team format, meaning direct entry to the top six teams in South America. The seventh-place team will contest an intercontinental playoff for a berth.

Colombia is in third place on four points after a 0-0 draw with Chile on Tuesday. Uruguay and Venezuela each have three points, followed by Paraguay, Peru and Chile with one point each.

The next games in South American World Cup qualifying will be played in October.

Argentina defined the match in the first half with two goals, kept its pace in the second half and added a third near the final whistle. A red card for Bolivia's Roberto Fernández in the 39th minute also made it less troublesome for the Argentinians.

Enzo Fernández opened the scoring in the 31st from close range after a low cross by Di María from the right. The veteran striker also took part in the second goal - lifting the ball into the penalty box from a free kick in the 42nd for Nicolas Tagliafico to score with his shoulder.

Nico González added Argentina's third in the 83rd with a crossed shot from the edge of the box that passed to the right of goalkeeper Billy Viscarra.

Messi applauded the goals from the bench in a stadium where 14 years ago he saw Argentina get hammered by the hosts by 6-1.

Messi, the 36-year-old Inter Miami star, was neither in the starting lineup for the World Cup champions nor on the bench. Last week, he scored from a free kick to give Argentina a 1-0 home win against Ecuador in its first competitive international since winning the World Cup last December.

Messi's absence disappointed many Bolivians, including hundreds of local fans who turned out to welcome him to the country Sunday evening.

Brazil arrived in Peru amid high

Brazil's Marquinhos, (top), scores his side's opening goal against Peru during a qualifying soccer match for the FIFA World Cup 2026 at National stadium in Lima, Peru. (AP)

Uruguay's Matias Vina, (left), and Ecuador's Enner Valencia fight for the ball during a FIFA World Cup 2026 qualifying soccer match at Rodrigo Paz Delgado stadium in Quito, Ecuador. (AP)

praise following a 5-1 battering of Bolivia on Friday. But very little of that enthusiasm remained after the final whistle was blown in Lima, despite the team's victory.

The Selecao had two goals disallowed in the first half by VAR __ including a Richarlison header that referees took 7 minutes to decide. It started the second half full of attack but Peru defended stoutly and showed that the new Brazil system under interim coach Fernando Diniz is far from a finished product.

Brazil had plenty of passing mistakes, including several by Neymar, and angered Diniz throughout the second half. Relief only came after a corner kick taken by Neymar found Marquinhos' head in the 90th minute.

SOCCER

Substitute striker Gabriel Jesus said criticism of Brazil at this stage is unfair considering beating Peru in Lima is a good result for any team.

A goal in each half from defender Felix Torres erased Ecuador's points deficit in the competition standings.

Uruguay opened the scoring in the 38th minute with Agustín Canobbio from close range in one of the few moments that Ecuador didn't dominate the first half.

Torres equalized with a header in first-half stoppage time.

Ecuador and its physical game continued to thrive against a young Uruguayan team in the second half. A quick play by 16-year-old Kendry Páez on the left flank ended in a low cross and Torres scoring again in the 61st.

The second goal gave relief to a crowded Casa Blanca Stadium in Quito. Eleven minutes earlier, striker Enner Valencia missed a penalty kick.

"What matters is that we did not get desperate," Valencia said. "This is our first victory and we will keep making ourselves stronger here."

Also, Venezuela beat Paraguay 1-0 with a goal from the spot by Salomón Rondón moments before the final whistle. It was the 33-year-old striker's 40th goal for his national team.

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